

LEEDS LANARK & DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT

**ENERGY**

Because of the need for improved nutrition and food habits for pre-schoolers, the Nutrition Department applied for and received a grant from Health & Welfare Canada under the Health Activities summer employment Programme for Students. The 11 week project was entitled "Energy" which translates into "Evaluation of Nutrition Needs, Education and Resources for Growing Youngsters". The objectives of the project which was designed for Pre-school Nutrition were: To determine major concerns of parents, preschool programme personnel & health workers in the area of Pre-school nutrition in Leeds, Grenville & Lanark Counties, to evaluate community programmes & services for preschoolers with respect to a nutrition component: resources, snack items, meals, learning experiences, etc.; to introduce a nutrition component where warranted, to develop resource material for parents, health workers, educators, and for preschoolers, to increase both knowledge in the area of preschool nutrition and awareness of its importance, to initiate a preschool nutrition programme which could be evaluated and revised in the months and years ahead. After 17 preschool programmes in the 3 counties were surveyed, here are the major findings.: The quality of the lunch and/or snack was generally good. There were 3 exceptions. This was due to either lack of interest and/or knowledge on the part of the parents, or ignorance of the fact that good food is not expensive. In the field of nutrition education of the children, a variety of approaches were used to educate the children. It must be noted

that the snack and/or lunch was seldom used as a means of nutrition education. Knowledge of the staff appeared adequate, but it was not utilized due to lack of time and resources. The parents are not sufficiently involved in the nutrition education programme at the various centres. The staff feel there is a need for nutrition education of the parents.

It was recommended that workshops could be arranged to educate both the staff and the children in the various centres, a workshop could be scheduled to present practical nutritional information to the parents, a Nutrition Kit was prepared which included nutrition resources and information for staff, children and parents. The Kit consisted of: booklets containing nutrition-related ideas for crafts, games, puppet shows and other activity, a cookbook with nutritious recipes young children can make, lists of books and resources, a series of newsletters for parents, ideas for Nutrition Week, basic nutrition and snack information, a cost comparison of nutritionally and dentally acceptable snacks, versus non-acceptable items, menu planning information. A list of reliable nutrition books for adults and children was also sent to all libraries and bookstores in the 3 counties. The Nutritionist will contact preschool programme leaders when they return in the fall to help them implement the Kit. As well, they will be encouraged to take advantage of the superb workshops presented by nutritionists with the Ontario Milk Marketing Board dealing with nutrition for preschoolers. Copies of the Kit, the full Survey and its Summary and Recommendations are available upon request.

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