

# Village Heights: Super Foods Program

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## Program background

### GROW Windham

GROW Windham was founded in 2010 to support the development of school and community gardens, promote healthy eating, and support for the Windham community. The programs have 3 initiatives: K-8 classroom and afterschool programming in all Windham Public Schools; a year round high school program, the Windham Youth CORE; and community food projects such as the Windham Community Food Network and support for the Willimantic Farmers' Market.. The staff consists of many directors, students, interns, and AmeriCorps service members. The overall goal of these programs is to support the development of healthy school environments and to assimilate the children of the Windham area with school gardens and healthy food based programs. GROW Windham works closely with the community to connect everyone to these different programs.

### Village Heights

Village Heights is a community of 142 townhouses and apartments located in Willimantic. The property consists of grassy lawns, a play area, a community room and resident computer learning center. Village Heights is part of the Caleb Group which is a nonprofit organization that was created in response to the lack of secure, affordable, well-managed housing in the rental market. The group also believes that those who are in need of affordable housing also need assistance to stabilize and advance. The Caleb Group has developed affordable housing in Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Connecticut. In addition, to providing assistance beyond housing, the Caleb Group has set up a community opportunity center and an onsite service coordinator (at Village Heights this is Nicole Ortiz). The center and service coordinator provide onsite support, educational and enrichment programs and networking for residents. One program offered is an afterschool program that meets 5 days a week from 3:00 to 5:00 in the center where the kids are able to work on their homework as well as participate in many fun activities. This program is run by Maria Gonzalez-Harris, with help from the youth.

## The Super Foods Program

The Super Foods program is an afterschool program for the kids living in the Village Heights community. The program is located in the community center and meets once a week from 4:00-5:00, during the regular after school program. The objective of the program is to teach the kids how to prepare healthy snacks and to expose them to new fruits and vegetables. The program is based off of a superpower theme in order for it to be fun and exciting for the kids. Each week a new recipe is introduced with an emphasis on one fruit or vegetable and its “super power.” The super powers are based off of the benefits that can be obtained from the vitamins and minerals found in the fruit or vegetable. The program is mainly run by the UConn Nutrition Club. Each week members of the club come in with ingredients to prepare the snack with the kids. They guide and help the kids through the process of preparing the snack that they all get to enjoy once they are done. About three students come to help each time. Each week the kids were given a copy of the recipe with a picture to color. The sheets were collected after each week and made into a cookbook at the end.

The program consists of about 12 elementary school students. The kids have a range of abilities, most being able to measure and handle a knife with guidance and a lot of supervision. The atmosphere is very laid-back and fun. The kids just went through a full day of school and don't want to be lectured or do worksheets, so fun is key. Splitting the kids up and giving each child a task as well as talking to the kids one-on-one worked best. Many of the kids are engaged in helping prepare the snacks and show interest in cooking.

## Supplies in the Village Heights kitchen

In the community center there is a small kitchen with a fridge, sink, oven, toaster oven, stove and microwave. Other supplies include:

- Baking sheets
- Casserole dish
- 2 small cutting boards
- Knives of varying sizes
- Can opener
- Spatula
- Tongs
- Ice cream scooper
- Bowls
- A few forks, knives and spoons
- Paper wear (paper towels, napkins, paper bowls)
- Plastic wear (forks, spoons, knives)

Supplies are subject to change with passing time.

As well as these supplies, Maria has available a blender, grater and many more common supplies that she is willing to bring with notice.

The kitchen also has a few ingredients stocked in the cabinets which are also subject to change. They include

- Pam
- Olive oil
- Canola oil
- Cinnamon
- Nutmeg
- Vanilla
- Salt
- Pepper
- Adobo
- Tahini

Average budget for each week's ingredients \$10, ranging from \$5 to \$18. Recipes should be cheap and simple for families to easily afford and make.

## Teaching strategies and best practices

After the first day it will be easy to tell which kids are most engaged. Continually make sure they are engaged while trying to encourage other students to participate as well. Mostly all the kids are happy to help. It was also found that talking to kids in small groups and one on one worked best. Go to each table and tell the kids what we will be cooking that day and what the benefits of the fruit or vegetable are. When actually preparing the recipe split it up into different parts. For example make a tomato team and a cucumber team when making a cucumber tomato salsa. This will make each kid feel as if they are more involved and also makes it easy to make sure each kid is participating. If it is a simple recipe the recipe can also be split in half. In the small groups give each student a job or ask for volunteers, for example ask who wants to measure out the oats. With things such as mixing, give every student a small turn. If pressed for time don't be afraid to step in and quickly chop the vegetables for example, as long as the student have had

the opportunity to do a little bit first. For knife skills, teach the kids how to properly hold a knife. You can hold the knife with them and it is also recommended that you hold the item being cut. If the student is holding the food item themselves while cutting have them hold it with a fist, with their knuckles holding the food down so their fingers aren't sticking out to be easily cut. Most important is to make it fun for the kids, rules and safety are important but don't bog them down with them.

