

# INTERGENERATIONAL FUN!

## OLDER ADULTS AND KIDS JOIN IN NUTRITION AND WELLNESS ACTIVITIES AT PARK AND RECREATION SITES

More and more, intergenerational activities (activities that include both youth and older adults) are taking place at park and recreation (P&R) sites nationwide. This year as part of the Commit to Health (CTH) campaign, P&R sites are adding and expanding intergenerational wellness programming. Providing intergenerational activities is a way

- ◆ to increase wellness knowledge transfer, both from older adults to youth and from youth to older adults;
- ◆ to bring in “expert” advice and experience for wellness activities (older adults have a lot of great things to share such as cooking, gardening and more); and
- ◆ to keep both older adults and children active, mentally challenged and happy.

Below we share some ideas for intergenerational fun that you may want to try to promote nutrition, physical activity and wellness in parks!

### **Kids and Older Adults Nutrition Fun Club!**

Start off your intergenerational programming by creating a nutrition fun club made up of kids and older adults. Challenge them to come up with a fun name that describes their goal and a mission, as well as a set of intergenerational activities that promote nutrition and physical activity on a regular basis. Make an official summer or afterschool plan for activities that will be led by the club. For example, create an intergenerational meal day where a CTH Food of the Month is served and the CTH Conversation Cards<sup>1</sup> are used to generate wellness-focused conversations. Check out some of the tools described below that can be part of your new nutrition fun club brainstorming sessions!

### **CTH Foods of the Month Tools and Activities for Intergenerational Fun!**

Older adults can support youth programs at P&R sites in many ways using the CTH Foods of the Month (FoM) tools.<sup>2</sup> Great ways to make this happen include reading to and playing games with children, and leading food tastings (see some fun taste-test ideas in box 1) and cooking demonstrations! Find a set of materials about specific foods profiled in the 12-month FoM program on the CTH website.<sup>3</sup> These great tools can inspire intergenerational activities at your P&R site.



Below, find a few descriptions of the available resources on the CTH website.<sup>3</sup> Check these out to get those creative juices flowing and to start intergenerational programming at your site! Please note that you can use the tools found under each month anytime, not just during the month in which they are listed. When and how you use them is up to you!



### **Coloring and Activity Pages**

Coloring and activity sheets for specific foods are profiled in the 12-month CTH FoM program. They are presented in age-appropriate categories for young children, grades K-2 and grades 3-5. Many activities reinforce core subject areas such as math, science and language arts while engaging teachers and learners in nutrition literacy activities.

### **Fun, Experiential Activities!**

Older adults also can engage youth by using the fun, experimental food-based activities (not all of which include consuming foods) within each monthly set of materials! They include fun, sometimes messy, activities such as using berries as paint in an art project. Organized on the FoM website by type of food, refer to the FoM calendar<sup>4</sup> to determine which month featured the food that you want to use in your intergenerational activity.

## **BOX 1: TRYING NEW FOODS USING TASTE AND OTHER SENSORY TESTS!**

Taste tests are super fun ways to showcase recipes from the CTH Foods of the Month and Summer Fresh curricula, as well as introducing individual raw vegetables and fruits to kids and seniors! Lead taste tests to identify a vegetable in various forms such as:

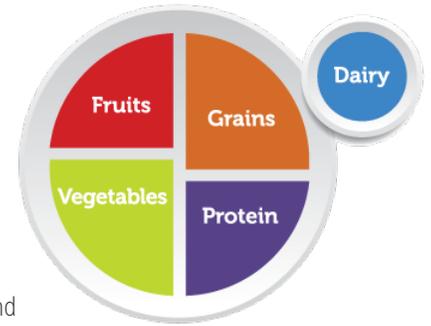
- ◆ Raw in basic form, like sliced raw bell peppers or chunks of honeydew (with a dip of some kind – kids LOVE dipping!)
- ◆ Raw in a prepared form, like smoothies with fruit and kale (yes, our summer 2018 research shows that kids LOVED kale added to their smoothies and even went home and asked their parents to try smoothies with fruit and kale!)
- ◆ Cooked (look for themes such as “around the world” and use the Foods of the Month program)

Add senses to taste-testing activities. Depending of the age of the children, these can be done as a fun and friendly competition. Who can name the fruit or vegetable?!

- ◆ Sight (look at and name the produce)
- ◆ Touch (feel and then name the produce, use a blindfold or put the produce in a “mystery bag” such as a pillowcase or a box with a hole in it for hands to go into to feel the produce)
- ◆ Scent (smell and name the produce)
- ◆ Taste (always end with a fun taste test, but make sure not to use the produce that has been handled in the sight, touch and scent activities!)

