

# Georgia's Healthy Communities Program

# SUCCESS STORY

*Empowering Kids in the Fight Against Cancer!*

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## Cooking Matters in Northwest Georgia

In 2016, the Northwest Georgia Regional Cancer Coalition partnered with Summit Quest and Redmond Regional Medical Center once again 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, 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.

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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. Many times there is often stress on the part of the cancer patient to continue to prepare meals for their families and even participate in the preparation for big celebrations. Cooking Matters™ built in special sessions for Thanksgiving Day meal preparation and a holiday baking day.

# SOLUTION

Children especially, feel powerless to help out loved ones when they are not feeling their best. 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. In addition, many children worry that they too, will develop cancer over time so good cancer prevention nutrition and cancer fighting foods are emphasized. Our dietician emphasizes how healthy eating can help in the long term prevention of cancer. In this class our dietician also often talks about foods that are good for the cancer patient during chemotherapy or other treatment modalities.

## Results

We had 24 families complete the 4 hour cooking class with a total of 79 participants throughout the 3 sessions. Participants reported through pre/post testing that they were cooking more at home, including more vegetables in their diet, 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 plans to continue the Cooking Matters™ program through 2017 offering classes to regional indigent care clinics and federally qualified health care centers. To find out more about working with Share our Strength and Cooking Matters™, go to [www.nokidhungry.org](http://www.nokidhungry.org)