

Cookbook Collaboration for Mobile Kitchen



Cortney Afton, registered dietitian and nutrition care coordinator for Kalamazoo Community Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (KCMHSAS), is certain that she's having a positive impact on the lives of her consumers. "Every day when I leave my job, I truly feel like I've helped someone," she said. "There are so many wonderful resources in Kalamazoo and this Mobile Kitchen initiative is one of them."

She's referring to a collaboration between KCMHSAS and Kalamazoo Valley Community College that resulted in the development of a cookbook that she considers "an incredible opportunity to educate consumers on the value of food as medicine."

The cookbook, funded by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, includes 26 recipes covering breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks and sweet treats. The cookbook also includes nutritional analysis for each recipe (by Darci Schimp, RDN), full color photos (by Anna Crahan), and equipment lists which complement Afton's sessions with KCMHSAS consumers. Chefs Matt Askelson, Cory Barrett and Stephanie Hughes, from Kalamazoo Valley's culinary arts program, contributed recipes which are SNAP eligible, average \$1.22 per serving and use ingredients available in every area neighborhood market.

Camille White, Kalamazoo Valley's community culinary and nutrition support specialist, noted that the recipes have wide appeal. "A lot of the recipes are for one or two servings which is nice since many consumers are living alone and they are reluctant to cook meals that will result in eating leftovers for days." White was also responsible for assembling the Mobile Kitchen unit for Afton to use when cooking in the field. This unit includes a variety of cooking equipment (induction burner, toaster, microwave, cutting boards, pots, pans, measuring cups, etc.), so the recipes can be demonstrated in any client setting.

Kalamazoo Valley's Community Culinary and Nutrition Program Coordinator, Lizzie Luchsinger, reiterated that "this important project provides the flexibility to meet consumers "where they are" and work towards our goal for improved health outcomes through increasing healthy, at-home cooking."

The three primary goals for the endeavor are:

- Improving health outcomes, quality and length of life for adults with serious mental illness (SMI)
- Promoting active participation from adults with SMI, their families, significant others and caretakers to engage in facilitating treatment compliance, realizing benefits from healthy food selection/preparation while incorporating the principle of "Food as Medicine" into the integrated plan of services
- Developing sustainable methods for providing cooking demonstrations and hands-on classes to educate participants about the impact of food on behavioral and physical health as well as teaching practical skills for making lifestyle changes.

Before introducing the recipes to her consumers, Afton and Kalamazoo Valley culinary instructor chef Cory Barrett prepared some of the meals in the culinary test kitchen. "These recipes are meant to be easy and fast," Barrett said. "The cookbook is great because it's simple. None of the cooking is really technical." Afton said she hopes her consumers will enjoy trying new dishes. "The involvement I've had with Kalamazoo Valley has been nothing short of magic. This collaboration has given me an invaluable gift that will help to build the knowledge and skills that my consumers and I work on together every day."

Recipes include breakfast sweet potatoes, breakfast burritos, tuna salad with garbanzo beans, sweet potato and sausage soup, zucchini burger and spiced walnuts. For a copy of the cookbook visit: https://www.kvcc.edu/communityculinary/KCMH_Cookbook_KT_Final_11-6_NoCrops-compressed.pdf.

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