



Michigan State University - Extension

For Immediate Release

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Macomb County 4-H is Jumping into Food and Fitness

Having fun with the serious business of teaching kids about healthy food choices and being physically active is built into Jump Into Foods and Fitness (JIFF), a Michigan State University Extension research-based curriculum for adults and older teens to use with elementary aged youth. Fun nutrition, physical fitness and food safety learning activities are integrated into the program, which uses the My Activity Pyramid and the My Pyramid for Kids.

JIFF was designed with children's developmental characteristics in mind and can be easily adapted for younger and older youth. The program encourages win-win situations and keeps kids active most of the time. The earlier children begin to practice healthy lifestyle habits, the longer they are likely to practice them.

One doesn't need to be a nutrition or fitness expert to work with kids on JIFF! In fact, 28 Fitzgerald high school teens are instructing over 150 elementary students at a summer program held at Mound Park elementary in Warren. The 4-H Jump Into Food and Fitness is part of a Fitzgerald's Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Summer Youth Work Readiness program for high school students. During this program, "high school students develop team building, leadership and life skills that allow them to problem solve and overcome challenges," states Tammy Findlay, WIA Program Director. "Serving as teen mentors and tutors to the elementary school participants, builds confidence, engages youth in community service fostering emotional and social growth," said Kathy Jamieson, Macomb County 4-H Director.

This summer the 4-H JIFF program was also conducted at the Macomb County Juvenile Justice Center. 4-H Staff and volunteer adapted the curriculum for a high school girls unit where they made healthy snacks, learned about proper nutrition, portion sizes, new fitness activities and much more.

Both these programs were funded by a grant from Michigan State University Extension Children and Youth Institute.

"Having somewhat older peers mentor younger children is a very effective approach," said Macomb County Executive Mark Hackel. "And the best way to develop a healthy eating and fitness routine is when it's fun and exciting."

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