

Eat Well Initiative Brings “Fresh on the Go” to Service Food



“Fresh on the Go” highlights healthy options at Service Food.

Project Provides Valuable Resources for Local Establishments

Sometimes our busy lives can make it challenging to make healthy choices when it comes to eating. Fortunately, community partners in Fergus Falls are collaborating on an initiative to help make the healthy choice the easy choice. “Eat Well,” a project funded by a Centers for Disease Control Community Wellness Grant through PartnerSHIP 4 Health, is designed to increase the number of healthy choices available to area residents by offering locally-owned, non-chain restaurants with professional assistance tailored to their needs.

Dietitian Katrina Mouser describes the process of the Eat Well Initiative: “We’re looking for food service establishments to partner with us to increase the number of healthy menu options that they have. What we offer to them are dietitians and chefs to work alongside them to analyze their current menu and to look for either menu options that they currently have, or help them to modify what they have, or to develop new recipes.” This often involves some number crunching that establishments with limited resources don’t have the time to complete. What makes a healthy recipe? Eat Well encourages their partners to offer entrees that are controlled in calories, saturated fat, sodium and added sugars, and include at least one cup of fruit or veggies.

So far, Eat Well has partnered with Union Pizza, Higher Grounds, The Fabled Farmer, Lake Region Healthcare, NDSCS, Essentia Health Detroit Lakes, LB Homes, La Barista, Eventide, Mill Street, and most recently, Service Food of Fergus Falls. As the first grocery store partner, Service Food has been a great test case. As part of a new line of grab-and-go foods inspired by Eat Well called “Fresh on the Go,” Mouser helped them gather a variety of snacks, parfaits, deli salads, and green lettuce salads featuring homemade dressings. Kevin King, Store Manager at Service Food, was impressed by her ability to suggest simple modifications to existing recipes that made them healthier. “There’s lots of tricks she knew on how to keep everything down and keep it healthy that we weren’t necessarily aware of, and it really worked out well.”

Early Success Fuels Expansion Plans at Service Food

It’s especially important to focus on making convenient options healthy, since busy families don’t always have the time to cook from scratch. Service Food also plans to offer other items that don’t require any preparation, such as healthy grilling options for summer. Eat Well also helps partners with food displays and labeling, which has helped raise awareness of healthier options. King has been grateful for the assistance, and plans to continue slowly expanding the “Fresh on the Go” offering. Service Food had previously explored how they might provide healthier options, and the partnership with Eat Well came at just the right time. “It’s really going to be a good thing for us and for our community I think, and I’m really glad that they guided us down the right path. We were looking, we just didn’t know where we were going and they stepped in and really helped us head to the right direction,” said King.

The Eat Well initiative is a great example of how a small amount of outside assistance and resources can help food service establishments realize their goal of providing healthy, nourishing, and easily available food to the community.

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