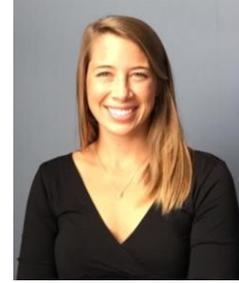


AmeriCorps VISTA working with ReThink Health: UCRV

In this guest blog post, Bella Stachowski, an AmeriCorps VISTA working with ReThink Health: UCRV, reflects on her experience so far helping to launch Healthy-Vibrant Kids (HVK), a modular nutrition education program developed by Dr. Deb Kennedy of Dartmouth-Hitchcock's Weight and Wellness Center. HVK is one of the first programs to take flight in a community-wide public health initiative in Claremont: Healthy Vibrant Claremont.



October marked the kick-off of Healthy-Vibrant Kids (HVK) in Claremont. Each month has a theme, like whole grains, healthy fats, limiting treats, and watching your sodium intake. HVK is designed to provide kids with easily digestible bites (pun intended) of information that meet them wherever they are while honing in on key messages based on USDA dietary guidelines.

One way we communicate these messages to kids is through monthly newsletters with the key messages, guidelines, and examples. There's a side for kids and a side for parents. Schools will send the newsletters home with kids at the beginning of each month.



But we find that the best way to connect with the kids is in-person. So, to kick off the HVK program, Dr. Deb and I spent the day at Claremont's Fall Festival and Chili Cook-Off with a blender bike and lots of kids making fresh fruit, kale, and yogurt smoothies!

This month I also started visiting two elementary schools in Claremont during lunch periods. Since October is vegetable month, we focused on getting kids excited about the "super powers"—strong bones, good vision, and a healthy immune system—they can acquire by eating a variety of vegetables, 3 servings of veggies a day, and healthier forms of potatoes and pizza. Not only was I tasked with getting a couple hundred kids excited about HVK, **I also needed to prove to myself that this work was worth getting excited about.**

VEGGIES RULE!

#1 BHK RULE: Eat a vegetable with lunch, dinner, and a snack for 3 a DAY!

WEEK 1: Eat veggie sticks with dip for a snack. Post your favorite dipping recipe on: www.Facebook.com/BuildHealthyKids

WEEK 2: Add a vegetable to your lunch. Try bell peppers, celery, or pea pods!

WEEK 3: Eat a Rainbow of colors. Try a new color each week. Orange/Red: carrots, yams, tomato, red peppers Green: Kale, baby spinach, broccoli, collard greens

WEEK 4: Super Power your Pizza - Add some veggies to it!

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GREAT CHOICES	NOT-SO-GOOD CHOICES

Healthy~Vibrant Kids

October 2015




If your child has trouble eating bitter tasting vegetables like broccoli, add salt to it.
Salt + Bitter = Sweet
Add a splash of soy sauce to steamed broccoli or kale.

3 Veggies a Day!

Help your kids to eat **3** vegetables a day to support their health. **Here is a good rule to try: Eat a veggie at every lunch, snack and dinner.**

Choosing Vegetables
Colorful vegetables contain disease-fighting nutrients. Some super veggies include: carrots, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, kale, and other green leafy vegetables. Vegetables are best fresh but they can be purchased frozen or canned too. Be careful of the sodium content in cans and avoid sauces.

VEGGIE SERVING TIPS!

1. Serve cut up vegetables before dinner
2. Keep trying new vegetables
3. Start with small portions
4. Serve with a dip: hummus, yogurt, or salad dressing
5. Sauté green leafy veggies with olive oil and soy sauce
6. Puree veggies in pasta sauces & soups

Learn more about vegetables:

<http://www.buildhealthykids.com/bhk12vegetables.html>

<http://www.fruitsandveggies-morematters.org/fruit-veggie-grams>

http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/5_day_challenge2.pdf

Kids need to eat a variety of vegetables each day:

- 1 cup for children 2-3 years
- 1 ½ cup for children 4-8 years
- 2 cups for girls 9-13, and 2 ½ cups for girls 14-18 years
- 2 ½ cups for boys 9-13, and 3 cups for boys 14-18 years

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I've been reflecting on my experience over the last few months and here are 5 things I've come to learn:

1. **Knowledge is power.** At some point in a child's life, they will be faced with choices. We—communities, guardians, educators—are responsible for providing children with the knowledge to make the most informed decisions possible about what they eat and how they live their lives.
2. **Meet kids where they are.** One of the great things about HVK is that it meets kids wherever they are by offering tangible and realistic goals to improve their nutrition and, ultimately, their lifelong mental and physical development. So instead of saying "Don't eat pizza," we say "Go ahead and eat pizza – just put some veggies on it!"
3. **Grassroots initiatives can effectively create and sustain social change.** Although I'm focusing my time

and energy on relatively small-scale work, I try to keep the bigger picture in mind: I'm helping schools build their capacity to integrate nutrition education into the classroom for years to come.

4. **It takes a village!** Education is essential to building healthy, vibrant communities. HVK is designed to be a community-wide nutrition education program. The goal is for kids to hear the same nutrition messages throughout the community (at home, at school, at the doctor's office, etc.). The School Administrative Unit for Claremont, as well as Valley Regional Hospital and the Community Center, are all on board in making this a reality.