



# What's up with Wellness?

December 2011

**FFI Resource Contact, Leah Chapman, distributes squash fries at West Union Elementary.**



Even though it's winter  
*Together, We Grow Healthy Kids.*

## Inside...

\*Wellness Updates from 14 schools throughout Northeast Iowa.

\*Features: *Hip, hip hooray* for All-Clad kits, students like squash fries(!), & thoughts from Liz Hovden FFI 4H Youth.

Many ingredients go into making healthy kids. Two of the most important are good food and physical activity. Most children today don't get enough of either, and the result is an increase in chronic illness, including Type II diabetes and childhood obesity.

Schools are the public tables, at which many of our children eat two or even three meals a day. By offering healthy food, such as salad bars and other fresh, local options, schools can have a direct impact on the health and wellbeing of our kids.

School is also a place that children spend a good portion of their waking hours. Increasing the amount of physical activity they get while there, or through school-related events, can go a long way toward reversing the negative health trends that have become prominent in the last decade.

In Northeast Iowa, we are working together to make schools health, vibrant places that serve locally grown foods and have abundant opportunities for physical activity and play *everyday*.

**Making the healthy choice, the easy choice.**



The holiday season came early for food service staff in northeast Iowa! Several cooking kits were donated to schools working with chefs to improve school nutrition programs. These kits included a stainless 8-quart stockpot, 3-quart saucepan, 12-inch frying pan, induction burner, low-oil fryer, utensil set, 18-centimeter chef's knife, 4-inch paring knife, large cutting board, 3-piece mixing bowl, and measuring cup. Each kit is a \$2,000 value! South Winn, Decorah, North Winn, Oelwein, Turkey Valley, Postville, New Hampton, and MFL MarMac School Districts received a kit because of their participation in the NE Iowa FFI's 5<sup>th</sup> Season Workshop(s). A kit was also donated to North Fayette School District for their involvement in F.E.E.S.T. Thank you All Clad, Share our Strength, Partnership for a Healthier America, and FoodCorps for this generous donation!

## Cooking Kits to Schools!



Photo: Turkey Valley Food Service



## School Updates:



### Central of Elkader:

- ❖ 7<sup>th</sup> graders in Family and Consumer Science class and high schoolers in Foods Class had a two-part basic nutrition lesson from FFI Resource Contact, Sonja Arneson-Ecklund about why wellness matters.
- ❖ Central's Food Service Director, Jeanne Helgerson spent an afternoon teaching Sonja the basics of menu-planning for school lunch.
- ❖ Elementary school teachers will have monthly healthy snack lessons during snack-time. The emphasis will be on seasonal holidays, local foods, and snacks students can teach their parents to make at home.
- ❖ Central's Garden Club has started! Members are planning for the spring and seeking parent volunteers and/or families who are interested in maintaining the garden.

### Decorah:

- ❖ The Wellness Team switched their monthly meeting time from afterschool to mornings. This helped improved attendance tremendously—nearly all 25 members were present at the December meeting! Planning has started for *Move to Beat the Winter Blues*. Families will have a chance to be physically active together at this workshop. Complete with a snowshoe scavenger hunt, this workshop will feature activities that are safe and fun to do in the winter, both inside and outside.
- ❖ See story about afterschool club by Decorah's 4-H FFI Youth Team member, Liz Hovden [page 4].

### Howard Winneshiek:

- ❖ FFI Resource Contact, Leah Chapman continues nutrition lessons at Lime Springs with kindergarten and first graders. In December, Chapman encouraged students to draw pictures of their plates, using USDA's [MyPlate](#) as a model.
- ❖ Cross-age teaching continues at Crestwood with guidance from Family and Consumer Science Teacher, Deb Obermann.

### MFL MarMac:

- ❖ Elementary school teachers at the Monona campus will be having monthly healthy snack lessons during their snack time. The emphasis will be on seasonal holidays, local foods, and snacks the students can teach their parents to make at home.
- ❖ The results of a parent survey administered during conferences have given the wellness team. This inspired many new projects. Ideas that emerged included: more fruits and vegetables at breakfast and lunch, inviting parents to eat lunch with their children during the school day, instilling a healthy snack policy in classrooms and creating an option for physical activity for birthday celebrations, and reducing screen time students are exposed to during the school day.
- ❖ The 100-Day Live Healthy Iowa Challenge will be integrated into Tamara Butikoffer's health curriculum this winter. For more info visit: <http://www.livehealthyiowa.org/>

## Students Sample Squash Fries

On Tuesday, December 13 FoodCorps Service Member and FFI Resource Contact, Leah Chapman conducted a cafeteria taste-test at West Union Elementary. Chapman worked with Food Service Director, Carol Stanbrough to find a creative use of excess butternut squash. Chapman made "squash fries" for students to sample.

