



A little 'Nurture' can go a long way

Winnetka nonprofit teams with food pantry to help families prepare healthy meals

by Anna Lothson

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The old Chinese proverb, "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime," is the driving force behind one Winnetka organization.

Nurture, founded by Winnetka resident Kathryn Guylay in 2008, strives to empower families with the knowledge and resources necessary to prepare delicious and healthy meals, even when faced with limited time and money. Starting this month, Nurture is teaming up with the New Trier Township Food Pantry to offer classes to teach those who use the pantry how to creatively prepare well-balanced meals using simple, yet fulfilling foods.

"When people think of nutrition, they tend to think of it in a bad way," Guylay said. "We try to de-emphasize nutrition and have fun."

Not to be forgotten, of course, the healthy choices are delivered in unique manners showing that essential foods – like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and protein – can be incorporated for a budget-conscious, yet tasty experience.

"People need to get back into the kitchen. It's important to reach all generations in a family," Guylay said. "There is a huge benefit to bringing family back together, with the added benefit of being healthy."

The first class through the food pantry was offered last week and two additional classes are being held Sunday, Oct. 10, and Sunday, 24. Classes will also be held in November through the Northfield Township Food Pantry.

Nurture's classes use items that are available at the pantry to show people they already have many of the foods at their disposal. Guylay said the secret of making good-tasting meals without spending a bundle is easy: keep it simple. Instead of focusing on lengthy recipes and unnecessary purchases, the classes emphasize the use of a simple spice to give a burst of flavor to any meal. She said this helps inspire people to cook, rather than choose the drive-through. Items like a rice cooker, which becomes a highly versatile tool, are given to participants to make the cooking experience even better.

Patricia Cantor, supervisor for New Trier Township, said working with agencies like Nurture has been extremely beneficial in spreading the word for people in need. Plus, it's a unique service that allows people to use the resources already available to them.

"It's important for our clients to take whatever foods available and create healthy meals," she said. "And it stretches their dollar. It's good for everybody."

In the last year, Cantor said the number of people seeking services through the pantry has nearly doubled, but luckily generosity remains strong.

"I think [Nurture] is fantastic. They're tenacious in what they do," she said. "Their outreach to the community as a whole is wonderful."

Nurture runs many of its programs out of Winnetka Presbyterian Church, which Guylay said makes operational costs achievable. The program runs on a "very lean budget," since the only funding is from donations, and she said the church has been an invaluable resource to the program. She added that the program is always looking for volunteers, since it is 100 percent volunteer based.

"We really try to make it a community affair," she said. "It's just a fantastic synergistic relationship."

But like many organization's struggles, challenges of maintaining funding for the programs and continually stocking materials remains. But the smiles on families' faces and the reactions after classes keep Guylay going.

"It's a nice intersection between friends, family and bringing people together," she said. "A lot of organizations do a lot of planning, but we do a lot of doing."

For more information about Nurture and to learn how to volunteer, visit www.nurtureyourfamily.org.

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