

Students learn about food culture, healthy eating through ActiveChefs

By Julie Slack
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Every session starts with "ewww" and ends with "yummy."

Not far from the norm when it comes to new foods and young children.

But according to Aman Jaspal, founding executive director of ActiveChefs, it's easy to teach children healthy eating habits simply by introducing new foods.

That's exactly what happened at J.M. Denyes Public School over the last four weeks. ActiveChefs, a non-profit organization that provides a once-a-week, one-hour, after-school program to students, just wrapped up its first session in Milton.

Some 25 students at the school learned all about the food cultures from Vietnam, India, Ireland and the Middle-East for St. Patrick's Day.

Last week, students slurped down green smoothies dubbed Leprechaun juice, made out of spinach, green grapes, kiwi, banana and pineapple juice.

And sure as Jaspal said, the expectant faces — turning their noses up at the sight of the thick green, lumpy drink — went from scowls

of disgust to surprised smiles, announcing happy taste buds.


Grade 5 student Brooklyn Chettle said the leprechaun juice "was kind of gross, but it tastes really good."

Other comments concluded the drink was sour, while some felt it was sweet. It was anyone's guess, but one thing was for sure: it was a healthy mix of fruits and vegetables.

Chettle added that her favourite dish was served during India's food presentation a few weeks ago. For the first time, she tried butter chicken sauce. Although it was served with bread at school, she said she told her mom about it and they had it at home with chicken.

Brooklyn said she also liked the Vietnamese spring rolls she tried.

ActiveChefs is dedicated to empowering children to make healthier lifestyle choices, Jaspal explained. The free and subsidized programs emphasize healthy eating, active living, multiculturalism and family engagement.

Children five to 12 years old learn skills and self-confidence so they can make healthier lifestyle choices. They learn about healthy eating, age-appropriate cooking skills, 



Students at J.M. Denyes School show their certificates last week after completing the ActiveChefs program, a not-for-profit initiative aimed at empowering children to make healthier lifestyle choices. The program — which has been brought to 5,000 students at over 60 schools — emphasized healthy eating, active living, multiculturalism and family engagement.

Eric Riehl / Canadian Champion (Follow on Twitter @halton_photog)

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Program made possible by Investment Fund of Halton Region

foods, physical activity, multicultural awareness and active living, Jaspal said.

Halton Region Community Investment Fund provided funding for the first-ever Milton program, she added, noting she hopes to introduce it to other schools in Milton given the high demand at J.M. Denyes — almost 85 students indicated an interest in participating at that school alone. Principal Dallas Laprade said ActiveChefs was welcomed with open arms by students and parents. She hopes the school can participate again so all interested students have a chance to take part in the program.

To learn more about the program go to www.activechefs.ca.

Julie Slack can be reached at jslack@miltoncanadianchampion.com or on Twitter @miltonmusing.

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SMOKING

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