COMMIT TO HEALTH

NUTRITION LITERACY & COMMUNITY AND HOME GARDENING

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

NRPA
National Recreation and Park Association

Walmart

HEALTHY NETWORKS DESIGN & RESEARCH
A NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION

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Introduction

Park and recreation agencies (P&R) are the health and wellness leaders in their communities, serving diverse populations of children, including those living in underserved communities who are at the greatest risk for poor nutrition and physical inactivity. As one of the largest providers of out-of-school time (OST) programs in the country, park and recreation agencies play a critical role in improving healthy eating (HE) and physical activity (PA) behaviors of children, their parents, and recreation providers. To support park and recreation agencies in establishing healthier environments and policies, the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) created the Commit to Health campaign in 2014. NRPA's Commit to Health initiative encourages park and recreation agencies to implement a set of Healthy Eating and Physical Activity (HEPA) standards that address meal quality, physical activity practices, nutrition education and family engagement in OST programs. Through Commit to Health, park and recreation agencies are creating policy and environmental changes that impact hundreds of thousands of children annually with increased access to healthy foods and more opportunities to be physically active. In order to support agencies and provide resources to successfully implement the HEPA standards, NRPA created two curriculums for OST providers to utilize within their programs—the Commit to Health *Foods of the Month* nutrition literacy curriculum and the *Community and Home Gardening* curriculum.

The *Foods of the Month* (FoM) nutrition literacy program teaches children and adults about two different foods (or food groups/beverages) each month using a variety of multimedia lessons based on a monthly lesson guide and a suite of supporting materials. Since 2012, the curriculum and its components have been thoroughly evaluated. Results of evaluations, which have been presented at professional conferences such as the *Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Food and Nutrition Conference & Expo*[1] and the *Active Living Research Annual Conference*,[2] show significant improvements in nutrition knowledge, physical activity, and healthy eating behaviors for all groups involved – kids, parents, and park and recreation staff![3,4]

The *Community and Home Gardening* (CHG) literacy program has two aims: 1) to teach children and adults how to garden at home and/or in community projects (including indoor gardens), the value of plant-based foods they can grow, and budget-saving considerations when growing their own foods, etc.; and 2) to teach staff who lead the program how to lead gardening education, install community gardens and indoor gardens, and consider unique opportunities for utilizing harvests. Like the FoM literacy program, the CHG program is organized by month and employs a

variety of multimedia lessons based on a monthly lesson guide and associated supportive materials.

This Facilitator's Guide provides an overview and some strategies for implementing the two Commit to Health nutrition literacy components: the *Foods of the Month* and *Community and Home Gardening*. In this guide, you will find:

- Overview of each component included in FOM and CHG curriculums
- Review of the Lesson Plan Guides for both components
- Description of items enumerated in the Lesson Plan Guides for both components

COMMIT TO HEALTH
FOODS OF THE MONTH CURRICULUM

OVERVIEW AND GETTING STARTED

The Commit to Health Foods of the Month (FoM) nutrition literacy curriculum is specifically designed to be implemented in OST programs at individual park and recreation sites. All materials are **free** and **downloadable**. Each monthly set of materials includes:

- Lesson Plan Guide (K-2, 3-5)
- Foods of the Month Posters
- Monthly Newsletter with Tips and Healthy Recipes
- Coloring and Activity Pages
- Fun, Experiential Activities!
- USDA MyPlate and Other Fun, Healthy Activities!
- Fun Being Active Tips
- Resources for the Home Newsletter

To get started with this fun, informative nutrition literacy program, go to www.nrpa.org/CommitToHealth and click on the "Foods of the Month Nutrition Literacy (FoM) Curriculum."

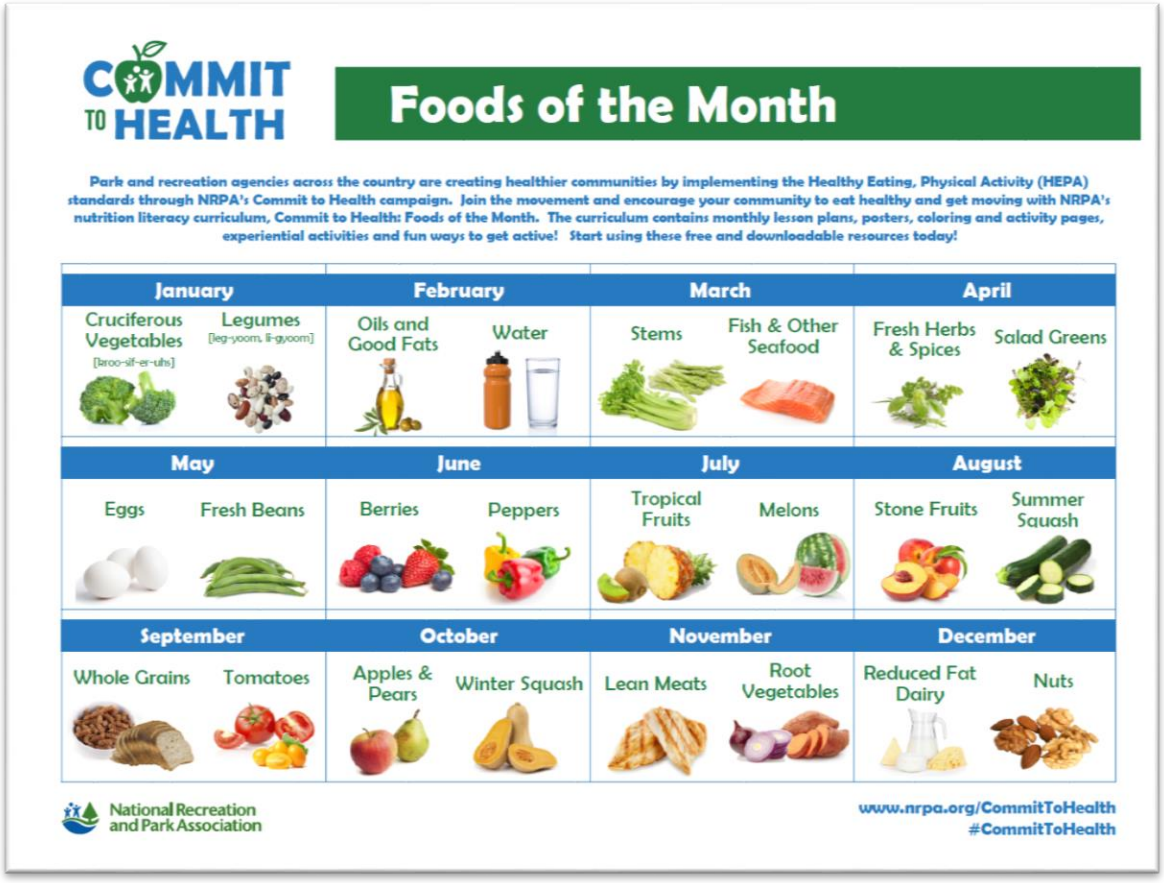
When thinking through how you will implement the FoM program, remember that helpful guides and tools are available on the NRPA Foods of the Month website. It may seem like a lot of *stuff* to organize, *but please do not get discouraged!* Find some great suggestions and tips below, including many from park and recreation professionals who have used this curriculum for a few years:

- Print out the *annual* Foods of the Month Calendar (shown on the next page) and display it at your site in a prominent location. The annual calendar helps you remember which food-based topics will be part of your programming each month. Print a few and post around your site to remind everyone about the forthcoming topics!
- Consider printing out a FoM binder containing all pieces of the curriculum so you can review, and share, all of it in one place. Many P&R staff indicated that a binder of all materials is very useful, due to the fact that many staff do not have access to online materials all the time, thus this "printed library" is available for review, and to use as "masters" for photocopying as needed.
- Monthly: Click on the link to the current month's FoM curriculum to access that month's materials (red arrow).
- Monthly: Print out the lesson plan guides for each grade level (K-2 and 3-5). Keep these handy and use them as your guides for planning monthly activities.
- Monthly: Print and hang the monthly FoM posters – *put in several locations to market the nutrient-rich, healthy foods!*
- Monthly: Print and send home the FoM newsletter with each child.
- Monthly: Plan and run the fun kid-friendly and engaging activities in each category: Experiential, USDA MyPlate activities, and Fun Being Active!
- Integrate food-based activities as much as possible-- these seem to have the most significant impact on children, often introducing them to new foods, beverages, preparation and cooking processes, etc. Food tastings, food prep demonstrations, cooking classes, food used in art, and other activities that use *real* food have a strong influence on eating behaviors of children!

FOODS OF THE MONTH

ANNUAL CALENDAR

Print and display this annual FoM calendar to remind yourself, staff, children, and caregivers/parents about the nutritious foods and beverages you will be profiling in the nutrition literacy program you lead.