Chapman spoke to students about squash fries. She told students the fries were made out of butternut squash, a food they helped grow in their school garden. Chapman did an informal vote to see if students would eat the fries if they were served for school lunch. The majority of the students, especially the 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade students liked them. The fries, which were roasted with cinnamon, nutmeg and a little salt, were sweet.

Chapman and Stanbrough spoke about the success of the taste-test. Stanbrough plans on serving the squash fries next fall after the butternut squash is harvested from the school garden.

### Reflections from Oelwein

I had a blast this month in Oelwein elementary schools doing taste test samplings of zucchini and dried plums (also known prunes).

Interestingly, when I asked Oelwein students what they were going to eat over the holidays they all raised their hands and listed off fruits and vegetables. Many of the students also went on to tell me that "instead of eating junk food all the time he/she also needed to eat healthy food." It's possible that students were just listing fruits and vegetables because I was there; however I believe the wellness work of administrators, teachers, and staff in Oelwein schools is really having an effect on students. On my second day in Oelwein, I talked with a teacher who had a son who had tasted the zucchini and plums the day before. She told me her son was so excited about the zucchini that she was going to buy some at the store. Seeing the students enthusiastic about fruits and vegetables is helping me find meaning in my work, and in this celebratory season.

*FFI Resource Contact, Stephanie Conant*

## New Hampton:

- ❖ The New Hampton Wellness Team has conducted surveys of students and staff at all grade levels to assess levels of health and wellness. They will use the data received to focus on target areas of education and improvement.
- ❖ New Hampton staff continue to participate in weekly wellness challenges to prepare for the [Live Healthy Iowa](#). Challenges in December included change an unhealthy habit, eat a new healthy food, use relaxation breathing for stress relief, and try a new healthy recipe.
- ❖ New Hampton Middle School students have the option of playing organized games in the gym after lunch, a very popular choice!
- ❖ Wellness walks continue at the elementary/middle schools.

## North Fayette:

- ❖ North Fayette Middle School is installing a new school garden using Whole Kids Garden Grant money.
- ❖ The school is applying for the Fayette County Community Foundation grant in order to install a 24'x24' greenhouse at West Union Center.
- ❖ North Fayette High School is starting a Fresh Fruit Friday program for the walking club. Moore's Foods is donating fruit for the month of January.
- ❖ Garden Pen Pal program is starting in January at West Union Center with Mrs. Schmitz's 4<sup>th</sup> grade class. They are paired with a classroom at Beeman Elementary in Cambridge, MA.
- ❖ See squash fries [page 3].

## North Winneshiek:

- ❖ FFI Resource Contact, Sonja Arneson-Eckland taught teachers the basics of chair yoga during a teacher in-service in December. These stretches can be used during class. Arneson-Eckland encouraged teachers and students to move in new and interesting ways during class.
- ❖ Students tested kiwi in the school lunch line early in December. The consensus? "Kiwi the best fruit ever!"
- ❖ Students requested jicama be served at lunch. Food Service Director, Barb Szabo has started serving it regularly at lunch.
- ❖ The FFI 4-H Youth Team has been exploring healthy breakfast options to recommend for school breakfast. 🌿
- ❖ There is a lot of student interested in the idea of having activity time during homeroom. A dodge-ball tournament is in the works.
- ❖ The 10-minute walk program at North Winn. is popular. The FFI 4-H Youth Team suggested playing music during walks. 🌿

## Oelwein:

- ❖ Terry Rex's 4<sup>th</sup> grade class is making a video for Fuel up to Play 60, 60-second video challenge. They are making snack cucumber boats and eating them.
- ❖ See reflections from FFI Resource Contact, Stephanie Conant.

## Postville:

- ❖ FFI Resource Contact, Elizabeth Makarewicz, read holiday favorites, The Gingerbread Man and The Polar Express to kindergarteners. Students were assigned different physical actions for characters, and moved through the tales.

## Riceville:

- ❖ Food service staff recently purchased several types of soup to test at the salad bar. Students will have the opportunity to provide feedback, and the most popular soups will be prepared for the salad bar.
- ❖ The FFI 4-H Youth Team has broken into sub-committees focusing on breakfast and lunch menu planning, cross-age teaching, and adding healthy options to concession stands. ❀

## St. Joseph's:

- ❖ 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders celebrated the Thanksgiving holiday by performing plays about John Smith and the pilgrims. They also prepared and enjoyed a delicious Thanksgiving feast! As per annual tradition, there was a school-wide Thanksgiving basketball tournament attended by many family and community members. A great day for food, fitness, and togetherness!
- ❖ St. Joe's students are still working towards their "Walk Across Iowa" challenge as part of the walking club.



classroom.