## USDA MyPlate and Other Fun Activities!

Find U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) MyPlate activities, sheets and handouts for all ages in the list of each month's tools. Activities found in this section include puzzles, crosswords, math challenges and other fun tips for using MyPlate to promote nutrition literacy. USDA created the MyPlate guide to show the right balance of healthy foods that should be included in meals. See the USDA infographic "10 Tips: Kid-friendly Veggies and Fruits"<sup>5</sup> for ideas on how to get kids to eat vegetables and fruits.



If reading to very young children is something a senior would like to do, the USDA Emergent Reader series offers the perfect opportunity. This series includes books for grades Pre-K-1 (but can be used for grades 2-3 in some situations) that shares foundational information about the core food components everyone should include in meals and snacks – fruits, vegetables, proteins, grains and dairy. One book on the MyPlate provides a way to organize all of these meal components. These are great for older adults to read to children, especially when followed up by a coloring or tasting activity!



## Fun Being Active!

Helping children engage in daily physical activity is another way to implement intergenerational activities at P&R sites. In each monthly section, see physical activity suggestions that are linked to nutrition literacy. While older adults may not be able to do all the suggested physical activities, they can facilitate and coach children during the activity. For example, the June FoM Fun Being Active materials describes an activity called, "MyPlate Relay." Older adults could draw the cards indicating the type of physical activity the child should do (such as jump, skip, etc.) out of the basket for each child as they run back and forth during the relay.

## Foods of the Month Newsletters

If parents get involved in some of the FoM activities as part of the intergenerational programming, you may consider

sending them home with some FoM newsletters covering the topic you want them to learn about. They can read these newsletters together as a family! Find an English and Spanish version of a newsletter for each monthly topic online.

## Summer Fresh

A new set of tools that promote produce typically found in gardens, farmers markets and produce stands during the summer months has just been launched – it is called the Summer Fresh program! Recipe cards, handouts and other great suggestions for using summer-fresh produce can be used in your intergenerational programming.

## CTH Community and Home Gardening Tools and Activities for Intergenerational Fun!

Intergenerational activities at your P&R site could revolve around gardening. Growing produce helps everyone learn about where our foods come from and helps keep us active! The Community and Home Gardening (CHG) section of the CTH website<sup>6</sup> lists many activities that can be intergenerational. They are presented by month, but the CHG activities do not have to be done in a particular order – use what you feel is best for your site's programming!

## Gardening tips

Plant an intergenerational garden! Older adults and children can work together to maintain and pick food from gardens, learn about the nutritional value of what they grow, share nutritious recipes and cook and share garden harvest meals. This gives everyone a chance to see the full garden-to-table process!

## Coloring and activity sheets

Find a variety of gardening and harvest/produce use topics profiled in the 12-month CTH CHG program listed under the heading, "Coloring and Activity Pages." They are presented in age-appropriate categories for young children, grades K-2 and grades 3-5. Many activities reinforce core subject areas such as math, science and language arts, while engaging teachers and learners in gardening and harvesting fun!

## Experimental activities

As another CHG section of resources each month, the experimental activities provide a great set of tools for older adults to engage with youth on gardening and/or celebrating harvests!

## Community and Home Gardening Newsletters

If parents get involved in gardening activities as part of the intergenerational programming, consider selecting some of the CHG newsletters covering the topic you are sharing. Send them home so families can read them together! Find an English and Spanish version of each newsletter covering a different topic each month on the CTH CHG website.



## REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> NRPA, Commit to Health *Conversation Cards*, [www.nrpa.org/our-work/partnerships/initiatives/commit-to-health/commit-to-health-resources/](http://www.nrpa.org/our-work/partnerships/initiatives/commit-to-health/commit-to-health-resources/)
- <sup>2</sup> NRPA, Commit to Health Foods of the Month nutrition literacy curriculum, [www.nrpa.org/our-work/partnerships/initiatives/commit-to-health/foods-of-the-month](http://www.nrpa.org/our-work/partnerships/initiatives/commit-to-health/foods-of-the-month)
- <sup>3</sup> NRPA, Commit to Health website, [www.nrpa.org/our-work/partnerships/initiatives/commit-to-health](http://www.nrpa.org/our-work/partnerships/initiatives/commit-to-health)
- <sup>4</sup> NRPA, Foods of the Month calendar, [bit.ly/2LNU50o](https://bit.ly/2LNU50o)
- <sup>5</sup> USDA, "10 Tips: Kid-friendly Veggies and Fruits" infographic, [www.choosemyplate.gov/ten-tips-kid-friendly-veggies-and-fruits](http://www.choosemyplate.gov/ten-tips-kid-friendly-veggies-and-fruits)
- <sup>6</sup> NRPA, Community and Home Gardening website, [www.nrpa.org/our-work/partnerships/initiatives/commit-to-health/community-home-gardening/](http://www.nrpa.org/our-work/partnerships/initiatives/commit-to-health/community-home-gardening/)