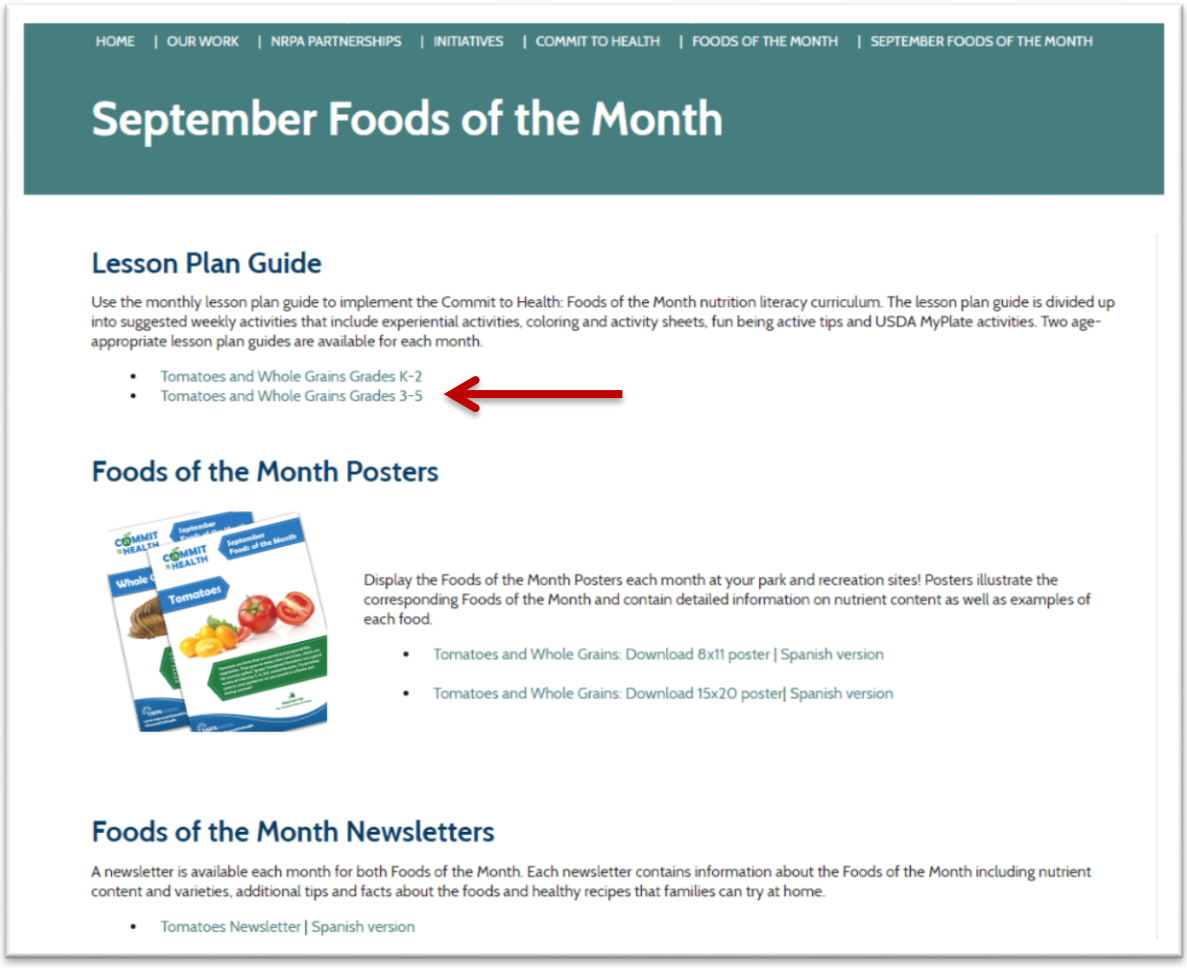


FOODS OF THE MONTH

MONTHLY MATERIALS

In the pages that follow, we walk you through the FoM materials for one month, using September as the example. Again, it may seem like a lot of materials and recommended activities, but with thoughtful planning, it is fun and easy to lead, and the children will learn a lot while having fun!

The image of the webpage below shows what you will see on each month's FoM page. The entire curriculum for the month is found on this month-specific page. Note that some items are for specific grade levels, so make sure you click the link associated with the age of your children. Also, some items are in Spanish, as indicated. Click on the green hyperlinks to open each file/tool.



FOODS OF THE MONTH

LESSON PLAN GUIDES

Each monthly lesson plan guide includes suggestions for things to do each week, based on that month's foods. The guide reminds you to send newsletters home, post your posters, and lists the activities and worksheets you can choose to do each week (the files describing each activity are found on the same monthly webpage by clicking the green hyperlinks under the section titles "Fun, Experiential Activities," "Coloring and Activity Pages," "USDA MyPlate and Other Fun Activities," or "Fun Being Active"). All are free and available to help children learn about those foods, and creative ways to help your kids stay active! There are individual lesson plans (and activities) for kindergarten through 2nd grade and 3rd through 5th grade – make sure you download the correct lesson guide. The suggested activities can be done *in any order*, so feel free to do them during different weeks than indicated on the lesson guide. Try to implement FoM activities *at least three days each week*, more if you can!

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Foods of the Month: Lesson Plan Guide

September

4-week Lesson Plan Guide and Worksheet: 3rd-5th Grade

WEEK	Foods of the Month (FoM) Whole Grains Barley, bulgur, brown rice, farro, oats, quinoa, wheat Tomatoes Cherry, grape, yellow cherry, plum, beefsteak	FoM Coloring & Activity Sheets (NOTE: Sheets listed below can be done in any order.)	Fun, Experiential Activities! (NOTE: Activities listed below can be done in any order.)	USDA MyPlate and Other Fun, Healthy Activities! (NOTE: Activities listed below can be done in any order.)	Fun Being Active! Check off each day when you lead organized physical activity!
1	☐ Send home FoM newsletter – Whole Grains and Tomatoes! ☐ Hang up posters, read them to children	☐ Whole Grain Hero (3-5) ☐ Adjectives for Tomatoes (3-5)	☐ Many Ways to get WG (3-5) – try to bring in a few WGs listed on this sheet ☐ Sunlight to Food Experiment (2-5)	☐ Send home "MyPlate at Home" ☐ Introductory Page-Serving Up MyPlate (read & show to children) ☐ MyPlate Crossword Puzzle	☐ Monday - Read BeAFitKid to children (3-5) ☐ Tuesday ☐ Wednesday - Be Physically Active Your Way (Food Relay) ☐ Thursday ☐ Friday-Hand out Tracking Exercises (ask kids to bring back end of next week)
2	☐ Read the FoM newsletters to the children, ask them if they ate these foods last week ☐ Conduct a food tasting with whole grains	☐ Spot the difference (3-5) ☐ Writing Tomato (3) ☐ Terry's Plant Parts (3-5)	☐ Making_A_Mummy (3-5) ☐ Multiple Tomato Tasks 1 (3-5)	☐ Finding Fiber Lesson-Fruit vs Juice (3-5) ☐ Kitchen Measurements for Ingredients (Math, 3-5) ☐ If feasible, take children to grocery store, show them the many types of whole grain items they can buy with their parents!	☐ Monday - Read Staying Active on Rainy Days, create your plan! ☐ Tuesday ☐ Wednesday - Be Physically Active Your Way (Food Relay) ☐ Thursday ☐ Friday - **Great Grain Obstacle Course**
3	☐ Conduct a food tasting with tomatoes (See "Tasty Tomatoes" in Fun, Experiential column)	☐ Word Scramble WG Characteristics (3-5) ☐ Tomato Math (3-5)	☐ Tracking Your Whole Grains (2-5) ☐ Tasty Tomatoes-Try Them! (2-5)	☐ Nutrient Flash Cards (3-5) ☐ Send home MyPlate Grocery Store Treasure Hunt (go over it with children first) ☐ MyPlate Maze (1-2)	☐ Monday ☐ Tuesday ☐ Wednesday - Be Physically Active Your Way (Food Relay) ☐ Thursday ☐ Friday - Hand out Tracking Exercises (ask kids to bring back end of next week) (1-2)
4	☐ Read the FoM posters to the children again, ask children if they talked with their parents about whole grains and/or tomatoes, and if they ate them last week	☐ Whole Grain WordScramble (3-5) ☐ Color by Number (3)	☐ Tomato Survey of Group (3-5) ☐ Multiple Tomato Tasks 2 (3-5) ☐ If feasible, take children to pick tomatoes!	☐ Crack the SecretCode (3-5) ☐ MyPlate Coloring Sheet-have children cut images from magazines for, or draw items in all categories	☐ Monday ☐ Tuesday ☐ Wednesday - Be Physically Active Your Way (Food Relay) ☐ Thursday ☐ Friday - **Great Grain Obstacle Course**

Reminders!

- Check the website frequently to download fun activity sheets, view music, and for other updates! All files above are listed by name on the site.
- Try to do food-based activities weekly!
- Point to the Foods of the Month posters as you do activities in this lesson plan.

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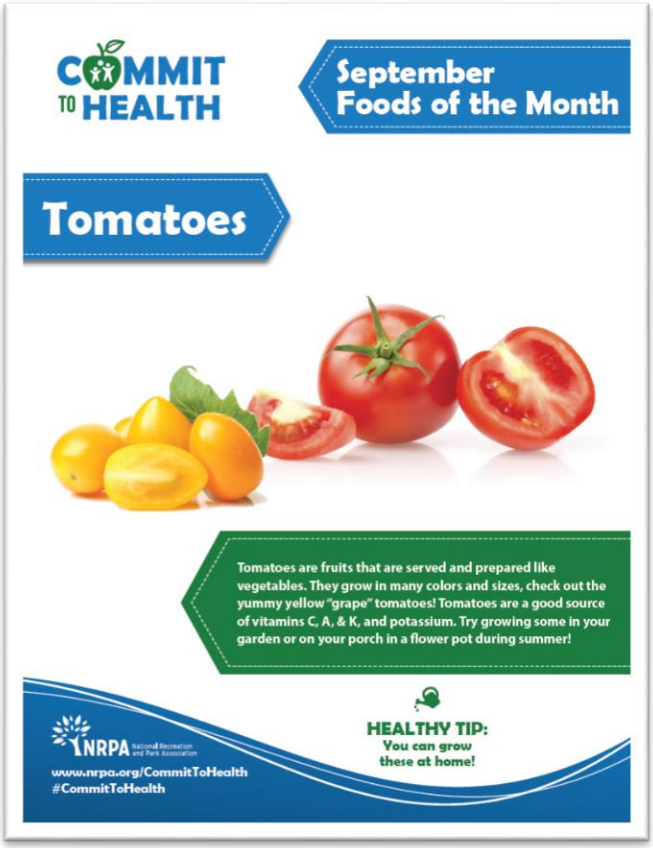
FOODS OF THE MONTH

MONTHLY POSTERS

(Column 2 on Lesson Plan)

Print the monthly Foods of the Month posters, hang them, and read them to your children! Hold a discussion about the foods, asking questions such as how many have tried the foods of the month, which are their favorites, and the best way to eat/prepare the food. Try a food tasting too!