## Example lesson outline

### Week 1

<b>Recipe title:</b> Strawberry smoothie
<b>Superpower (main theme):</b> Infectious smile (Vit C)
<b>Introduction to lesson (10 minutes) Superpowers!</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Introduce myself</li><li>• If you could have one super power what would it be?</li><li>• How do some of these super powers sound? Night vision, super brain, healing power, unbreakable bones, limitless energy</li><li>• Did you know that fruits and vegetables can give you these powers?!</li><li>• For the next 8 weeks we are going to cook some tasty snacks with some super foods that will help you develop some of these super powers!</li><li>• Our first super food is Strawberry!!</li><li>• Strawberries are an excellent source of vitamin C and give us the super power of an infectious smile.</li></ul>
<b>Cooking Activity (30 minutes-40minutes)</b>
<b>Materials:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Blender (brought by Maria)</li><li>• measuring cup</li></ul>
<b>Ingredients:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <math>\frac{3}{4}</math> cup ice cubes</li><li>• 1 cup fresh strawberries</li><li>• <math>\frac{1}{4}</math> cup unsweetened almond milk</li><li>• 1 banana</li><li>• Blend ice, then add strawberries and almond milk</li></ul>
<b>Closing (10 minutes)-</b> revisit main theme/ super power
<b>Comments/ reflection on lesson</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Learn the kids names!</li><li>• Hard to talk to the kids as a big group, better to talk in small groups or one on one</li><li>• Found it easier to split the kids into 3 groups and take each group into the kitchen to make their smoothies (I had 3 groups of 3 kids)</li><li>• To save time and for safety I found it easier to have the adult helpers cut the fruit and have the kids measure it out</li><li>• Finished with just enough time</li><li>• Positive response from kids. One boy said he is going to go home and teach his mom</li></ul>

## Week 2

<p><b>Recipe title:</b> Cucumber and tomato salsa</p>
<p><b>Superpower</b> (main theme): Cucumbers- hydrating Tomatoes, biotin- glowing skin</p>
<p><b>Introduction to lesson</b> (10 minutes) Ask kids if they remember what we talked about last week (Strawberry, Vitamin C, infectious smile) Talk about this week's super powers. Split up class, give each group a role for the salsa (will depend on how many kids there are)</p>
<p><b>Cooking Activity</b> (30 minutes-40minutes)</p>
<p>Materials: cutting board, knife, measuring cups and spoons, bowl, spoon, plates for serving, peeler (brought by Maria)</p>
<p>Ingredients:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2 cucumbers</li><li>• 1 tomatoes</li><li>• Garlic clove</li><li>• Lime juice</li><li>• 2tsp cilantro</li><li>• ½ tsp dill weed</li><li>• ¼ cup sour cream</li><li>• Whole wheat Chips</li></ul>
<p>Instructions: Combine cucumbers, tomatoes, garlic, lime juice, cilantro and dill weed. In another small bowl combine sour cream and lime juice</p>
<p><b>Closing</b> (10 minutes)- revisit main theme/ super power</p>
<p>Comments/ reflection on lesson</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Small groups worked better</li><li>• Kids were very engaged and wanted to help (especially with cutting the cucumber)</li><li>• Assigned jobs included seed scooper, cut cucumber in strips, dice cucumber, help measure and cut tomato and other seasonings/herbs. All jobs were split up evenly.</li><li>• Too much emphasis on eating chips and not the salsa- possible solution would be to scoop the salsa directly into the scoop chips and serve it to them that way.</li><li>• Mixed feedback with liking the recipe. I was able to encourage kids to at least try it</li></ul>

