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Nutritionist: It's not just a job, it's a lifestyleBy [Diana Bean](#)
365YourLife

REBECCA TOWNS / 365
Molly Morgan is a registered dietitian and certified dietitian-nutritionist from Vestal. She helped Broome-Tioga BOCES schools put together a new tastier, healthier school lunch menu for this year.

If you have a child in Broome or Tioga schools, Molly Morgan will be making sure he eats a good lunch come September.

As part of a strategy to help children eat healthier and learn to make better food choices, kids in 15 Broome-Tioga BOCES school districts will be eating stir-fry, baked french fries and chicken nuggets with whole-grain breading when they return to school this year.

The program, which has been about a year and a half in the making, pools the buying power of the school districts by having each school follow the same menu. It's hoped there will be cost savings associated with the effort. But Morgan is looking further down the road at the potential to curb health-care costs associated with obesity and poor nutrition.

"My purpose is educating students to live healthier lives and introduce new menu items," says Morgan, a registered dietitian and certified

dietitian-nutritionist in Vestal who is a consultant on the school lunch project for Broome-Tioga BOCES.

As owner of Creative Nutrition Solutions, Morgan's job is to get the healthy eating/healthy living message out. It's a message we hear all the time; getting people to take action is the hard part.

The school lunch program is an example. It's a way to encourage kids to eat healthier without saying, "Eat more fruits and vegetables." Because we all know how well THAT works.

The idea is to keep things fun, to incorporate the good stuff into the daily menu and to make the food so good that kids will naturally want it. That's why there will still be tacos and burgers and fries on the menu; they'll just be healthier versions of favorite foods.

Even the name of the program matters. Using the words "nutrition" or "healthy" would be accurate, but stuffy. Instead, it's called Rock on Café.

So far, students have reacted positively. They've been asked what they'd like to eat and they've taste-tested the recipes.

The reaction of one fourth-grader in the Maine-Endwell School District told Morgan they were on the right track. His description of the chicken fajita salad: "This is the bomb!"

"What fourth-grader says that about a salad?" Morgan said.

LIVE BY EXAMPLE

When your career is nutrition, you have to get used to the fact that it's not just what you know, it's what you do that people notice.

"People will look in my grocery cart," Morgan said. And when she goes out to dinner with acquaintances, "people like me to order first," she laughed.

ABOUT MOLLY MORGAN

Age: 28

Lives in: Vestal

Business: Creative Nutrition Solutions. She started the business 2 1/2 years ago and has been a registered dietitian for seven years.

Why she chose her career: "A love for wanting to help people lead healthier lives."

Family: Husband, Bill, and infant son, Owen Christopher, born in June.

Sports: Both Molly and Bill enjoy downhill skiing, soccer and biking. Molly has hockey hopes for Owen.

Favorite junk food: Sweet potato chips

Favorite fruit: Mango

Favorite vegetable: Eggplant

Favorite meal: Stir-fry. She loves to try new recipes.

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For the record, she will eat a hot dog or chicken wings from time to time, she said. But always in moderation.

Her favorite meal happens to be stir-fry, which is something school kids will be eating this year. It wasn't originally on the menu, which was drawn up by Morgan and the schools' food service directors. But when the students were polled, they requested "Chinese food," and stir-fry was added.

That plays in nicely with the idea of "stealth" nutrition -- adding healthier ingredients to favorite foods. Stir-fry is a tasty way to cook vegetables. Another "stealth" idea: mixing highly processed white rice with healthier brown rice.

GETTING THE WORD OUT

Morgan has a lot of different ways to get her healthy eating message out. She can do it through a cooking demonstration, menu analysis or menu makeover. She can focus on how to motivate and communicate. Her clients include BAE Systems, Binghamton Senators, Crowley/HP Hood LLC and several high school athletic teams. She takes her message on the road, traveling between Philadelphia and Maine, and doing interviews for CNN, the Associated Press and other media.

The "eat healthy" message is at the core of every job, but keeping it fresh without being preachy is always a challenge.

In February, the Binghamton Senators were enlisted to help Broome-Tioga BOCES with its "Step It Up" campaign for kids. Each child received a wellness scorecard on which they kept track of physical activity, food consumption and screen time. The goal was to help increase awareness of the need to eat more fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy and whole grains. The Senators and their mascot appeared in a DVD that launched the program.

"It made it fun, and the kids got excited," Morgan said.

The work she's done on the school menus isn't over yet. When school starts, there will be a potential clientele of 17,000 students eating from the enhanced menu.

"The hard work is just beginning," she said.

Food service directors will have to keep re-evaluating dishes to find out what sells and what doesn't. The good part, she said, is that everyone has worked together on the project. "When was the last time you had to get 12 people to agree on something?"



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