FOODS OF THE MONTH

MONTHLY NEWSLETTERS

(Column 2 on Lesson Plan)

Print these newsletters each month to send home with your children. Before sending these home, read the newsletter with them (see the Lesson Plan Guide for discussion topics). After they have taken them home, ask if they shared them with their family, if they taught their family about the foods profiled in the newsletters, tried any of the recipes, etc. Try out some of the recipes at your site!

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Foods of the Month Newsletter

SEPTEMBER: TOMATOES

Tomatoes are one of the most popular "vegetables" eaten by Americans. Tomatoes, however, are members of the fruit family that are served and prepared as vegetables - this is why most people consider them vegetables and not fruits. They are high in vitamins C, A, and K. Tomatoes contain large amounts of an antioxidant called lycopene, which may help guard against certain cancers. Tomato paste and sauces, which contain highly-concentrated cooked tomatoes, have lots of healthy lycopene!

CHECK OUT SOME GREAT INFORMATION ABOUT HEALTHY TOMATOES BELOW!

Varieties- Did you know there are *thousands* of types of tomatoes?! The most popular kinds are classified into three groups: cherry, plum, and slicing tomatoes. Grape and cherry tomatoes are fun, sweet, and really delicious to eat alone or in a salad!

Selection- Cold temperatures can damage tomatoes, so avoid buying tomatoes that are stored in a cold area, and try not to put them in your refrigerator unless you cannot eat them soon. Pick plump tomatoes that have smooth skin with no bruises, cracks or blemishes. Slightly soft tomatoes usually have more flavor than hard ones.

Storage- Store tomatoes at room temperature (above 55 degrees) until they are fully ripened. This will allow them to ripen properly so they taste and smell *delicious*. Store tomatoes out of direct sunlight, because sunlight will cause them to ripen unevenly. If you must store them for a longer period of time, place them in the refrigerator (but remember they may lose some flavor!). Serve tomatoes at room temperature.

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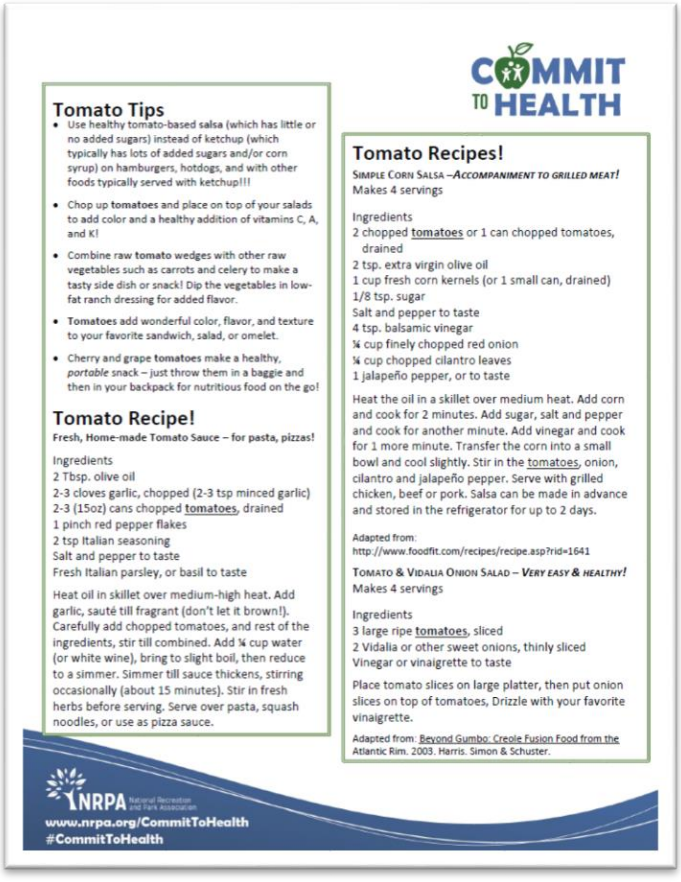

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Tomato Tips

- Use healthy tomato-based salsa (which has little or no added sugars) instead of ketchup (which typically has lots of added sugars and/or corn syrup) on hamburgers, hotdogs, and with other foods typically served with ketchup!!!
- Chop up **tomatoes** and place on top of your salads to add color and a healthy addition of vitamins C, A, and K!
- Combine raw **tomato** wedges with other raw vegetables such as carrots and celery to make a tasty side dish or snack! Dip the vegetables in low-fat ranch dressing for added flavor.
- **Tomatoes** add wonderful color, flavor, and texture to your favorite sandwich, salad, or omelet.
- Cherry and **grape tomatoes** make a healthy, *portable* snack – just throw them in a baggie and then in your backpack for nutritious food on the go!

Tomato Recipe!

Fresh, Home-made Tomato Sauce – for pasta, pizzas!

Ingredients
2 Tbsp. olive oil
2-3 cloves garlic, chopped (2-3 tsp minced garlic)
2-3 (15oz) cans chopped tomatoes, drained
1 pinch red pepper flakes
2 tsp Italian seasoning
Salt and pepper to taste
Fresh Italian parsley, or basil to taste

Heat oil in skillet over medium-high heat. Add garlic, sauté till fragrant (don't let it brown!). Carefully add chopped tomatoes, and rest of the ingredients, stir till combined. Add ¼ cup water (or white wine), bring to slight boil, then reduce to a simmer. Simmer till sauce thickens, stirring occasionally (about 15 minutes). Stir in fresh herbs before serving. Serve over pasta, squash noodles, or use as pizza sauce.

Tomato Recipes!

SIMPLE CORN SALSA –*ACCOMPANIMENT TO GRILLED MEAT!*
Makes 4 servings

Ingredients
2 chopped tomatoes or 1 can chopped tomatoes, drained
2 tsp. extra virgin olive oil
1 cup fresh corn kernels (or 1 small can, drained)
1/8 tsp. sugar
Salt and pepper to taste
4 tsp. balsamic vinegar
¼ cup finely chopped red onion
¼ cup chopped cilantro leaves
1 jalapeño pepper, or to taste

Heat the oil in a skillet over medium heat. Add corn and cook for 2 minutes. Add sugar, salt and pepper and cook for another minute. Add vinegar and cook for 1 more minute. Transfer the corn into a small bowl and cool slightly. Stir in the tomatoes, onion, cilantro and jalapeño pepper. Serve with grilled chicken, beef or pork. Salsa can be made in advance and stored in the refrigerator for up to 2 days.

Adapted from:
http://www.foodfit.com/recipes/recipe.asp?rid=1641

TOMATO & VIDALIA ONION SALAD – *VERY EASY & HEALTHY!*
Makes 4 servings

Ingredients
3 large ripe tomatoes, sliced
2 Vidalia or other sweet onions, thinly sliced
Vinegar or vinaigrette to taste

Place tomato slices on large platter, then put onion slices on top of tomatoes, Drizzle with your favorite vinaigrette.

Adapted from: Beyond Gumbo: Creole Fusion Food from the Atlantic Rim. 2003. Harris. Simon & Schuster.

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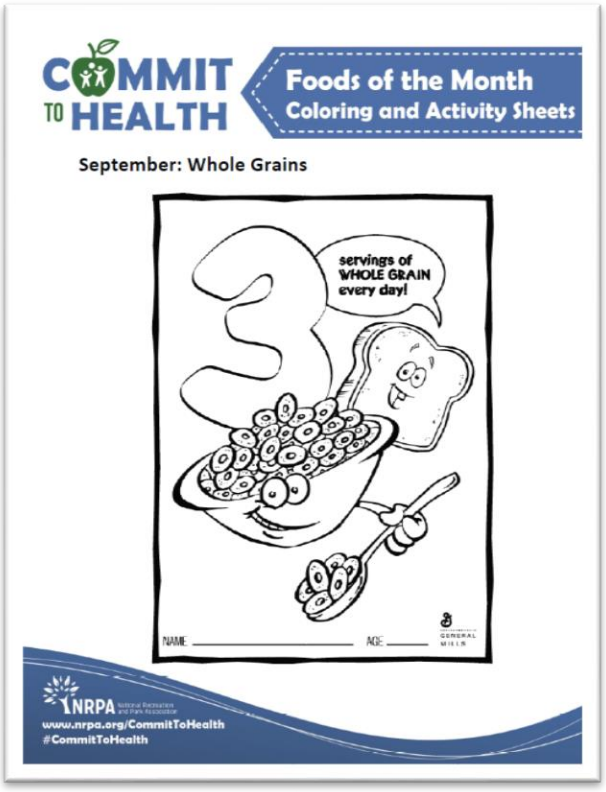
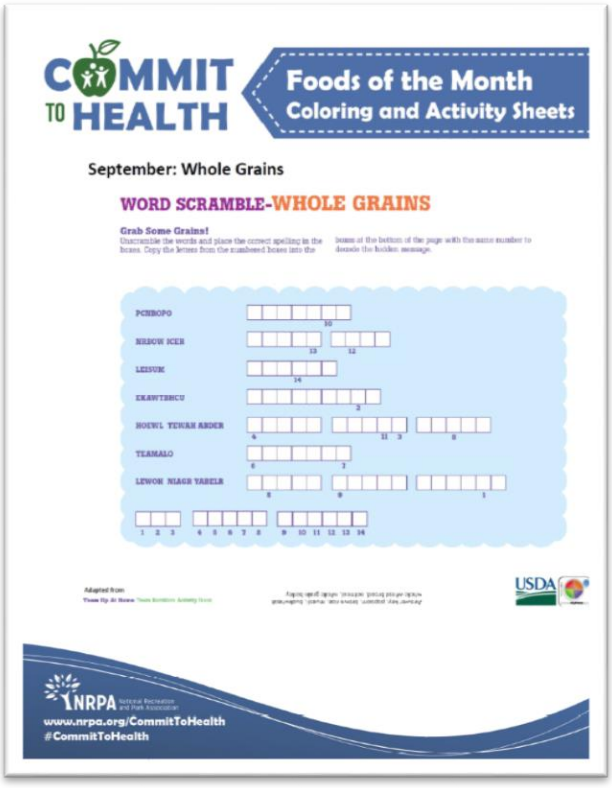
FOODS OF THE MONTH

COLORING & ACTIVITY SHEETS

(Column 3 on Lesson Plan)

Each month there is a variety of coloring and activity worksheets, based on the foods for that month, to print and use with your children. Although recommended ages are in parenthesis (ex: K-2) after the name of each document, use them as you deem appropriate for the educational maturity of each child. You do not need to follow the suggested order for using the worksheets/implementing the activities. Use the ones you want, whenever it best fits into your weekly schedule! Try to do at least three per week.





