

## THE INTRODUCTION

**Background Information on Earth Day** - Founded in 1970 as a day of education about environmental issues, Earth Day is now a global day of events focused on green awareness. It is the brainchild of the former U. S. Senator Gaylord Nelson (D-Wisc). Earth Day began as a “national teach-in on the environment” and was held on April 22, 1970. The first event drew 200 million people in over 140 nations who participated in events regarding healthy, sustainable environments.

Out of the movement grew The Earth Day Network that reaches over 22,000 organizations in 192 countries. The domestic program assists over 30,000 educators, coordinating thousands of community development and environmental protection activities throughout the year.

**Congressional Legislation for Public Protection** - There have been a number of significant laws passed that established standards for environmental concerns i.e., the: Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); Clean Air Act; Resource Conservation and Recovery Act; Toxic Substances Act; Endangered Species Act; Safe Drinking Water Act; Air Quality Act; and the Clean Water Act. There have been significant reductions in emissions by factories, vehicles and other sources from 1980 to 2013 of lead (99% reduction), sulfur dioxide (81%), carbon monoxide (67%), volatile organic compounds (53%), nitrogen oxide (52%) and direct particulate matter (50%). Source: *The Tennessean*, April 19, 2015, page 5B.

## Earth Day and Nutrition

Many of us do not think about how our eating habits affect the earth. We often place food choices ahead of the state of the environment and do not consider a lasting change toward sustainability that will benefit our bodies and the planet. In order to achieve a change, we should start by making simple adjustments and alterations that will lead to big, green results. The best diet for your body is the best for the environment.

Below you will find suggestions to make the adjustments and alterations. You are encouraged to start thinking about change now that will have a lasting affect on your health. Encourage your parents/guardians, other family members and friends to consider making adjustments and alterations to their daily diet. **Suggest:**

- 1) *Buying in Bulk* – This reduces the amount of processing and packaging that commonly accompanies convenience foods such as canned and boxed products that reduce landfill waste and potential energy used to recycle packaging.
- 2) *Purchasing Locally* – There are many opportunities to buy local foods and produce, such as those found at farmer markets. Buying locally increases the likelihood that the vegetables and fruits will be at the peak of freshness.
- 3) *Being Creative with Leftovers* – Much of our food gets trashed without being eaten. We should consider adding leftover grains or veggies to stews, soups and stir-fries. Roasting a whole chicken or turkey and storing the extras for use in salads, on sandwiches or in wraps saves on packaging, processing and energy.
- 4) *Eating Less Meat* – Eating an abundance of meat has been found to be linked to an increase risk of heart disease, cancer and obesity. The production and distribution of meat creates harmful sewage and greenhouse gases. The American Dietetic Association recommends that we aim to consume only six ounces of protein foods each day (the

approximate size of two decks of cards). Consider including more plant-based protein foods daily like beans, legumes, tofu, nuts, seeds and grains. These plant-based foods provide a healthy dose of fiber and plant chemicals that play a role in reducing cholesterol levels and improving heart health.

## THE PROGRAM

Working through Principal Ron Woodward and Teacher Dawn Thomas, the team researched healthy eating and recruited teachers who were willing to include nutrition as a part of their class’ lesson plan. In summary, the highlights of the classroom presentation are noted below. We should:

- Greatly reduce sugar and salt and be careful of products with hidden sugars, salt and fats;
- Eat mostly fresh vegetables and fruits;
- Practice portion control – do not eat until you are full;
- Be active – the body needs to move so walk, swim, or engage in activities that burn calories and give the body movement. Be physically active in your own way;
- Eat and drink as if the rest of your life depended on it...because it does.

Along with this bi-fold, you are being provided with valuable material from Metro Public Schools Office of School Nutrition. We urge you to read it and begin to incorporate the information into your daily diet. Healthy diets make for healthy bodies.



MyPlate illustrates the five food groups that are the building blocks for a healthy diet using the image of a place setting for a meal. Before you eat, think about what goes on your plate, in your cup or in your bowl. Serve one-half of your plate with fruits and vegetables and serve almost the other one-half with whole grains. Remember, vegetables, fruits, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, and lean protein foods contain the nutrients you need without too many calories.

## REFERENCES

1. Weight Control Information Network (The National Institute for Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney diseases). Visit [www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/health-topics/weight-control/take](http://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/health-topics/weight-control/take) charge-your-health.
2. Health.gov “Dietary Guideline 2015-2020”
3. MyPlate.gov
4. www.humana.gov

