

Lake Region Healthcare Serves Up Local



Hydroponically - grown Romaine lettuce provides a crunchy base to the Honey Berry Salad in Lake Region Healthcare's cafeteria line, as well as their Lena's Lakeside, Otter Tossed, Caesar, and Midwest Salads.



Locally grown watermelon was personally delivered to each employee during Lake Region Healthcare's Employee Appreciation Day and was a huge hit!

Local Foods For the Win

What if health care facilities were challenged to lead the charge in connecting the public to local foods? What if their cafeteria menus featured fresh food grown just days earlier a few miles away? Lake Region Healthcare in Fergus Falls, Minn. took the challenge seriously during the growing season of 2020 and their staff and employees both came away pleasantly surprised.

Through a Good Food Guidelines grant, PartnerSHIP 4 Health staff helped to connect Lake Region Healthcare's Nutrition Services department to a local grower (Melonhead Farms) who provided them hydroponically-grown lettuces, tomatoes, and cucumbers, as well as watermelon, honeydew, and cantaloupe. The lettuce, tomatoes, and cucumbers were featured in their daily salads, and the melons available as cut-up fruit. Kristy Norenberg, Nutrition Services Director, noted that the lettuce was bigger, crispier, juicier, and greener than lettuce from their food distributor. She also reported that, "The hospital employees began to notice the 'good lettuce' in the grab-n-go salads, and they would disappear off the line!" Because they were so impressed by the flavor, employees began to ask if they could order additional melons for their personal use!

Healthy Mission, Healthy Food

In past years, the hospital's annual Employee Appreciation Day included a watermelon-eating contest. COVID-19 restrictions prevented this event in 2020, but staying on trend, the hospital delivered cut-up watermelon to all departments and outreach locations in the service area. Tom Rufer, Employee Community Relations Coordinator for LRH, says that "This local foods model fits into Lake Region Healthcare's mission and organizational goals – to keep people healthy by offering healthy food – and supporting a local business along the way."

It is critical to have health care facilities on board with all healthy eating campaigns to portray its importance and significance to the public. Please contact PartnerSHIP 4 Health for more information on how to connect local growers to other facilities.

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