FOODS OF THE MONTH

EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVITIES

(Column 4 on Lesson Plan)

Experiential Activities are lots of fun, and can include arts, crafts, songs, stories, science, and outdoor fun – all based on the foods of the month! Review these in advance to ensure that you have the needed materials. Many of these, just like the Coloring and Activity sheets, address core academic subjects, so consider integrating the food-based, nutrition literacy activities into academic time as well!

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Foods of the Month
Fun, Experiential Activities

September: Tomatoes

Changing Sunlight to Food? How do plants do this?!!

All green plants contain chlorophyll that absorbs sunlight. The chlorophyll is in small parts of the plant called chloroplasts. Chloroplasts convert the sunlight/solar energy absorbed by the chlorophyll into sugar that is used by the plant to activate a process called photosynthesis.

Photosynthesis is a process whereby the plant uses water and carbon dioxide to create compounds called carbohydrates that help plants grow.

Fruit bearing plants such as the tomato store carbohydrates in the fleshy part of the fruit as well as in all other parts of the plant.

Try the fun experiment on the next page to see what happens if you block sunlight from the leaves of a green plant!

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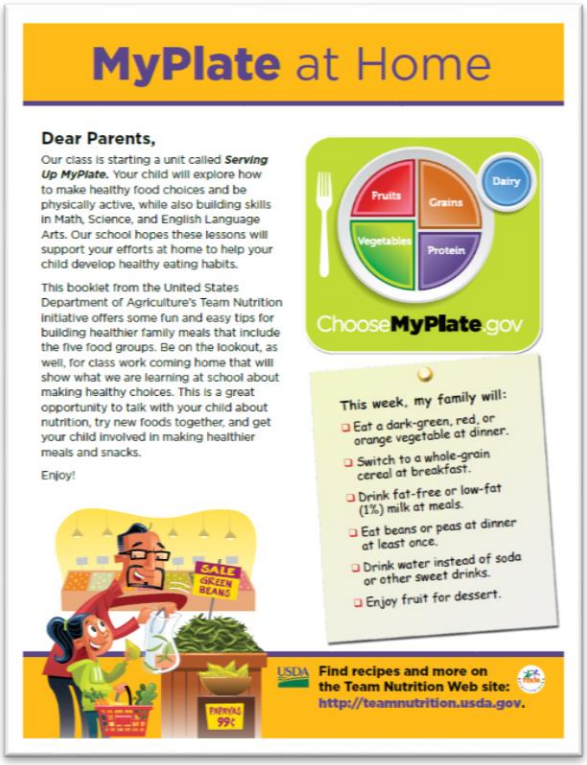
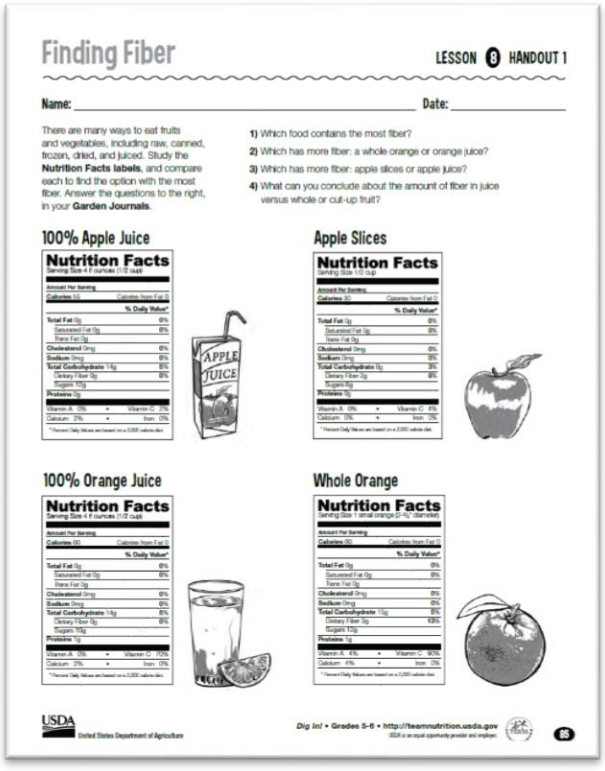
FOODS OF THE MONTH

USDA MYPLATE & OTHER ACTIVITIES

(Column 5 on Lesson Plan)

Materials found under this topic can be used to round out the lessons for the month, covering subjects including the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) MyPlate, which teaches about putting together a nutritious meal based on sections of a plate assigned to different types of foods! In addition to the set of materials found under this section of the monthly C2H FoM website, you can visit www.choosemyplate.gov to find resources to send home with children to share with their family.



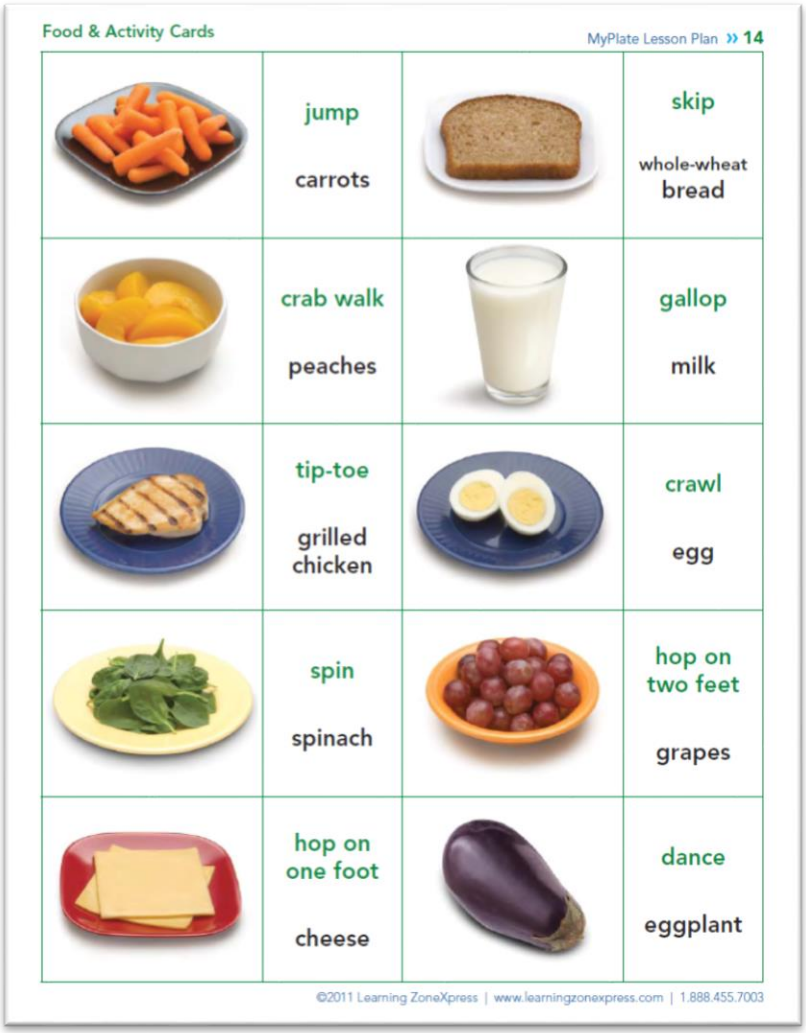


FOODS OF THE MONTH

FUN BEING ACTIVE

(Column 6 on Lesson Plan)

Help your children be physically active every day! Check out the "Fun Being Active" section of the lesson guides to learn about special physical activities to do throughout the month – once the children learn them, they will enjoy doing them over and over again! Many of the activities can be done inside or outside, so check them out even for rainy, hot, or snowy days.



FOODS OF THE MONTH

RESOURCES FOR THE HOME

One of the final items you will find on each month's list of resources is a sheet you can send home with your children to help the healthy living initiatives continue once they leave your care. Encourage the children to talk about what they learn about the foods of the month, and tell them they too can be teachers about healthy eating and physical activity! These sheets will help pull it all together for families!

COMMIT TO HEALTH

RESOURCES FOR THE HOME

NRPA's Commit to Health initiative supports the implementation of healthy eating and physical activity standards in park and recreation sites across the nation. Now you can help reinforce the healthy habits that your child is learning in their out-of-school time program in your home!

SEPTEMBER

Different cultures have different food traditions. This September, explore different culinary treats from cultures around the world—from meal preparation to cooking spices. Mealtime can be healthy, fun, and exciting if you try different recipes and cook as a family!

