

# Parental News

Stepping Into the Future

Vol. 12 No. 2, Winter 2010

## Practical Ideas for Children's Health and Nutrition



Supporting your family's health and nutrition is an every day activity. Where can you find help with information and resources on these issues? The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has made it easy for all of us to understand how we can make better food choices and the role exercise plays in our overall health. Their interactive Web site at [mypyramid.gov](http://mypyramid.gov) will give you the best and most current information on eating right, exercise, and having fun with health and nutrition! It is full of ideas for all ages and stages of development. You will be hooked on reading about how to be a healthy role model for your children or tips on how to help a picky eater. The amount of resources seems endless and it is available in English and Spanish. Let's look at just a few ideas from this site if you were looking for answers to the following questions:

- **How can I encourage more fruits and veggies?** Keep a bowl of fresh fruits on the counter. Refrigerate cut up fruits and vegetables in small bags for easy snacks on the run.

- **What amount of vegetables is needed daily?** The amount of vegetables children need to eat depends on their age, sex, and level of physical activity. In general, 2 to 3 year olds need 1 cup each day and 4 to 8 year olds need 1½ cups each day.
- **Where can I find out the calories for a food item?** Myfoodapedia on the [mypyramid.gov](http://mypyramid.gov) Web site provides quick access to food information such as food groups, calories, and comparisons of foods.
- **How can I introduce my child to a new food?** Offer only one new food at a time along with a food that you know your child likes. Offering too many new foods all at once could be overwhelming. It may take up to a dozen tries for a child to accept a new food.
- **How much physical activity do children need?** Children and teenagers should be physically active for at least 60 minutes every day, or most days.
- **Why is physical activity important?** It helps children stay healthy, they learn good habits early in life, and it gives them an outlet for their natural energy.
- **What can I do to increase my child's interest in exercise?** Set a good example and be active together as a family. For the next birthday or holiday, have a party that has a focus on physical activity such as a backyard Olympics, indoor relay races, or a bowling party.

You will have fun exploring all the resources and ideas on [mypyramid.gov](http://mypyramid.gov). Check it out today!

### Source:

U.S. Department of Agriculture, [mypyramid.gov](http://mypyramid.gov)

# A Message from the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services



Dear Parents,

As we start 2010, we are thankful for the opportunity to work with all of you. We all have new goals or New Year's resolutions that we work towards during the next few months and beyond. I want to encourage all of us to take time to think about and support the everyday actions and activities that encourage better health and nutrition for you and your family.

Being healthy is about making good choices about what we eat and also about being physically active each day. This edition of *Parental News* focuses on information and resources that we have available to support you as you help your children to be physically healthy and strong. Tips on cooking with children or indoor activities that keep us moving during these cold winter days will spring us into action with both feet.

We are also working hard at DFSS to implement some new initiatives that are featured in this newsletter. The *I Am Moving, I Am Learning* program is intended to help Head Start and Child Care sites reverse the trend of childhood obesity in young children. The *SPARK program—Sports, Play & Active Recreation for Kids!*—supports the DFSS school-age sites with ideas and training that can instill the love of lifelong movement in our youth. You can read more about both of these programs in this issue as well as other resources that support the well-being of families in economic transition, information on fighting the flu, and many more health related ideas.

Here's wishing that 2010 is a healthy and productive year!

Mary Ellen Caron, Ph.D.  
Commissioner



**UIC**

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## Putting SPARK into Action



SPARK—Sports, Play & Active Recreation for Kids!—is a physical activity program that has been developed for children in before and after school sites. Its goal is to actively engage youth, ages 5 to 14, in physical movement activities while encouraging lifelong wellness.

In October 2009, DFSS offered a training to school-age program staff on the *SPARK* program.

Many of the staff went back to their sites ready to implement the activities and ideas from the training. Here is what a few of the staff have to say about their success with SPARK:

“What I love about the SPARK Curriculum is that it puts a SMILE on the face of everyone involved. From staff to students to parents, laughs and giggles can be heard all around. One does not expect a high degree of focus on the social-emotional development of students in a P.E. curriculum, but with SPARK there is a strong understanding of the need for character development in our schools. They understand that physical education is important for children’s growth, but without an overall appreciation of each other’s wants and needs, we can not help our children to fully grow as individuals.”

—Randelle Villaber  
Lead School Age Worker  
Christopher House—Logan Square



“I came back from the training ready to put SPARK into our daily activities. At first the children were reluctant; they stood around on the side and didn’t get involved. After a few activities were presented such as basketball, stretching, and dance, everyone was active and participating. Now, they can’t wait to do the

SPARK activities. I can see that the children are building their physical skills with the actions, but they are also playing and working together more. They regularly switch partners during the games and the social dynamics are great.”

