

Putting Health on the Menu



Culinary training at Dakota Medical Foundation with "Healthy Chef" Elizabeth Halting

Making it easier to find healthy food options

Have you ever wished it could be easier to identify healthy food options at your favorite local restaurant? Well, that's exactly what the "Putting Health on the Menu" initiative is all about. Launched in early June, this initiative invites small independently-owned restaurants, caterers, or cafeterias to create and promote healthy menu options.

Helping restaurants meet the growing demand for healthy foods

Our first step recruiting partners is to share the details and expectations of the program. Once they are willing participants, we start with an assessment of their current menu offerings and nutrition environment. This assessment guides our work with the manager to customize an action plan that focusses on healthy menu options, portions and price, marketing and promotion.

Participating establishments have the opportunity to consult individually with nutrition and culinary experts to modify or create healthy menu options. Nutrition analysis software is available to determine nutrition

content of favorite recipes. Experienced culinary experts provide staff training on healthy cooking techniques. Menus are labeled to highlight healthy options with a logo we hope will be recognized around the region. Staff learn marketing strategies that influence healthy food choices. Strategy funding is available to help implement healthy changes.

In July, we held our first culinary training at Dakota Medical Foundation. Cooking staff at partner establishments learned how to add more fruits and vegetables to the menu, cook with whole grains, season food with less salt and replace solid fats with heart healthy oils. Participants enjoyed tasting the recipes and sharing ideas with one another. We plan to tape future training sessions to better accommodate a variety of work schedules.

Our early adapters include La Barista Restaurant and Catering in Detroit Lakes; Essentia Health St Mary's-Detroit Lakes; Eventide Senior Living Communities in Moorhead; and Union Pizza in Fergus Falls. Our first success has been the interest and enthusiasm of our partners as we work together to develop action plans that put healthier options on the menu and encourage patrons to make the healthy choice.

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Becker, Clay, Otter Tail & Wilkin Counties

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Janet Lindberg
PartnerSHIP 4 Health
218-998-8322
jlindber@co.ottertail.mn.us



PartnerSHIP 4 Health
www.partnership4health.org