

Community offers support for needy families to get their plates in shape

Written by Submitted
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March is National Nutrition Month. Each March, the annual campaign organized by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, formerly the American Dietetic Association, brings awareness to smart food choices and physical activity practices. This year, the theme is, "Get Your Plate in Shape." Getting your plate in shape is easy using MyPlate. MyPlate has replaced MyPyramid as a way to represent the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. It encourages consumers to fill one fourth of their plates with lean protein, one fourth with whole grains, and half with fruits and vegetables.

For some Watauga County residents, getting their plates in shape may be a costly endeavor. According to the Second Harvest Food Bank, there are 7,560 people in Watauga County who are food insecure, not always knowing where their next meal will come from. Unfortunately, healthy, local produce, costs more than unhealthy processed foods, and it is not always readily available at food banks or congregate meal sites.

This year High Country CSA, the Community Care Clinic, the Children's Council, and the Appalachian District Health Department are partnering to provide teen parents and uninsured community members with diet-related disease in Watauga County a weekly supply of healthy produce at a low cost. CSA stands for Community Supported Agriculture, and provides participants with a box of produce each week. A CSA share of locally grown produce for 20 weeks costs \$300. Through the new Cost-Share CSA program, participants will only be required to pay \$100 by using their EBT/SNAP (formerly food stamp) benefits, another \$100 of each share will be donated by the Children's Council and Appalachian District Health Department, and the last \$100 of the share will be raised through donations.

High Country CSA is hoping to reach 28 community members with this cost-share CSA. That means there is \$2,800 needed in donations in order to make fresh local food a reality for these individuals who would otherwise not have the means to receive it. In spirit of National Nutrition Month, please consider making a donation towards a CSA share for an individual in need. Your support helps to nurture a growing local food system in the High Country that improves the quality of life for farmers and consumers of all levels of income in our community.

If you'd like to make a donation, checks can be made out directly to High Country CSA, with cost-share CSA donation in the memo line and sent to High Country CSA, 410 Justus Road, Banner Elk, NC 28604.

The Cost Share CSA is being partially supported by the Take Step Two Initiative, a campaign funded by the Appalachian District Health Department's Communities Putting Prevention to Work grant. Take Step Two focuses on building communities where it is easy to make the healthy choice. For more information on Take Step Two visit: takesteptwo.com.

Another way to learn how to get your plate in shape is to check out your local WIC Office. Appalachian District Health Department supports nutrition for families is through the Women, Infant, and Children's (WIC) program. The Watauga WIC office provides healthy, nutritious foods along with healthy eating education and breastfeeding support for moms and their children who qualify. Contact the WIC office to learn more at (828) 264-6641. This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.