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HealthyFam to teach people the value of eating right

By Ian Holroyd METROLAND WEST MEDIA GROUP

Julia Hanna has a vision.

In that vision, Canadian families are once again crowding around the dinner table, enjoying delicious, healthy food together while discussing the day's events.

The table, lovingly draped in a crisp cloth, is covered with steaming bowls of ravioli, green salads and baskets of fresh-baked bread just like nona used to make.

Family members scoop portions of food vigorously onto their plates as they talk to one another across the table. The conversation often gets heated but is always layered with love, understanding and respect.

Hanna believes somewhere in our society's evolution we lost our way when it comes to eating — and eating together. Quality food and time-honoured traditions were traded for convenience and timesaving measures.

Sharing a meal with family was replaced with grabbing a grease-stained bag of food on the run. The kitchen was abandoned and the family dialogue stopped.

There's a crisis in North America when it comes to our food, suggests Hanna, a 56-year-old chef and restaurateur.

"The problem is all the women left the kitchen but nobody went back in," she said with a smile, sitting in a booth at Julia, her restaurant in downtown Oakville. She also owns Ritorno, an Italian restaurant at Dundas Street and Trafalgar Road.

"Convenience foods and processed foods have become a staple in our diet," she said. "And of course now the harmful long-term effects of that have come into plain and clear view that nobody can dispute any longer."

In an effort to rediscover a healthy relation-



From left, Matthew, Julia, J.P. and Alex gather in the Hanna family kitchen to enjoy a peach crisp fresh out of the oven. Nikki Wesley / Metroland West Media Group (Follow on Twitter @halton photog)

ship with food and reverse the trends of eating for convenience sake, Hanna is introducing a new initiative, HealthyFam, scheduled to launch this September.

HealthyFam is actually the expansion of an earlier program she established called Kids Culinary Community (KCC), a free, three-session food-and-cooking education program designed for youths.

"It was simple logic. We thought let's go to the very beginning. Let's get children before they develop those habits. Let's give them at least the knowledge base to work with," said Hanna of the philosophy behind KCC.

Since it was founded in 2009, KCC has had more than 500 participants go through the program and graduate. Hanna said she noticed the adult mentors who accompanied





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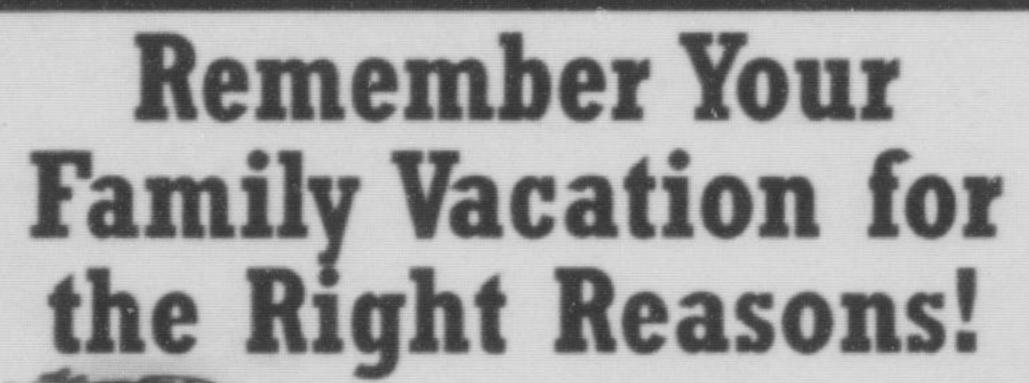
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