- As children study different cultures in school, your family may enjoy learning about different cultures by trying new foods and spices. Here are some healthy tips.
- Oregon State University Extension Service has some great recipes to take your taste buds on a world tour!
- Help your young children develop healthy eating habits! Check out some tips here.
- Cook as a family! Check out some ideas for getting your kids cooking! (Spanish)
- Physical Activity Tip: September brings football! Make the time to go outside with your family to throw around the football. Make a plan to take as many laps around a local track or park path as the number of points scored by your favorite football team! Challenge your family and friends to do the same!
- Learn about a fruit and vegetable each month! Try new healthy recipes and cooking techniques here! (Spanish)
- Help reinforce healthy eating with fun activity sheets (tomato and whole grains) and coloring (tomato and whole grains) sheets for your family.

*For Spanish information about MyPlate, please click here!

Alliance for a Healthier Generation

National Recreation and Park Association

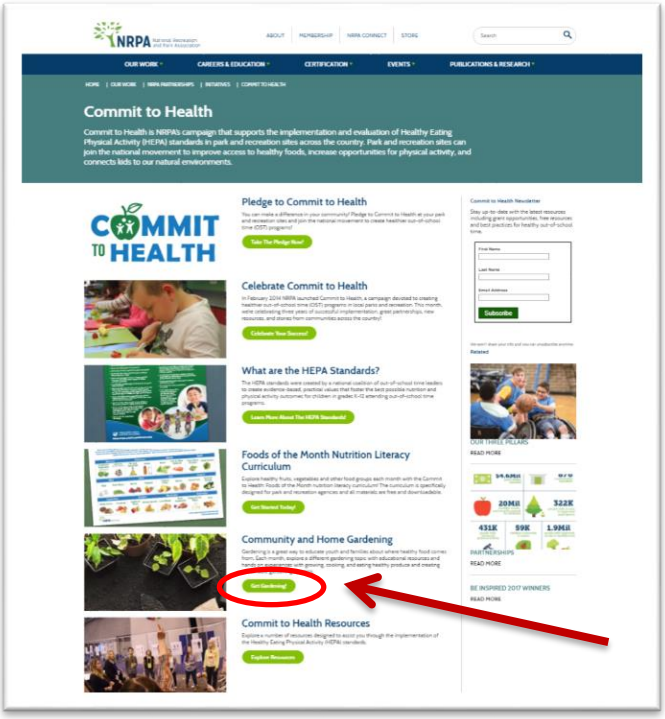
www.nrpa.org/CommitToHealth

COMMIT TO HEALTH
COMMUNITY AND HOME GARDENING

OVERVIEW & GETTING STARTED

In 2017, NRPA expanded to include the Commit to Health Community and Home Gardening literacy curriculum. Among other topics, this curriculum will assist you with planning, planting and tending a garden at your site, places to find fresh-grown produce, preparing and preserving produce, and teaching your kids about gardening. All materials are **free** and **downloadable**. The following materials are found at the website:

- Monthly Lesson Plan Guide (K-2, 3-5)
- 4 Seasonal Gardening Posters
- Monthly Newsletter with Tips
- Monthly Coloring and Activity Pages
- Monthly Fun, Experiential Activities!
- Bimonthly Gardening Tips Sheets on Home Gardening
- Bimonthly Gardening Tips Sheets on Community Gardening

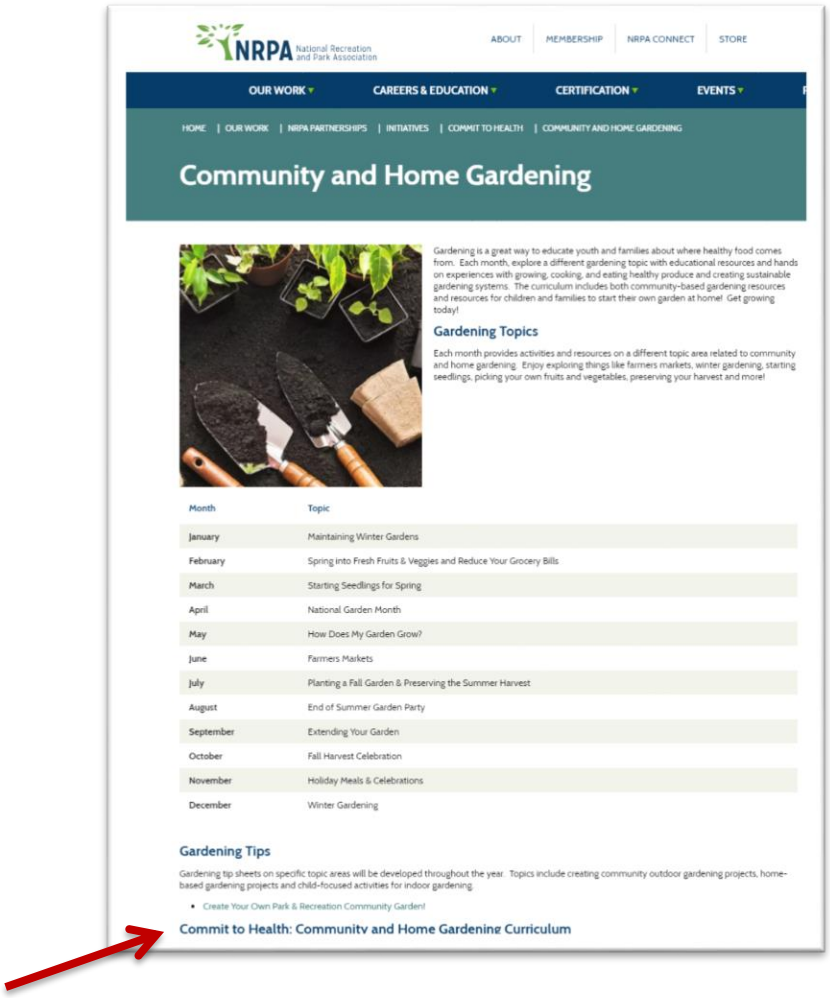


The Community and Home Gardening component of Commit to Health is in the same easy-to-use format as Foods of the Month. To get started, go to www.nrpa.org/CommitToHealth and click on the "Community and Home Gardening" button.

COMMUNITY AND HOME GARDENING

MONTHLY MATERIALS GUIDES

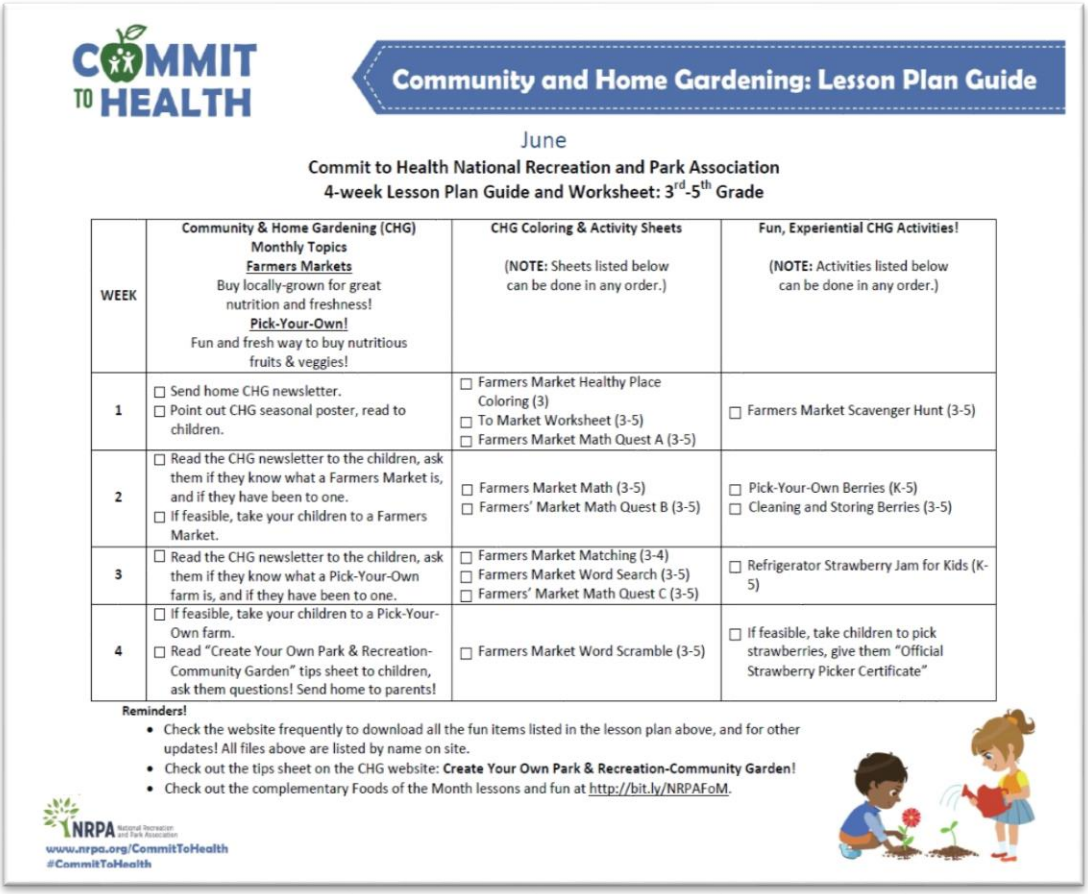
The image of the webpage below shows the CHG topics for each month. By clicking on the link at the bottom of that page, you will be able to access the materials for each month of the CHG curriculum (see red arrow). Like the FoM materials, note that some materials are for grades K-2 and some for grades 3-5, so make sure you use the ones that are appropriate for your children!