## Starmont:

- ❖ Students in the afterschool program participated in a holiday celebration. FFI Resource Contact, Elizabeth Makarewicz, lead "healthy gingerbread houses" complete with foods like broccoli, shredded carrots, peanut butter, and Craisins.
- ❖ See page 5 for Makarewicz in the

## South Winneshiek:

- ❖ Health teacher, Sheryl Holien did K-5<sup>th</sup> grade mini-health lessons on different types of apples. She made CrockPot applesauce and dried apples for students to sample. The kids loved them!
- ❖ High school students have enjoyed pumpkin and banana bread during semester exams complements of Holien. The 4-H Youth Team provided milk, which was served with the bread. ❀
- ❖ The 4-H FFI Youth Team serves "grab and go breakfast" from 8 to 8:25 the mornings students have semester exams since there is no breakfast or lunch offered on these days. ❀
- ❖ Turkey and cheese sandwiches and Gogurt are offered in high school concession stands.
- ❖ The 4-H FFI Youth Team bought 15 sleds for recess at the elementary school. Sledding is a great way to exercise. Now let it snow! ❀

## Turkey Valley:

- ❖ Students partook in a holiday scavenger hunt celebration.

### Decorah Afterschool Club

What started as a distant dream of an active school district has now blossomed into a lively afterschool program. Four Decorah High School seniors, Abby Meirick, Liz Hovden, Bre Pierce, and Rachel Haindfield, created the idea of a weekly wellness driven program for students kindergarten through fourth grade. This program was made possible with the money earned from the "That was Easy Fun Run" the students held on November 5, 2011.

Once a week around 70 children partake in active games, a health or wellness lesson, and a healthy snack. Under the supervision of many high school volunteers, hidden sugar lessons were taught, obstacle courses created, food lessons delivered, and healthy snacks encouraged. At the conclusion of the two-hour program, each child walks away with a smile across their face and a worn out body, an example that activity can be fun. One week each child ran a mile. While this activity may have seemed like a daunting task, smiles spread across faces as they raced themselves and their friends around the track. At the conclusion, one little girl begged to run another, and she did.

The excitement these children express while being active provides an encouraging hope for the health of their future.

*4-H FFI Youth Team Member, Liz Hovden*

## Valley of Elgin:

- ❖ K-5<sup>th</sup> grade students will have the opportunity to participate in a 100 day wellness challenge.

## West Central:

- ❖ Decided to do the Live Healthy Iowa 100 Day Challenge.



December  
cross-age  
teaching  
lesson=



## Starmont Foods Classes Jazz Up Desserts with Vegetables

As school budgets tighten, family and consumer science course options are often some of the first cut. However, ask any FCS teacher (or member of Food & Fitness) and he or she will certainly enlighten you to the benefits of such education.



FCS classes are a natural fit with the NE Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative. Students are empowered with skills needed to cook for themselves and are able to more carefully decide what goes into their bodies. Lessons about well-balanced meals and good nutrition provided by FCS teachers further enable students to make the right decisions.

Starmont FCS Teacher, Jan Murray approached FFI Resource Contact Elizabeth Makarewicz, about teaching a dessert lesson for her Foods I class.

Makarewicz with a touch of creativity and advice from Mrs. Murray, chose two recipes that would utilize veggies— beet chocolate cake and squash quick bread.

The lesson took place over three days. One the first day, students chopped, cooked, and pureed beets and squash in preparation for the baking. The vegetables were blended into batter and baked on the second day. And on the third day, they tasted.

Impressions? Though students were initially tentative about the desserts baked with mush that reminded them of baby food, in the end, they hardly noticed the purees.

"It tasted like chocolate cake," said one student after trying the beet cake. "And I loved the squash bread so much I took a loaf home with me!"



Starmont student mixing pureed beets.

December 2011

## Quote of the Month

"I believe that education is the best way to change a mind set, if we can educate a few families on how to make their lifestyle more active and eat better it's a success! Maybe it will become contagious or better yet.... even viral with the rest of the community." *Decorah School Wellness Team Co-Chair, Gina Holthaus*

This newsletter is a product of the Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative. We encourage recipients to contribute! Please submit articles or bullets to Flannery Cerbin, Communications Liaison, [fcferbin@iastate.edu](mailto:fcferbin@iastate.edu) / 563-382-2949.

Thank you!

*The FFI School Wellness Outreach Team wishes a very bright 2012!*

*We are looking forward to working with you in the New Year.*



LUTHER COLLEGE

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY  
Extension and Outreach

upper explorerland  
regional planning commission