—Madeline Lee  
School-age Center Group Leader  
Chinese American Service League

“It was such a privilege and honor to attend the SPARK workshop. It was very beneficial and has enhanced our school-age program. I have implemented some of the activities with my group and they really are enjoying it. SPARK activities are educational and help to encourage social skills through the games, dances, and sports. I think it is a great program for any age and group size and it can be done inside or outside. Try it, you will like it too!”

—Sara Daniels  
After School Group Worker  
Catholic Charities—St. Joseph Child Care Center



# FOOD and FITNESS FUN



## Simple Yoga for You and Me

Many people do yoga to relax and build physical flexibility. Children love to move and stretch. Add imagination to movement and try out these animal poses with your children.

### Meowing Cat

1. Get on all fours.
2. Arch your back up like an angry cat.
3. Now add the cat sound. Meow like a cat.
4. Slowly let your back fall and then arch it back up again.

### Hissing Cobra

1. Lay down on your stomach.
2. Place your hands directly by your chest.
3. Push your upper body upward as far as you can.
4. Now add the cobra sound. Hiss like a snake
5. Drop your body down and then do the action again.

These activities are great for body awareness, self-control, flexibility, and coordination. Can you think of other animals that you can do? You can also read the children's story, *The Happiest Tree: A Yoga Story* by Uma Krishnaswame to spark more interest and imagination in yoga.

## YUMMY SNACKS

We all get hungry between regular meals. Make snacks count toward food group servings from the Food Pyramid which include grains, vegetables, fruits, milk, and meats and beans. Think about snacks as mini-meals and try a variety of different foods. Here are a few simple ideas for snacks that you can make together. You'll also be incorporating small motor activities with cutting and stirring, math through measuring, literacy by reading recipes, and science with changes in solid and liquid forms. Have fun!

**Pretzels with Cheese:** Put pretzels on a plate and add bite size pieces of cheese on top. Put in the microwave for 15 seconds or until the cheese slightly melts.

**Purple Cow:** Combine 1 cup frozen vanilla yogurt with 2 cups of grape juice into a blender. Blend and pour into cups.

**Banana Sticks:** Crush some corn flakes cereal and put it on a plate. Put yogurt on a separate plate. Cut the bananas into pieces and put one on a popsicle stick. Roll the banana in the yogurt then roll it in the cereal crumbs.

**Veggie Dip:** Cut celery, carrots, broccoli, or other vegetables into 2 inch sticks. Combine ½ cup of plain yogurt with 1 tablespoon of mayonnaise. Add your choice of spice such as curry, dill, or basil and 1 teaspoon of minced green onion. Mix and start to dip!

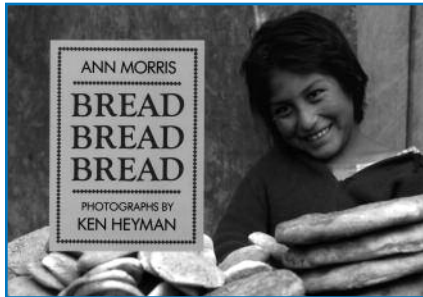
## Tips for Cooking with Children

Taking part in preparing and eating healthy foods is the best nutrition lesson children can get. Here is a list of the top ten tips for cooking with children!

1. Start with a simple snack recipe.
2. Read the recipe all the way through at least once.
3. Buy all the ingredients for the recipe.
4. Have everyone wash their hands before and after handling food.
5. Give a job or task to each child.
6. Plan the activity with safety in mind.
7. Have the written recipe out for you to read together.
8. Ask questions or comments that connect to the math and science you are doing.
9. Make clean-up part of the activity.
10. Have fun and enjoy the food!

# FOOD AND FITNESS FUN

## From the Book corner



### **Bread Bread Bread** by Ann Morris

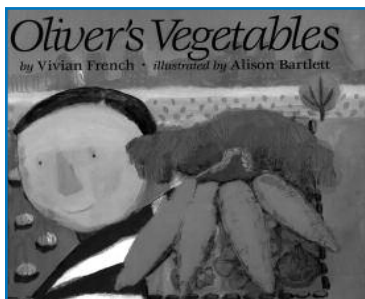
There are many kinds of bread – soft, round, flat, crunchy, bread with a hole, and more.

You'll enjoy looking at the rich photo illustrations in this book that celebrates the many different uses and kinds of bread throughout the world.



### **Do Donkeys Dance?** by Melanie Walsh

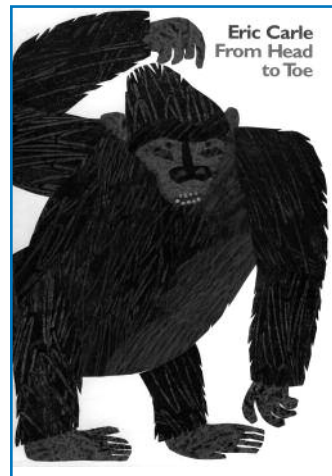
The author plays a question and answer game throughout the book about animal movements that will have children giggling and laughing. The simple yet imaginative story will have children wanting you to read it again and again.