COMMUNITY AND HOME GARDENING

LESSON PLAN GUIDES

Each monthly lesson plan guide includes suggestions for things to do each week. The guide reminds you to send newsletters home, post your posters, and lists the activities and worksheets you can choose to do each week (the files describing each activity are found on the same monthly webpage by clicking the green hyperlinks under the section titles "Fun, Experiential Activities," "Coloring and Activity Pages," "Bimonthly Gardening Tips Sheets on Home Gardening," or "Bimonthly Gardening Tips Sheets on Community Gardening"). All are free and available to help children and adults learn about gardening, food preservation, where to find fresh-grown produce, and other important facts about whole foods! There are individual lesson plans (and activities) for kindergarten through 2nd grade and 3rd through 5th grade – make sure you download the correct lesson guide. The suggested activities can be done *in any order*, so feel free to do them during different weeks than indicated on the lesson guide.



COMMIT TO HEALTH

Community and Home Gardening: Lesson Plan Guide

June

Commit to Health National Recreation and Park Association
4-week Lesson Plan Guide and Worksheet: 3rd-5th Grade

WEEK	Community & Home Gardening (CHG) Monthly Topics **Farmers Markets** Buy locally-grown for great nutrition and freshness! **Pick-Your-Own!** Fun and fresh way to buy nutritious fruits & veggies!	CHG Coloring & Activity Sheets (**NOTE:** Sheets listed below can be done in any order.)	Fun, Experiential CHG Activities! (**NOTE:** Activities listed below can be done in any order.)
1	☐ Send home CHG newsletter. ☐ Point out CHG seasonal poster, read to children.	☐ Farmers Market Healthy Place Coloring (3) ☐ To Market Worksheet (3-5) ☐ Farmers Market Math Quest A (3-5)	☐ Farmers Market Scavenger Hunt (3-5)
2	☐ Read the CHG newsletter to the children, ask them if they know what a Farmers Market is, and if they have been to one. ☐ If feasible, take your children to a Farmers Market.	☐ Farmers Market Math (3-5) ☐ Farmers' Market Math Quest B (3-5)	☐ Pick-Your-Own Berries (K-5) ☐ Cleaning and Storing Berries (3-5)
3	☐ Read the CHG newsletter to the children, ask them if they know what a Pick-Your-Own farm is, and if they have been to one.	☐ Farmers Market Matching (3-4) ☐ Farmers Market Word Search (3-5) ☐ Farmers' Market Math Quest C (3-5)	☐ Refrigerator Strawberry Jam for Kids (K-5)
4	☐ If feasible, take your children to a Pick-Your-Own farm. ☐ Read "Create Your Own Park & Recreation-Community Garden" tips sheet to children, ask them questions! Send home to parents!	☐ Farmers Market Word Scramble (3-5)	☐ If feasible, take children to pick strawberries, give them "Official Strawberry Picker Certificate"

Reminders!

- Check the website frequently to download all the fun items listed in the lesson plan above, and for other updates! All files above are listed by name on site.
- Check out the tips sheet on the CHG website: **Create Your Own Park & Recreation-Community Garden!**
- Check out the complementary Foods of the Month lessons and fun at http://bit.ly/NRPAFoM.

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COMMUNITY AND HOME GARDENING

SEASONAL GARDENING POSTERS

Four seasonal posters will be available on the website very soon! Each has a specific focus aligned with the seasons, and seasonal opportunities, for gardening. The following topics will be shared on these posters:

- Launch your summer with edible gardening in your park/home!
- Harvest-time – what did your garden grow? Come see what we produced at our park & rec sites!
- Winter gardening? Of course, we do it! Come inside and see!
- Spring into fresh food – plant seedlings and salads now!

COMMUNITY AND HOME GARDENING

MONTHLY NEWSLETTERS

Print these newsletters each month to send home with your children. Before sending these home, read the newsletter with them (see the Lesson Plan Guide for discussion topics). After they have taken them home, ask if they shared them with their family, if they taught their family about gardening, how to preserve fresh vegetables/fruits, how to find local fresh vegetables/fruits, etc.

COMMIT TO HEALTH

Community and Home Gardening Newsletter

JUNE: Farmers' Markets & Pick Your Own

Have you heard of a **farmers' market?** Do you know what one is, have you seen one in your community? Many of us have not…Have you picked your own produce, maybe strawberries or peaches?…This month we are featuring facts about the local, nutritious, colorful, and fun to be had at **farmers' markets** and **pick-your-own** locations (page 2)!

A **farmers' market** is a place where foods are sold directly by farmers to customers. Food items are presented and sold in booths, tables or stands, and can be sold outdoors or indoors. **Farmers' markets** can be small, consisting of just a few stalls, or very large, covering many city blocks!

Farmers may sell fruits, vegetables, meats, and sometimes prepared foods (such as jellies, salsas, beverages, etc.). **Farmers' markets** are a bit different than regular grocery stores, which are generally housed in permanent structures, open year-round, and offer a variety of non-local produce (although more and more groceries are offering local produce!), packaged foods, and non-food products. **Farmers' markets** are found worldwide and wonderfully reflect local culture in food items for sale. See a short video about **farmers' markets** at: https://www.nutrition.gov/farmers-markets

Top 10 Reasons to Shop at Farmers' Markets!

1. Freshly picked, in season produce is at its peak in flavor and nutrition.
2. Support your local farmers and economy - you are helping new and smaller farmers be successful and saving farmland in your area.
3. Colorful fresh fruit and vegetables are full of powerful antioxidants and phytonutrients.
4. It's a great way for kids to be involved! Kids can help pick out something new to try, then help prepare a meal or snack using the *new* produce.
5. Supporting your local farmers market strengthens your community – oftentimes you run into friends and neighbors (or meet new ones!) while stocking up on local goods.
6. Protect the environment! Food in the U.S. travels an average of 1,500 miles to get to your plate. All this shipping uses large amounts of natural resources (especially fossil fuels), contributes to pollution, and creates trash with extra packaging.
7. Farmers often have recommendations for preparing their nutritious fresh foods! Ask them for tips on how to prepare the items and/or recipes!
8. You can try a new fruit or vegetable! Many farmers' markets offer lesser known fruits and vegetables that are grown locally – check them out!
9. SNAP and WIC benefits are accepted at some farmers' markets, check out where here (http://bit.ly/whereSNAP).
10. Farmers' markets are easy to find, check out this link: http://bit.ly/whereFarmers.

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June: Pick Your Own

Have you ever picked your own apples, strawberries, or pumpkins at a farm? Have you ever heard of such an activity that is known as "**Pick-Your-Own**"? Going to a **pick-your-own** farm lets you choose what you want to pick, and buy, connects you to farmers and your community, helps you learn about where your food comes from, and encourages a bit of physical activity since you have to walk around looking for your produce, and then bend and stretch to reach and pick it!

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS FUN ACTIVITY? CHECK OUT MORE FACTS BELOW ABOUT "PICK-YOUR-OWN"

What is a "pick-your-own?" A pick-your-own (PYO) operation is a farm where you, as the customer, pick, cut, or choose your own product out of the field. Yes, out in the field! The most common pick-your-own farms grow berries, tree fruits, pumpkins and Christmas trees, but other crops such as beans and flowers may also be offered through this fun way of selecting and purchasing farm products.

History of Pick-your-own (PYO)! PYO began almost 90 years ago in the United States! In the 1930s, prices for some fruit and vegetable crops hit low levels, so low that the prices for some crops failed to cover the cost of paying people to harvest the produce. So some farmers decided to allow customers to come to the fields to pick their own product for purchase, thus saving the labor costs. Also during this time, there was an increase in "rural recreation," as people drove to the countryside from the cities for leisure, which also increased the popularity of PYO.

Why should you try PYO, if available in your area (or during summer vacation if you visit an area that has PYO)? It is fun, first of all! Seeking out and picking your own food is fun, something new to try…and, you cannot get more fresh produce, and usually at a reduced price! Check out the link below to find PYO locations near you, and/or make a road trip to enjoy this way to buy nutritious foods!

