

Learning Nutrition Hands-on in the Garden

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Provider Riverbend Head Start in Alton, IL, featured by the National CACFP Sponsors Association

AUSTIN, TX, USA, February 20, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Riverbend Head Start in Madison County, IL, first opened their doors in 1916. They now have six Head Start centers and serve around 700 students. Jon Kuanfung had the opportunity to join the team two years ago as a Nutrition Specialist and is working alongside a passionate staff dedicated to the nutrition and betterment of the children they serve.

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Jon stresses the importance of teaching nutrition at an early age. As obesity rates and the amount of chronic diseases increase, the best time to educate children is when habits are beginning to form. Change is usually a difficult process, and it is an easier task to help habits form rather than changing them later in life. If children learn the habits earlier and create a healthy lifestyle, they can rely on them through adulthood.

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John Kuanfung



The children help plant the garden at Riverbend Head Start.

The nutrition education that Riverbend teaches is two-fold, focusing on kids at the center and kids at home. Wanting to include more fresh, home-cooked meals on the menu, Jon began establishing gardens at all of the sites. Both the staff and families are instrumental in the success of the gardens. The children tend and harvest the gardens. The nutrition curriculum from the garden incorporates phonics, math, science, and social studies. Teachers focus

on what healthy choices are, what fruits and vegetables do to strengthen our bodies, and lead monthly cooking activities.

Riverbend wants to ensure that nutrition education continues at home. Families are encouraged to visit the garden and harvest the vegetables for personal use. Cooking demonstrations are presented at monthly meetings and parents are able to taste the food their children eat. Cooking and nutrition lessons are taught on the Riverbend online channel where featured recipes are easy and quick. Riverbend hopes to grow both their programs at school and in homes to continue influencing children in developing healthy lifestyles habits.

CACFP is an indicator of quality child care. When children are cared for by providers who are part of the CACFP, they are receiving the best nutrition available. Learn more about other CACFP providers featured in the Member Showcase through the [National CACFP Sponsors Association](#).

Since 1986, the [National CACFP Sponsors Association \(NCA\)](#) has been the leading national organization for sponsors who administer the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). It provides education and support to thousands of members in the CACFP community and in particular to sponsors of all sizes from across the country. CACFP strives to improve communication between families, caregivers, sponsors and their supervising government agencies.

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