



Healthy Living: A National 4-H Mission Mandate

"Health" became the fourth "H" in 1911 and ever since, 4-H members around the country have been "Pledging . . . their HEALTH to better living . . ." When 4-H started in the early 1900's, 4-H members improved crops through their project work which in turn improved their diets. Learning safe canning methods was also an important focus for 4-H in the early years. From the Healthiest 4-H Boy and Girl contests in the 1920's and 1930's to "Mulligan's Stew" in the 1970's, and now to the current Mission Mandate, the 4-H program has been dedicated to helping youth live healthier lives for over 100 years.

In New Jersey, the *Get Moving–Get Healthy with New Jersey 4-H* (GMGH) places a renewed emphasis on the fourth "H." Action kits, a display, and curriculum were developed to provide a fun, interactive way to learn healthy eating habits, portion sizes, the Food Pyramid, and simple exercises. The kits have the following activities - Exercise Challenge, Finding Your Pyramid, Healthy Plate, Measure Up, Portion Distortion, Read the Label, Serving Match, Think What You Drink, Food Group Shuffle, and What Counts. Each has a lesson plan and provides options for expanding the learning experience. GMGH kits are available for use at each of the county Rutgers Cooperative Extension offices.

Incorporate Healthy Living into Club Meetings

Besides the GMGH kits, Healthy Living can be incorporated into many of your club's activities. Here's how:

- Elect a Club Health Officer. The Health Officer can plan a 5 minute educational or recreational activity at each meeting.
- Use the following Healthy Living questions for roll call. What is . . .
 - A sport or fitness activity you enjoy?
 - A sport or fitness activity you'd like to try?
 - A food you eat only on special occasions?
 - A food you'd like to learn to make?
 - A green food?
 - A food that is a good source of Vitamin C.
 - The first food you prepared yourself?
 - A career related to food or fitness?
 - A food you'd like to taste this year?
 - The best cook or chef you know?



- Provide healthy refreshment options.
 - Water, milk, or juice instead of soda
 - Pretzels or popcorn instead of chips
 - Fresh fruit
 - Raw vegetables with dip made with yogurt or reduced fat sour cream
 - Cheese (preferably reduced fat) and crackers

Lead the Way to a Healthier Community

Youth can lead your community to adopt healthier lifestyles. Brainstorm ideas, and then keep track of the costs, participation, and results as you do your community service project. Share the results and action photos with your county 4-H office and the local media.

- *Donate fruit or veggie snacks to a preschool or child care center.* Better yet, deliver the snacks and do an activity with the children. Take them for a neighborhood nature or art walk, play games, or read a fun food book. When reviewing plans with the teacher/provider, ask about food allergies that any of the children might have.
- *Organize a workday.* Exercise while cleaning up a community site, such as a park, county fairgrounds, or local community center. Sweep, mop, pick up trash, cut weeds, wash windows, paint; whatever needs to be done. Provide bottled water or juice-based beverages for the crew.
- *Hold a dance marathon.* Donate the proceeds to a worthy cause. Serve healthy snacks.
- *Get growing.* Plant and care for a community garden or flower bed. Set up a care schedule that includes watering and weeding for the entire summer.
- *Assist with a community health day.* Check with local public health or hospital officials to find out if there is a health fair and when. Brainstorm ideas you might want to do or take your county's *Get Moving – Get Healthy* activity kit. (Contact your county Rutgers Cooperative Extension office to reserve the kit.)
- *Fight hunger.* Volunteer at a local pantry, homeless shelter, or meals on wheels site. Pack cold lunches, help in the serving line, or stock shelves when deliveries are made. Visit the managers to find out what food items are in short supply.
- *Give healthy treats.* Make and deliver fruit baskets to shut-ins, child care providers, new residents, or anyone else in your community. Create your own "holiday" instead of waiting for the traditional gift-giving days.
- *Promote healthy snacks.* Work to get healthy choices on the menu at concession stands. String cheese, 100% fruit juice, pretzels, oranges, apples, and baked potatoes might be big hits.

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References

Adapted in part from *Food and Fitness Craze!*, Iowa State University Extension, www.extension.iastate.edu/nutrition.

For more information on New Jersey 4-H, please visit www.nj4h.rutgers.edu.

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