Find PYO locations:
http://www.pickyourown.org/#states

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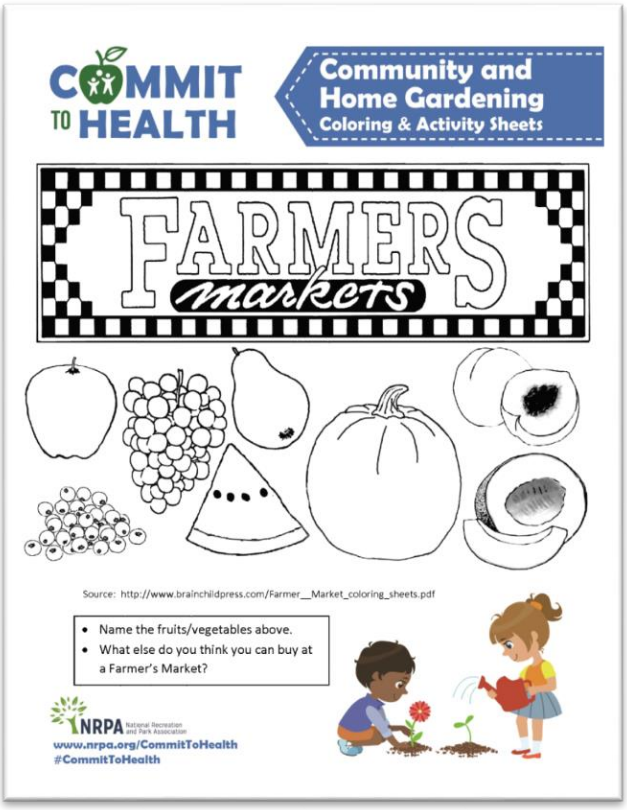
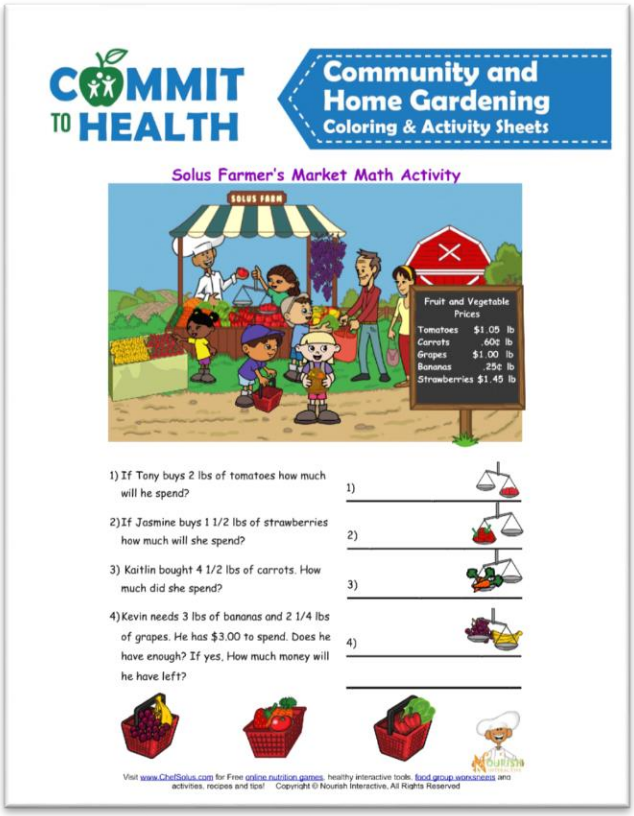
COMMUNITY AND HOME GARDENING

COLORING & ACTIVITY SHEETS

Each month there is a variety of coloring and activity worksheets, based on the monthly CHG calendar, to print and use with your children. Although recommended ages are in parenthesis (ex: K-2) after the name of each document, use them as you deem appropriate for the educational maturity of each child. You do not need to follow the suggested order for using the worksheets/implementing the activities. Use the ones you want, whenever it best fits into your weekly schedule! Many of these sheets are aligned with core academic subjects, so try to work these into regular academic tutoring time, for example. Try to do a couple each week.





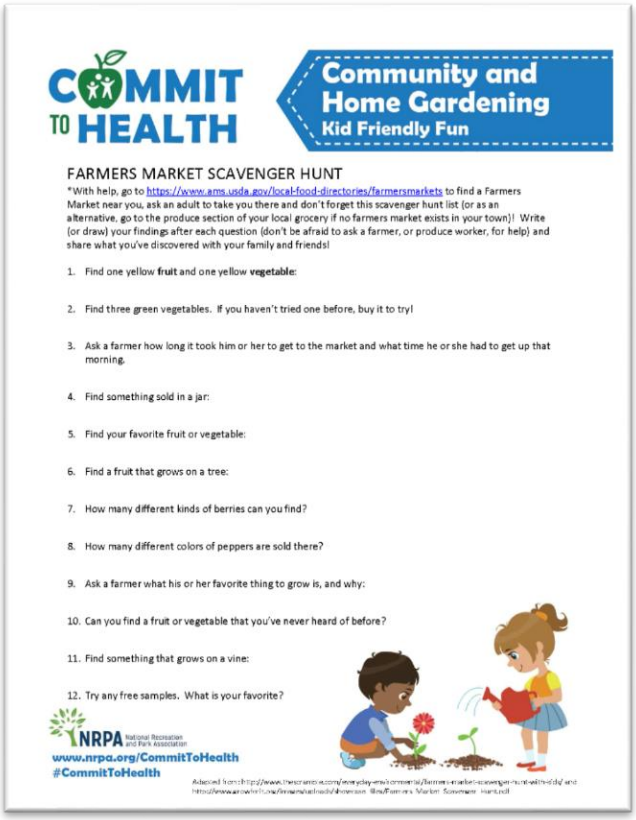
COMMUNITY AND HOME GARDENING

EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVITIES

*Growing * Starting Seeds * Fun at Farms & Farmers Markets * Using Produce *

* Art and Plants *

Experiential Activities are lots of fun, and can include arts, crafts, songs, stories, science, outdoor fun, and field trips!!! Review these in advance to ensure that you have the needed materials. Many of these, just like the Coloring and Activity sheets, address core academic subjects, so consider integrating the food-based, nutrition literacy activities into academic time as well!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Community and Home Gardening
Kid Friendly Fun

FARMERS MARKET SCAVENGER HUNT

*With help, go to https://www.ams.usda.gov/local-food-directories/farmersmarkets to find a Farmers Market near you, ask an adult to take you there and don't forget this scavenger hunt list (or as an alternative, go to the produce section of your local grocery if no farmers market exists in your town)! Write (or draw) your findings after each question (don't be afraid to ask a farmer, or produce worker, for help) and share what you've discovered with your family and friends!

1. Find one yellow **fruit** and one yellow **vegetable:**
2. Find three green vegetables. If you haven't tried one before, buy it to try!
3. Ask a farmer how long it took him or her to get to the market and what time he or she had to get up that morning.
4. Find something sold in a jar:
5. Find your favorite fruit or vegetable:
6. Find a fruit that grows on a tree:
7. How many different kinds of berries can you find?
8. How many different colors of peppers are sold there?
9. Ask a farmer what his or her favorite thing to grow is, and why:
10. Can you find a fruit or vegetable that you've never heard of before?
11. Find something that grows on a vine:
12. Try any free samples. What is your favorite?

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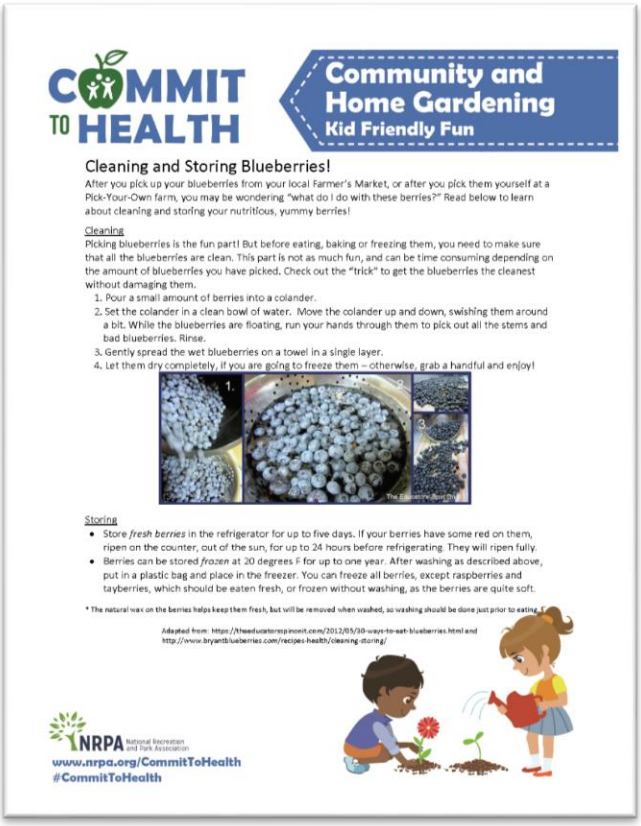
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Community and Home Gardening
Kid Friendly Fun

Cleaning and Storing Blueberries!

After you pick up your blueberries from your local Farmer's Market, or after you pick them yourself at a Pick-Your-Own farm, you may be wondering "what do I do with these berries?" Read below to learn about cleaning and storing your nutritious, yummy berries!

Cleaning

Picking blueberries is the fun part! But before eating, baking or freezing them, you need to make sure that all the blueberries are clean. This part is not as much fun, and can be time consuming depending on the amount of blueberries you have picked. Check out the "trick" to get the blueberries the cleanest without damaging them.

1. Pour a small amount of berries into a colander.
2. Set the colander in a clean bowl of water. Move the colander up and down, swishing them around a bit. While the blueberries are floating, run your hands through them to pick out all the stems and bad blueberries. Rinse.
3. Gently spread the wet blueberries on a towel in a single layer.
4. Let them dry completely, if you are going to freeze them – otherwise, grab a handful and enjoy!

Storing

- Store *fresh berries* in the refrigerator for up to five days. If your berries have some red on them, ripen on the counter, out of the sun, for up to 24 hours before refrigerating. They will ripen fully.
- Berries can be stored *frozen* at 20 degrees F for up to one year. After washing as described above, put in a plastic bag and place in the freezer. You can freeze all berries, except raspberries and tayberries, which should be eaten fresh, or frozen without washing, as the berries are quite soft.

* The natural wax on the berries helps keep them fresh, but will be removed when washed, so washing should be done just prior to eating.

Adapted from: https://theeducatorspinonit.com/2012/05/10-ways-to-eat-blueberries.html and http://www.bryantblueberries.com/recipes-health/cleaning-storing/

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COMMUNITY AND HOME GARDENING

GARDENING TIP SHEETS

Bi-Monthly tip sheets on gardening at home and gardening in your community

Every two months, tip sheets on gardening at home and gardening in your community will be available on the website. Print these and read them to the children, consider sending them home so parents/caregivers can learn about CHG, use some of the suggestions at your site to build, tend, and harvest gardens, teach food preservation, and do other fun CHG activities!

COMMIT TO HEALTH

Community and Home Gardening Tips

Create Your Own Park & Recreation-Community Garden!

While edible gardens produce lots of nutritious vegetables and fruits, they also serve as a gathering point that brings communities together and offers a place for kids and adults to experience hands-on lessons on the origins of food. An edible garden is a great way for everyone to de-stress, get in touch with nature, and practice healthy living. This sheet includes tips for creating your own park-community garden!

