

*“Together with PartnerSHIP 4 Health we have been able to make changes in our catering business and our family daycare that result in healthier options for those we serve.”*

**-Tom and Daniela Zens-  
Zens Creative Catering  
Daniela's Daycare**



Have you ever been at a meeting where the food served was less than healthy, and instead of energizing you, the opposite occurred? Have you ever dropped off your child at daycare and wondered whether they would receive healthy food and physical activity options?

Tom and Daniela Zens of Fergus Falls, MN, have collaborated with *PartnerSHIP 4 Health* to make changes in their catering business as well as their family-based daycare, to ensure that they present healthy options to those they serve.

According to Tom, “Many of the healthier recipe ideas that I use came from catering requests and feedback received from *PartnerSHIP 4 Health*. I now offer several different healthy menu items such as sweet potato and black bean enchiladas, grain salads, and many recipes that include kale and beets as those were the vegetables of the year selected by Fergus Falls the past two years.”

“I find myself making sure our meals include plenty of fresh fruit, vegetables, and whole grains. We also have vegetarian and gluten free options. In the past year requests for healthier entrees and fresh fruit as dessert increased by about 50%,” Tom said.

Tom found that his family’s food tastes changed as well: “After taste-tasting my sweet potato, black bean, and kale enchiladas, my wife encouraged me to add more kale! A year ago she would not have eaten kale.”

*PartnerSHIP 4 Health* also impacted their family daycare business. As Daniela states, “Krystle McNeal from *ChildcareAlive!*, and *PartnerSHIP 4 Health* did a great job getting the kids moving and involved in making new foods.

Daniela incorporates outdoor play at least once a day, weather permitting. “Daycare parents appreciate us getting outside to play, especially during the winter months. We have a hill in our yard so sledding is an everyday event. Indoor physical activities include riding toys, bouncing balls, parachute games, follow the leader, dancing, and ‘wiggles and giggles.’”

Krystle’s whole grain tortilla layered with peanut butter and a banana slice, and then rolled up, quickly became one of their all-time favorite snacks. Tom often makes food for the daycare similar to what he is preparing for his caterings. Daniela encourages everyone to try the new foods, explaining that “you can’t just look at it and say you don’t like it; you actually have to take a bite.”

It always smells good when parents are picking up or dropping off children, as Tom is often cooking something up in the kitchen. Many daycare parents tell Daniela that their children are eating much better than they are, and they want to stay for lunch.

Tom recently asked *PartnerSHIP 4 Health* about the 2015 Vegetable of the Year, indicating his desire to continue to integrate healthy options into his catering business, influencing the health of his customers, the family daycare, his family, and the community.

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*PartnerSHIP 4 Health is community and public health partners in Becker, Clay, Otter Tail, and Wilkin counties working together to create an environment that supports improved health for all.*

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