

SHIP stories

Eating a balanced diet is one of the most important things we can do to maintain and improve our health. Encouraging fruits and vegetables in schools helps kids grow up strong and healthy, with good habits that last a lifetime.



Achieving nutritional strides at Martin County West Schools

In spring 2010, licensed school nurse Laura Kramer of Martin County West Schools applied for a Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP) grant to improve the nutritional value of foods offered at her schools.

Fast forward two years later and the nutritional strides that Martin County West Schools have made are momentous.

Among the highlights, Martin County West Schools successfully:

- Built two salad bars, completely stocked with fresh fruits and veggies
- Serve more fruits and veggies at school functions than ever before
- Serve healthier foods in the classroom. Prior to SHIP, only one in five food items were healthy. Now three in five food items offered are healthy

“It’s amazing. Students are learning about different types of fruits and veggies – foods that some students have never seen, tasted or tried before...” reported

Laura. “And from a teacher’s standpoint, they’re pleased that they can monitor snack breaks without fighting parents about the nutritious quality of the foods they’re giving their kids for snack time.”

Parents, teachers, principals and food service workers united forces to create policy changes in Martin County West Schools’ nutrition. At Martin County West High School, a group of students developed the Student Nutrition Group. The group actively promotes healthy eating as well as provides opportunities and access to healthy food options within their school. One of the group’s biggest successes was building salad bars at both Martin County West Elementary School and Martin County West High School. In addition to this, the high school began the first-ever school breakfast program. “We have seen a good response to the breakfast program,” commented Laura, “and now, since we’ve been approved for the second round of SHIP funding, we’re able to continue communicating with parents to increase awareness of these healthy changes.”

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The Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP) works to improve health through better nutrition, increased physical activity and decreased commercial tobacco use and exposure. Find out more at www.health.state.mn.us/ship