What form should our park's garden take?
An edible garden can be created ***in many forms***, based on the open space available at your location. Some parks have lots of green space, others have none. The only true limiting factor to take into consideration is to make sure that what you are planting in (ground, container) is nontoxic (so no tires or plastics that leach chemicals if in the sun, and you may want to do a soil test if planting in the ground):

- Planting in the ground, find a spot, till/turn over the dirt, mix in compost, and you are on your way!
- Planting in raised beds, those you make and/or kits you buy, are always a fun gardening method!
- Planting in containers of all sizes, on the ground or on walls, and mixing a variety of sizes and colors of containers makes a beautiful, artsy presentation, and is a great solution if you have only concrete space available! And, in winter, you can move some containers inside and continue the harvest!

In ground | Raised bed | Container garden | Wall container garden

What gardening activities can people of all ages do together? Everything, that is why gardening is so great!

- Designing the garden,
- Turning over/preparing the soil,
- Growing seedlings,
- Planting seeds and seedlings,
- Thinning (carrots for example!),
- Weeding,
- Harvesting,
- Composting,
- What else can you think of?!

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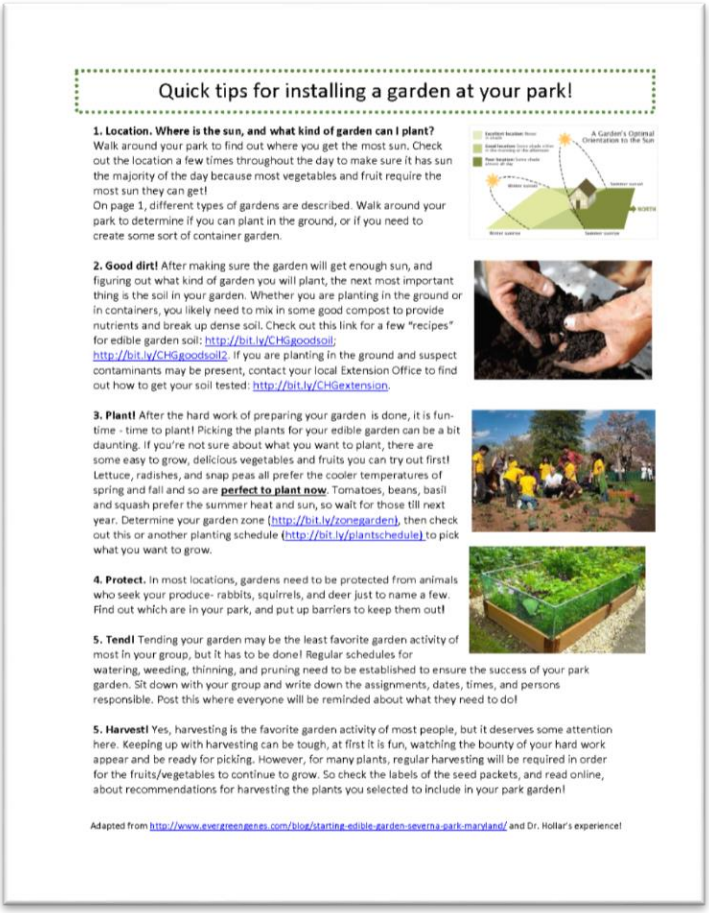

Quick tips for installing a garden at your park!

1. Location. Where is the sun, and what kind of garden can I plant? Walk around your park to find out where you get the most sun. Check out the location a few times throughout the day to make sure it has sun the majority of the day because most vegetables and fruit require the most sun they can get!
On page 1, different types of gardens are described. Walk around your park to determine if you can plant in the ground, or if you need to create some sort of container garden.

2. Good dirt! After making sure the garden will get enough sun, and figuring out what kind of garden you will plant, the next most important thing is the soil in your garden. Whether you are planting in the ground or in containers, you likely need to mix in some good compost to provide nutrients and break up dense soil. Check out this link for a few "recipes" for edible garden soil: http://bit.ly/CHGgoodsoil; http://bit.ly/CHGgoodsoil2. If you are planting in the ground and suspect contaminants may be present, contact your local Extension Office to find out how to get your soil tested: http://bit.ly/CHGextension.

3. Plant! After the hard work of preparing your garden is done, it is fun-time - time to plant! Picking the plants for your edible garden can be a bit daunting. If you're not sure about what you want to plant, there are some easy to grow, delicious vegetables and fruits you can try out first! Lettuce, radishes, and snap peas all prefer the cooler temperatures of spring and fall and so are **perfect to plant now**. Tomatoes, beans, basil and squash prefer the summer heat and sun, so wait for those till next year. Determine your garden zone (http://bit.ly/zonegarden), then check out this or another planting schedule (http://bit.ly/plantschedule) to pick what you want to grow.

4. Protect. In most locations, gardens need to be protected from animals who seek your produce- rabbits, squirrels, and deer just to name a few. Find out which are in your park, and put up barriers to keep them out!

5. Tend! Tending your garden may be the least favorite garden activity of most in your group, but it has to be done! Regular schedules for watering, weeding, thinning, and pruning need to be established to ensure the success of your park garden. Sit down with your group and write down the assignments, dates, times, and persons responsible. Post this where everyone will be reminded about what they need to do!

5. Harvest! Yes, harvesting is the favorite garden activity of most people, but it deserves some attention here. Keeping up with harvesting can be tough, at first it is fun, watching the bounty of your hard work appear and be ready for picking. However, for many plants, regular harvesting will be required in order for the fruits/vegetables to continue to grow. So check the labels of the seed packets, and read online, about recommendations for harvesting the plants you selected to include in your park garden!

Adapted from http://www.evergreengenes.com/blog/starting-edible-garden-severna-park-maryland/ and Dr. Hollar's experience!

STAFF ROLE-MODELING

Modeling good nutrition and healthy living!

Finally, we cannot express the importance of your role as healthy, active role models as you lead FoM and CHG activities!!! Please, think about your eating choices in front of the children in your programs, and, get up and move with them every day! Some suggestions for positive, healthy role modeling are:

- Eat and drink nutritious foods/beverages in front of children (avoid sodas, chips, junk food, etc.).
- Be active – when kids are moving, you should be moving!
- Encourage children to try new, unfamiliar foods.
- Be on time, eat well, be physically active, and give positive affirmations.

SHARE YOUR SUCCESSES

Utilize social media and other communications channels to document the impact you're making!

The work that you do matters. It's important to document and collect stories about your nutrition education programs to raise awareness of the impacts you are making on youth in your programs.

Please be sure to connect with NRPA on the following platforms, if you have not already. Please tag NRPA when you post about your grant. To tag on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram use the @ symbol and the "handle" or name. For example: @National Recreation and Park Association (Facebook), @NRPA_news (Twitter) and @nrpa (Instagram).

Facebook

Twitter

Instagram

YouTube

In your social posts, be sure to use the hashtag **#CommitToHealth** on Twitter and Instagram. Using hashtags amplifies our message and makes social conversations trackable.

Sample Posts for Twitter

- We decided to #CommitToHealth with @NRPA_news by providing healthier meals, more physical activity and nutrition education!
- Join us as we #CommitToHealth at [program name]! Healthy food, nutrition education and lots of physical activity! [include photo]
- Being part of @NRPA_News' #CommitToHealth initiative is all about instilling healthy habits and values in our children!

Sample Posts for Facebook

- We're ready to #CommitToHealth! This year children in [program name] will be eating healthier and getting active while learning about the importance of healthy choices!
- We're helping improve healthy eating and physical activity outcomes for 228,000 youth with Commit to Health and the @National Recreation and Park Association! Proud to be part of this initiative! Check out the video to learn more: http://ow.ly/1mAX309pjTM

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The National Recreation and Park Association and Healthy Networks Design and Research, Inc. (HNDR) collaborated on the development of these materials. We thank Ann Gottlieb, MS for her skillful contribution to compiling this guide, as well as the many recreation and park program leaders and supporters who provided fun, action-filled photos of their activities. If you have any questions about the evaluation results mentioned herein, please feel free to contact Dr. Danielle Hollar, HNDR President (DanielleHollar@gmail.com).

Special Thanks to

Walmart

National Recreation and Park Association

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) is the leading non-profit dedicated to improving the health and sustainability of communities for all people through parks, recreation and conservation. NRPA represents a vast membership network of 12,000 agencies, 105,000 parks and touches the lives of more than 200 million people in virtually every community. As the trusted leader for parks and recreation, NRPA is at the forefront of the movement to educate and empower professionals across the country to improve their community's access to healthy activities, food and education.

HEALTHY NETWORKS DESIGN & RESEARCH
A NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION

Healthy Networks Design and Research, Inc.

Healthy Networks Design & Research, Inc., is a nonprofit organization that assists organizations with health-related project development, curricula design, funding acquisition, implementation, evaluation, and research functions to improve the health of communities they serve. More information is available at www.HealthyNetworksDesignandResearch.org.

FOOTNOTES

1. Hollar D., Collum M., and May K. Commit to Health: A Nationwide Summer Camp Nutrition and Feeding Intervention Improves Nutrition Knowledge and Healthy Eating Behaviors of Children, Parents, and Staff. Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Food and Nutrition Conference & Expo. October 6, 2015, Nashville, TN.
2. Hollar D., Colman A., and May K. Commit to Health: Policies and Standards Targeting Increased Physical Activity During Out-of-School Times Produce Results. Active Living Research Annual Conference. February 26 - March 1, 2017, Clearwater Beach, Florida.
3. Hollar D. Recreational Programs Rev It Up. *Parks & Recreation*, 2016 (June).
4. Hollar D. Changing it Up for Better Health. *Parks & Recreation*, 2015 (June).