### **Oliver's Vegetables** by Vivian French

Oliver is a boy who goes to visit his Grandpa. The best thing about Grandpa's house is the wonderful garden. Oliver and Grandpa explore the

garden together and Oliver soon learns that he likes to eat more than just french fries.



### **From Head to Toe** by Eric Carle

This book encourages the reader to exercise by following the movements of various animals such as "I am a crocodile and I wriggle my hips. Can you do it?" You'll love the colorful illustrations as you actively move your way through this book!

To find these, or other books on food and fitness fun, visit the Chicago Center for Early Education, call (312) 733-3134, or go to [www.uic.edu/educ/ccee](http://www.uic.edu/educ/ccee).

## Indoor Active Fun

Looking for an active game to play inside? All you will need is a sock rolled into itself, a piece of newspaper wadded up, or a bean bag. Use this object like you would a ball and play catch or toss it into bowls placed on the floor at various distances. You can juggle with two or more of

these objects or play the "Simon Says" game by having your child hold or balance the object with different parts of their body. Can you make a bowling game or play a hockey game with it? Be creative and think of other games that you can play together just for fun!

# New Resource for Families at Garfield Community Service Center

The Chicago Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) is committed to helping families in need access a wide range of resources. Many families come to one of the six Community Service Centers in the city for the “one-stop” concept of services from various city agencies. Clients can get help with resources such as shelter, food and clothing, domestic violence assistance, job training and placement, and prisoner re-entry. They can get information about rental, utility, and other financial assistance programs. The facilities also serve as Warming and Cooling Centers during periods of extreme weather.

DFSS and the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) Center for Literacy are leading an outreach with a new program being developed at the Garfield Community Service Center which is centrally located on the west side of Chicago at 10 South Kedzie. The program is called the **Family Support Center (FSC)**. FSC seeks to help families in transition that are using the Garfield Community Center location to access city services. Case managers at Garfield issue a pass to the FSC so parents and children who are waiting for their interview for services can be involved in meaningful activities. FSC has a home-like atmosphere in a safe environment with age-appropriate learning and play



materials for children of all ages and their parents. The center offers unique support during these sometimes stressful periods and the staff is full of bright smiles and concern for helping families.

If your family or another family you know needs to come for services at the Garfield Community Center, FSC is there in room 129 to share resources and offer support. For further information on this program, call Shilanda Hall at (312) 746-5642.

## I Am Moving, I Am Learning

*I Am Moving, I Am Learning* is a new program that emerged out of a collaboration between the Head Start Regional Office and West Virginia University. The simple message, “Be Choosy Be Healthy”, is the theme for the program that was developed to promote healthy nutrition and increase physical activity during daily routines for children ages 3 to 5. CHOOSY which stands for Choose Healthy Options Often and Start Young is a lovable, big green character that will help to promote healthy messages and behaviors with children.

DFSS is kicking off this new movement and nutrition program in the Head Start and Child Care sites by focusing on four specific goals:

1. Increase the amount of time spent in physical activity during daily routines to meet national guidelines of 30 to 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity each day.
2. Improve the planning of movement experiences facilitated by the teachers in programs.
3. Promote healthy nutrition choices daily.
4. Work to reverse the trend of childhood obesity.

Ask your child’s teacher about this exciting new program today and *Be Choosy Be Healthy!*

## Parents as Advocates

We can build awareness of health and well-being issues for our families through information from health care providers, books and pamphlets, and on the Internet. During this time of year, we are focusing more on the flu and how we can help fight the spread of this illness. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that pregnant women, everyone from 6 months through 24 years of age, and caregivers or those living with infants younger than 6 months be vaccinated against the H1N1 flu. Consult your health care professional today about the vaccinations your child may need for the flu.

It is also good to remember the basic symptoms of the flu. These include: fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy

nose, body aches, headache, chills, fatigue, and sometimes diarrhea and vomiting.

If your child does get sick, it is recommended that the child:

- stays home and away from other people as much as possible
- gets extra rest and drinks fluids to prevent dehydration
- returns to school only after the fever is gone for at least 24 hours without the use of medicine

Talk to your health care professional with any questions and concerns or if the symptoms get worse.

