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Food and Fun at Community School *Program empowers kids to make healthy food choices*

This school year, students in the 3rd and 5th grades at Community School are participating in a new program called **Food and Fun** which provides positive messages to encourage kids to make healthy choices. The program is being taught by volunteer Kathryn Guylay, a new resident to the Wood River Valley, who has taught nutrition education to kids in Chicago through her work with non-profit Nurture and the Healthy Kids Ideas Exchange.

“I am excited about the great reception we’ve had for this program at Community School. The parents are extremely supportive and have told me they’ve already noticed changes in the choices their kids are making. The kids ask excellent, thoughtful questions and are really engaged.” Guylay is teaching from a curriculum created by a team of Registered Dietitians at Nurture that covers topics including the importance of breakfast, whole grains, eating more fruits and vegetables, and much more. “The curriculum is great because the messages are simple but powerful”, says Guylay. “No food is a ‘bad’ food. The idea is for kids to have fun, learn, feel empowered about making good choices, and hopefully try some new things”.

The kids are already demonstrating their knowledge from the program. “I learned the difference between ‘go foods’ (foods that give you sustaining energy) and ‘slow foods’ (junk foods that slow you down if you eat too much) and why it is important to choose more ‘go foods’”, explains participant Eliza Marks. Kids are also learning how to read labels and look out for certain ingredients. “(I learned that) a ‘go cereal’ has 3 grams or more of fiber, and 9 grams or less of sugar”, adds 5th grade participant Christine DuFur.

The program runs on a once-a-month basis, and includes a food or recipe that the kids can try. Guylay is quick to voice her appreciation to Atkinson’s Market for offering a special discount and tax free rate for the food served during the program. This month the theme is being thankful for food and incorporates a lesson on the importance of eating locally. “We are going to bring in a representative from Idaho’s Bounty to talk to the kids about what is grown in Idaho”, explains Guylay. “We will ask the kids to brainstorm a special Thanksgiving menu based only on local-foods.”

Nurture is a non-profit organization whose mission is to empower family members of all ages (children, teens and adults) with the tools and resources needed to prepare healthy and delicious meals even when faced with limited time and budget. Healthy Kids Ideas Exchange is an online community of parents interested in sharing topics related to children’s health. For more information, please visit the Nurture website at www.nurtureyourfamily.org or the Healthy Kids Ideas Exchange at www.healthykidsideas.com. Kathryn Guylay can be contacted at KG@nurtureyourfamily.org.