

RECREATION AND NUTRITION

Summer Meals Program



Recreation and Nutrition Newsletter

Spring 2016

The Program

The Recreation and Nutrition program aims to achieve greater food security and a healthier lifestyle for children from low-income households. The program takes place at three of Burlington's subsidized family developments and includes a free snack and lunch every day, along with enrichment activities. Family food budgets that rely on school breakfast and lunch are stretched in the summer and put children at risk of food insecurity. We believe a comprehensive approach is necessary to address the increasing number of families facing this risk. Last year the program served 3,855 free lunches to over 200 Burlington children. This is twice as many meals/snacks as the summer of 2014. A growing number of families are in need of our program. Due to this additional need, we are working with the Burlington Boys & Girls Club to add a site this summer at Roosevelt Park. We not only offer the same meals that children receive at school, but we also continue to implement an educational gardening curriculum that allows kids in the program to grow their own fruits and vegetables as well as nutrition education programs that teach participants about the benefits of a healthy diet.

Field Trips

The field trips are designed to help the participants gain a greater sense of community. The coordinators at each site collaborate to offer opportunities to discover Burlington's beautiful parks and helpful community resources. Some of the field trips last year included visits to ECHO Lake Aquarium, berry picking at Mazza's Berry Farm, reading at the Fletcher Free Library, and swimming at North Beach. Special guests are invited to share on site as well and the *Dream Program* provides volunteers and staff to assist our staff in providing great programming at our three sites. Last year the Fletcher Free Library provided staff to do outreach programming onsite.



Nutrition Activities

The program's comprehensive approach to nutrition education is comprised of hands on activities and nutritious meals. The meals are provided by the Burlington School Food Project and meet the USDA's



Child Nutrition Guidelines. The Burlington School Food Project offers wholesome, fresh and nutritious meals daily to the children in Burlington during the school year as well as in the summer. Their mission is to connect students and their families with whole, fresh, and local foods to improve student learning and the health of our community.

Nutrition education gives children skills and knowledge in growing, preparing, and choosing healthy foods. Engaging activities include vegetable gardening, cooking activities, taste testing, field trips to farms, and visits from food and nutrition educators. The children prepare recipes using their own harvested vegetables and other local produce. Last year we implemented the *OrganWise Guys* Nutrition Education Program.

Gardening

Each site made weekly visits to our new Teaching Garden located at the BACG site at Star Farm Park. The children plan, plant, maintain, and harvest the garden. This past summer an AmeriCorps volunteer taught lessons at the garden site and at all three program sites. These activities connect the children to their environment and the food they eat.





2015 Summer Update



Franklin Square Apartments

The Franklin Square program added extended afternoon hours, allowing additional time for extra programming. With the added session we provided an average of over 60 meals/snacks per day throughout the summer of 2015. This is twice as many meals/snacks as the summer 2014. The children also enjoyed skipping rope, soccer, kickball and basketball. Other activities included West African dance and music instruction and the children and their families enjoyed a final block party cookout with games, drumming instruction, a dance party and a visit from the Parks & Recreation Play-mobile. We hired co-directors for this program to better supervise the evening program, which we are committed to doing again in the summer of 2016.

Riverside Apartments

Riverside participants had an outstanding summer. A new initiative last summer was walking children to the Riverside Program from the BHA Hillside Terrace Apartments located off Riverside Avenue. Two staff accompanied an average of 9 children per day to the program. The Riverside group was active in the summer gardening education program. They tended to fruits and vegetables at our Star Farm Garden Site on a weekly basis. The group also made pies with berries the children picked at a Colchester berry farm. Everyone had an active summer playing basketball, soccer, and musical chairs. The children learned African drumming and received weekly visits from the Fletcher Free Library Reading Program.

Howard Center McClure Gymnasium

For the second straight summer we partnered with the Howard Center's Baird School and the BSD Food Services team to operate a program at the Baird School's McClure Gymnasium. Running the program at the Baird School has been a big success. We averaged 15 youth per day in the program last summer. This group embarked on many field trips, heading to North Beach and Oakledge Parks, picking berries in Colchester and traveling on a weekly basis to Star Farm Park to participate in our Gardening Education Program. This group tended to be mostly boys and their favorite activity was definitely basketball. We will be doing outreach in the spring to involve more girls in the program.





2016 Plans and Goals



Physical Activity

Recreation choices are offered daily, and are organized and developmentally appropriate for the participants. A wide variety of activities are offered that focus on fun and simplicity to encourage participation and instill a sense of competency.



2016 Goals: We plan to enhance our 2016 program by adding more active field trips. Surveys of participants show that many of them want hiking and rock climbing trips. We also will be working closely with our partners, *Body Resolution*, to implement more active games and exercises.

Nutrition Education

The nutrition activities offered are engaging and hands on, giving children skills and knowledge in growing, preparing, and choosing healthy foods. *Body Resolution* Fitness Consultants provided *Organwise Guys* nutrition training to staff. This program is promoted by the National Recreation & Park Association, and educates youth about healthy eating habits. We also added an AmeriCorps volunteer who provided gardening education at a garden plot at Star Farm Park.



2016 Goals: The program has set forth an improved nutrition education initiative utilizing the *Organwise Guys* curriculum. Sites will hold at least two nutrition-based activities each week. We also plan on continuing our Garden Education Program at Star Farm.

Parent Involvement

The program takes place essentially in the children's neighborhoods. With the close proximity, parents have an opportunity to get involved and lend an extra hand when the children organize a kickball game, take a walk to a nearby park, or set up a slip and slide. Parent involvement improves children's behavior and encourages success.



2016 Goals: Parent volunteers will be recruited to chaperone field trips, host activities, and provide extra supervision. The program keeps parents informed about activities and opportunities for the children, which is coordinated with the *DREAM* program and other activities.

Community Resources

Many of the children who participate in the program are not only new to Burlington, but are also new to the United States. Educational field trips introduce resources and inspire a sense of place. The children become familiar with low cost resources in the community that they can access with their families, such as free activities at the Intervale, low-cost food options at City Market, inexpensive bikes from Bike Recycle Vermont, and ECHO's "Open Door" program that provides free entry to the aquarium.

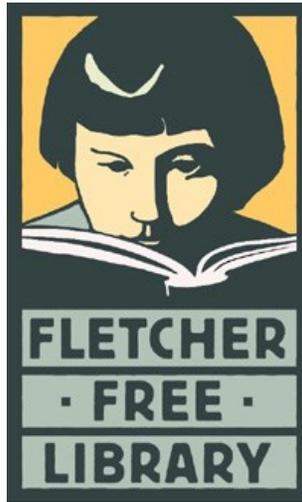


2016 Goals: Each site will host a guest educator each week. The children will also be able to participate in at least one community service activity. Lastly, we will be planning a talent show fundraiser this year.



BURLINGTON
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**For \$4 a day...
(Donation of \$150.00)**

make Burlington children's
biggest concern this summer
the score of the basketball
game, not where their next
meal comes from.