

Winnetka-GlencoePatch

Nonprofit Feeds Healthy Lessons To Local Families

Nurture volunteers school struggling households in the art of cooking, gardening.

By [Elizabeth Manaster](#)

Nurturing Health

Like a lot of moms when their youngest child heads off to kindergarten, Kathryn Guylay, a Winnetka mother of two, found herself with a little extra time on her hands. Wanting to use that time in a meaningful way, she asked herself, “What are my gifts and how can I use them to embrace my passion and interests? How can I create something that will be beneficial to others as well?” Her answer? She went back to school, earned her Certificate in Nutritional Counseling at Trinity College of Natural Health, and in 2008 founded Nurture, a non-profit organization that provides nutrition and wellness education to resource-limited families in the northern suburbs at no charge.



With a background in business and 10 years of experience as management consultant, Guylay had plenty of business know how. But her true passion had always been nutrition. “I grew up in a household where nutrition was always a hot topic,” she says. “And I knew it was possible to eat well on a limited budget. In graduate school, (she received her MBA from University of Texas in Austin) I lived on rice and beans, grains and healthy vegetables – a lot of the same things we teach in our cooking classes at Nurture. Being on a tight budget doesn’t mean that you can’t eat healthy food. I was convinced that I could pass on my knowledge and help others.”

She wrote up a business plan and began sharing it with people. The first two volunteers to jump on board were a Registered Dietician and a PH D in Nutrition. A personal trainer and more like minded volunteers quickly followed and Nurture was up and running, conducting educational cooking classes in collaboration with social service agencies such as Family Focus of Evanston, Family Network in Highland Park, the Infant Welfare Society of Evanston and the Northfield Township Food Pantry. A recent slow cooker class was conducted in collaboration with the Winnetka Presbyterian Church and Campus Kitchens of Northwestern University.



The classes provide cooking instruction, shopping tips and nutritional education – all at no charge to the families who sign up for the programs. The participants receive cooking equipment such as a rice cooker or slow cooker with whole food staples to take and use at home. They are taught how to prepare economical, time efficient, healthy and delicious meals - for less than you'd pay at a drive thru.

This past year programs were expanded to provide after school classes at Chippewa Middle School in Des Plaines and Oak Terrace Elementary school in Highwood. Programs during school hours also take place at Oak Terrace and Dewey Elementary School in Evanston. With Type 2 Diabetes on the rise, and fast food becoming an all too frequent way of dining, Nurture's focus is teaching others healthier lifestyles. If current trends continue, 1 in 3 children born in the year 2000 will develop diabetes during their lifetime. Michele Obama is bringing national attention to the need to support our children in developing healthy habits for life, and Nurture's volunteers are doing just that, engaging children with fun activities and lessons that create excitement for the healthy choices they are learning. Healthy breakfast and snack options are created by the children at the relaxed gatherings, taught by volunteers.

And new programs continue to evolve. This September a program for foster parent caregivers will take place at Family Focus in Evanston, highlighting easy and nutritious meals made in a rice cooker.

This past March marked the beginning of the Nurture Demonstration Garden, located at St. Philip Lutheran Church in Glenview. Here families were provided with gardening education and access to fresh organic and local produce they could grow themselves in the available plots. Jeanne Pinsof Nolan of The Organic Gardener taught a free seminar and seeds were donated by Johnny's Select Seeds. Volunteers helped prepare the garden and aided in the planting. Families provided not only for themselves, but the fresh vegetables from this Grow Your Own Food Program were made available to the Northfield Township Food Pantry on a regular basis throughout the summer.



Nurture's mission is based on the proverb "Give a man a fish, feed him for a day; teach a man to fish, feed him for a lifetime." Fueled by passion and energy to help others, this 100% volunteer run organization is truly making a difference. To find out more go to www.nurtureyourfamily.org.