### Week 3

<b>Recipe title:</b> Apple Cinnamon Energy bites
<b>Superpower</b> (main theme): Apple- Vitamin C, power to heal
<b>Introduction to lesson</b> (10 minutes) “Quiz” kids about strawberry, cucumber and tomato Talk about this week’s super powers. Half the recipe and split up class into 2 groups. Give each kid a job
<b>Cooking Activity</b> (30 minutes-40minutes)
Materials: cutting board, knife, measuring cups and spoons, bowl, spoon, grater (brought by Maria), peeler (brought by Holly), napkins to serve on
Ingredients: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2 cups old-fashioned oats</li><li>• ¾ teaspoon cinnamon</li><li>• ½ cup almond butter (bought 2 packages instead of big jar)</li><li>• ¼ cup plus 1Tbsp honey</li><li>• 1tsp vanilla extract</li><li>• 1 cup grated apple (about 1 medium)</li></ul> Directions <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Combine oats and cinnamon.</li><li>• In another bowl combine almond butter and honey</li><li>• Pour honey mixture over oats</li><li>• Stir in apples</li><li>• Scoop mixture into size balls, shape with hands</li></ul>
<b>Closing</b> (10 minutes)- revisit main theme/ super power, clean up
Comments/ reflection on lesson <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This week went the best so far. The group was separated into two groups allowing each kid to be able to contribute to the preparation a lot.</li><li>• The kids enjoyed the taste of the end product too. I got a lot of confirmation that they would make it again at home.</li><li>• This recipe had a lot of measuring and not as much cutting which seemed to work better</li><li>• However, the kids like to cut (asked if they could cut the apple like last week) and enjoyed peeling and grating the apple</li><li>• The UConn nutrition club helpers were very engaged with the kids which also helped a lot.</li><li>• Make sure to reinforce the importance of the helper and kid relationships.</li></ul>



## Week 4

<u>Recipe title</u> : Carrot chips
<u>Superpower</u> (main theme): Night vision, Vitamin A
<b>Introduction to lesson</b> (10 minutes) “Quiz” kids about strawberry, cucumber, tomato, apple Talk about this week’s super powers. Give each kid a job
<b>Cooking Activity</b> (30 minutes-40minutes)
Materials: cutting board, peeler, baking sheet, bowl
Ingredients: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Carrots</li><li>• Olive oil</li><li>• Salt</li><li>• Pepper</li></ul> Directions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Preheat oven to 350°F</li><li>• Holding the stem end, shave the carrots lengthwise into thin strips using a peeler</li><li>• Place the strips into a bowl</li><li>• Add oil, salt and pepper to taste. Toss</li><li>• Place the strips in a single layer on a baking sheet</li><li>• Bake for 10 minutes or until the edges of the chips start to turn golden brown.</li><li>• Cool on the baking sheets until crisp, about 3 minutes.</li><li>• Serve with ranch dressing (if desired)</li></ul>
<b>Closing</b> (10 minutes)- revisit main theme/ super power, clean up
Comments/ reflection on lesson Hold carrot, have kid hold peeler and tell them to “push” as you move the carrot. Try not to rotate the carrot a lot to produce wider strips Cut time very close. Had to take carrots out of the oven a little early. Working efficiently and quickly can be improved The kids still liked them **Carrots are a favorite vegetable among a lot of the kids Started evaluations this week- seeing positive thoughts on the program from kids

## Week 5

<u>Recipe title:</u> Hummus
<u>Superpower</u> (main theme): Super energy, Vitamin B6
<b>Introduction to lesson</b> (10 minutes) “Quiz” kids about strawberry, cucumber, tomato, apple, carrot Talk about this week’s super powers. Give each kid a job- split recipe in half if needed
<b>Cooking Activity</b> (30 minutes-40minutes)
Materials: can opener (brought by Maria), measuring spoons, liquid measuring cup, blender (brought by Maria)
Ingredients: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1 can chickpeas, drained and rinsed</li><li>• 2 Tbsp olive oil</li><li>• 2 Tbsp tahini</li><li>• 4 Tbsp lemon juice</li><li>• 2 small garlic cloves</li><li>• ¼ cup water</li></ul> Directions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Measure out the ingredients</li><li>• Place ingredients into a blender, liquid first (not including the water) followed by dry ingredients. Add water as you process to create desired consistency</li><li>• Serve with carrots, pretzels, pita bread, cucumbers and more!</li><li>•</li></ul>
<b>Closing</b> (10 minutes)- revisit main theme/ super power, clean up
Comments/ reflection on lesson <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fast recipe but kids seemed to enjoy it</li><li>• Few kids but if there were more I would split the recipe in 2</li><li>• Used left over carrots from last week to serve hummus with</li></ul>

## Week 6

<b>Recipe title:</b> Banana peanut butter sandwich bites
<b>Superpower</b> (main theme): Run forever, Vitamin B6
<b>Introduction to lesson</b> (10 minutes) “Quiz” kids about strawberry, cucumber, tomato, apple, carrot, banana, chick peas Talk about this week’s super powers. Give each kid half a banana to work with
<b>Cooking Activity</b> (30 minutes-40minutes)
Materials: cutting board, knife, paper plates, plastic knives
Ingredients: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Banana</li><li>• Peanut butter</li></ul> Directions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cut banana into half inch thick slices</li><li>• Smear the banana with peanut butter, top with another banana piece</li><li>• Freeze for 2 hours if desired</li><li>• Enjoy!</li></ul>
<b>Closing</b> (10 minutes)- revisit main theme/ super power, clean up
Comments/ reflection on lesson <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Since it was near Halloween I modified the recipe and had the kids make ghosts (cut banana in half the long way, spread peanut butter, used chocolate chips for eyes and mouth)</li><li>• Good lesson. I think the kids enjoyed making the ghosts as well as creating their very own personalized snack. If this is done not using ghosts give each student half a banana and peanut butter to work with so they can all make their own sandwiches.</li><li>• Suggest using more recipes like this</li></ul>

