

Georgia's Healthy Communities Program

SUCCESS STORIES

Empowering Kids in the Fight Against Cancer!

By: Erin Hernandez

Cooking Matters in NWGA

The Northwest Georgia Regional Cancer Coalition partnered with Summit Quest and Redmond Regional Medical Center to offer Cooking Matters™, a cooking class for kids and families with a cancer diagnosis. Cooking Matters™ empowers families at risk of hunger with the skills, knowledge and confidence to make healthy and affordable meals. With the help of volunteer culinary and nutrition experts, course participants learn how to select nutritious and low-cost ingredients and prepare them in ways that provide the best nourishment possible to their families.



SPOTLIGHT

Chef Andrew Ballantine of Redmond Regional Medical Center had a particular interest because his dad had cancer when he was young and his family prepared meals together to help out. It is then that he first learned to cook.

NORTHWEST GEORGIA REGIONAL CANCER COALITION

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CHALLENGE



Many times in families where cancer is present, financial resources are difficult and the traditional caregiver is often too tired or sick to prepare meals on their own. Cooking Matters™ teaches children how to work together with their families in the kitchen, empowering them in their own journey of cancer survivorship.

SOLUTION



Children especially, feel powerless to help out loved ones when they are not feeling their best. Giving these children some skills and knowledge for working side by side in the kitchen with a cancer patient/survivor helps empower them to be a key part of that process. In addition, many children worry that they too, will develop cancer over time so good cancer prevention nutrition and cancer fighting foods are emphasized.

Results

We had 20 families complete the 4 hour cooking class with a total of 57 participants throughout the 4 sessions. Participants reported through pre/post testing and anecdotal comments that they were cooking more at home and enjoying the time spent with one another in the planning and preparing of meals. Giving children skills and knowledge for working side by side in the kitchen with a cancer patient/survivor helps empower them to be a key part of that process. One of the main areas of emphasis of the program in Rome was talking about cancer fighting foods and the role of nutrition in cancer prevention. Many of the children served by Summit Quest realize that having a parent with cancer raises their own cancer risk. Teaching children how to make healthy choices gives them a sense of control over their own future. Participants were given two cookbooks provided by the American Cancer Society, [Kid's First Cookbook](#) and [What to Eat During Cancer Treatment](#), and crockpots were provided for families by the Rome/Floyd Commission on Children and Youth.



Dietician Helen Judd, of Redmond Regional Medical Center, and a participant work on knife safety skills



Future Direction



The NWGRCC contracted with Share our Strength to participate in the Cooking Matters Train the Trainer program and have access to resources and materials for the classes. To find out more about working with Share our Strength and Cooking Matters, go to <http://cookingmatters.org/>. The Northwest Georgia Regional Cancer Coalition plans on hosting another class session towards the end of the summer, and additional classes throughout the year.