### Source:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: FLU.gov

## Book Review

Healthy eating starts at home and *The Healthy Start Kids' Cook Book* edited by Sandra K. Nissenberg can help you become more involved in the eating habits of your children. The book helps you understand the Food Pyramid, teaches how to read food labels, and describes how to keep track of calorie consumption. By introducing basic nutrition concepts and providing easy to use recipes, it also provides the reader with the tools to educate children on the importance of healthy eating. Fun and easy to read, this book will bring a smile to you and a full tummy for your children. You can check-out this book for loan at the Chicago Center for Early Education. For further information, call (312) 733-3134.

## New Booklet on Economic Resources for Families

The Chicago Department of Family and Support Services in partnership with the University of Illinois at Chicago Center for Literacy have partnered to develop a resource booklet that will serve as a tool for families during the current economic downturn. The booklet, *Chicago Families: Meeting the Challenges of Today's Economy*, is filled with helpful information and resources available to you throughout the City of Chicago. Copies of the booklet, available in English and Spanish, can be picked up at the Chicago Center for Early Education, 1900 W. Van Buren, Room 2611, Chicago, IL 60612.

... CATCH ... THROW ... BALANCE  
... DANCE ... TOSS ... KICK ...

**Bean Bags are great for all kinds of Physical Movement and Games!**

Bring this coupon to the Chicago Center for Early Education for a set of two bean bags.

Chicago Center for Early Education  
1900 West Van Buren, Room 2611  
Chicago, Illinois 60612  
(312) 733-3134

**Supplies are limited. One coupon per adult.**

## Resources, Education and Training for Parents

**FAST Learning Centers** offer family literacy programs and services, which include GED, English as a second language, computer literacy and family literacy programs for Head Start or Child Care parents.

### Family Start Learning Centers (FAST)

FAST at Garfield Human Services Center  
10 South Kedzie Avenue  
(312) 746-5416

FAST at King Human Services Center  
4314 South Cottage Grove Avenue  
(312) 747-2354

FAST ESL Central  
1640 West Roosevelt Road, Room 611  
(312) 996-9361

FAST ESL North  
1650 West Foster Avenue, Room 1652  
(773) 561-5667

FAST Family Literacy Outreach Office (FLO)  
1640 West Roosevelt Road, Room 619  
(312) 413-3252

### Project SOAR (Sharing Opportunities and Activities for Reading)

Supports the development of literacy among preschool children in Head Start programs, as well as supports employed parents and teens as they develop their own literacy, leadership, and employability skills.  
1640 West Roosevelt Road, Room 618  
(312) 413-2654

### AmeriCorps Programs

FAST is always interested in talking with parents who want to serve their communities while earning a living allowance and a \$4,725 education award. Call Ruby Camacho at (312) 355-4227

### Chicago Center for Early Education: resources for parents and professionals

provides resources and training materials based on current research and best practices to promote high-quality education of young children.  
1900 West Van Buren, Room 2611  
uic.edu/educ/ccee  
(312) 733-3134

### Finding Child Care

earlychildhoodchicago.org

### Action for Children

actforchildren.org  
(312) 823-1100

### Links:

Chicago Department of Family and Support Services  
cityofchicago.org/fss

U.S. Department of Agriculture  
mypyramid.gov

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
flu.gov

## Family Events in Chicago

### You! The Experience

Permanent Exhibit  
Museum of Science and Industry  
www.msichicago.org

### Pizza: Any Way You Slice It

Temporary Exhibit  
January 18–May 24  
Kohl Children's Museum, Glenview, IL  
www.kohlchildrensmuseum.org

### St. Patrick's Day Parade

March 13, Noon  
Columbus Drive and Balbo Drive

### Play For All

Events for Children and Families with Disabilities  
March 13, April 10, May 8, June 12  
9:00 a.m.  
Chicago Children's Museum  
at Navy Pier  
www.chicagochildrensmuseum.org

### Northwest Side Irish Parade

March 14, Noon  
6633 West Raven Street

### Easter Extravaganza in the Park

March 27, 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.  
At many local Chicago Park Districts  
www.chicagoparkdistrict.com

### Mayor Daley's Kids and Kites Festival

May 1, 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.  
Montrose Harbor in Lincoln Park

### 6th Annual Chicago Health and Fitness Expo

June 5–6  
Navy Pier

## Teens Needed for Summer Nutrition Work

Project SOAR (Sharing Opportunities and Activities for Reading) employs teens, ages 14–18, to work as Nutrition Aides in Summer Nutrition sites to assist with meal service and lead nutrition and fitness activities for children. Teens also attend weekly interactive trainings to help them improve their job skills and learn fun activities to do with children.

Summer Nutrition sites receive FREE help from Teen Nutrition Aides. Applications for Project SOAR 2010 Teen Summer Nutrition Aide Program will be available March 29, 2010. Teen applicants must have attended Head Start as a child or have a family member currently enrolled in Head Start. For more information on positions for teens

or to become a placement site contact Samuel Austin at (312) 413-7403 or Laura Knights at (312) 413-2654.