## Week 7

<b>Recipe title:</b> pumpkin granola bars
<b>Superpower</b> (main theme): Fights sickness, Vitamin A
<b>Introduction to lesson</b> (10 minutes) “Quiz” kids about strawberry, cucumber, tomato, apple, carrot, banana, chick peas, banana Talk about this week’s super powers. Give each kid an ingredient to measure
<b>Cooking Activity</b> (30 minutes-40minutes)
Materials: 8x8 baking pan, measuring cups and spoons, 2 large bowls, spoon for mixing
Ingredients: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● 3 ½ old fashion oats</li><li>● ½ teaspoon cinnamon</li><li>● ¼ teaspoon nutmeg</li><li>● ¾ cup brown sugar</li><li>● ½ cup pumpkin puree</li><li>● ¼ cup apple sauce</li><li>● ¼ cup honey</li><li>● 1 tsp vanilla</li><li>● ¾ cup chocolate chips</li></ul>
Directions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Preheat oven to 350°F. spray 8x8 baking pan with cooking spray. Set aside</li><li>● In a large bowl whisk oats and spices</li><li>● In a medium bowl whisk brown sugar, pumpkin, honey and vanilla extract until smooth. Pour over oats and stir well, until all of the oats are moist. Stir in chocolate chips</li><li>● Evenly press oat mixture into prepared pan</li><li>● Bake for 30-35 minutes or until golden brown.</li><li>● Let cool then cut with a knife</li></ul>
<b>Closing</b> (10 minutes)- revisit main theme/ super power, clean up
Comments/ reflection on lesson <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● When measuring and mixing the pumpkin the kids were grossed out. Thought it smelt and looked gross. But in the end they loved them!</li><li>● Put them in the freezer once taken out of the oven, the help the cooling process</li><li>● A lot of down time, while they were cooking</li></ul>

## **Week 8**

<b>Recipe title:</b> Baked Parmesan Zucchini
<b>Superpower</b> (main theme): Super heart, folate
<b>Introduction to lesson</b> (10 minutes) “Quiz” kids about strawberry, cucumber, tomato, apple, carrot, banana, chick peas, banana, pumpkin, zucchini Talk about this week’s super powers.
<b>Cooking Activity</b> (30 minutes-40minutes)
Materials: cutting board, knife
Ingredients: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● 4 zucchini, quartered lengthwise</li><li>● ½ cup freshly grated parmesan</li><li>● ½ tsp dried thyme</li><li>● ½ tsp dried oregano</li><li>● ½ tsp basil</li><li>● 1/4tsp garlic powder</li><li>● 2 Tbsp. olive oil</li></ul> Directions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Preheat oven to 350. Coat a baking sheet with nonstick spray</li><li>● In a small bowl combine Parmesan, thyme, oregano, basil and garlic powder</li><li>● Place zucchini on a baking sheet. Drizzle with olive oil</li><li>● Place into oven and bake until tender, about 15 minutes</li><li>● Broil for 2-3 minutes until crisp and golden brown</li><li>● Serve</li></ul>
<b>Closing</b> (10 minutes)- revisit main theme/ super power, clean up <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Finish all reflections</li><li>● Hand out cookbooks</li><li>● Final wrap up</li></ul>
Comments/ reflection on lesson <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Mixed feedback on this recipe. Either strongly liked it or strongly disliked it.</li><li>● The youth helper cut the zucchini to expedite the process</li></ul>

The Cookbook (see attached)

### Final Reflection

Over all the program went well. The kids seemed to enjoy most of the recipes. They definitely liked the fruit based recipes better but vegetable exposure is still equally important. Recipes with a lot of measuring and less cutting seemed to also work best. I suggest doing more simple fast recipes and ones with not a lot of baking time. Going forward a formal final cook book might not be made at the end of the program but I do suggest at the very least giving the students copies of the recipes to take home. However, I do highly suggest making a final cookbook if someone is available to organize and keep track of each child's pages. The point of the program is to have the kids choose healthier recipes over processed junk foods for snack so they would need the recipes to do that. Another key suggestion is be prepared. Each week make sure you know that the cooking supplies you will need are available at village heights. The staff here are very helpful and easy to work with. I received a lot of positive feedback on the kids wanting to try the recipes at home so continuing this program is important. The main ideas such as why fruits and vegetables are beneficial and why they should be choosing healthy snack need to be constantly reiterated to have the most effect.