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### **Local Chefs Teach Healthy Cooking in the Community**

With the help of volunteer chefs and dietitians, the ACHIEVE New London County Coalition has launched the county's **first** culinary program for middle school students and human service providers. The Cooking Matters® program teaches participants how to get more food for their money and better nourishment from those foods. Cooking Matters is part of the national non-profit Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry campaign. Participants learn culinary skills from some of the top chefs in the area and how to integrate the 2010 USDA Dietary Guidelines into teachable lessons for thousands of county residents.

"We have convened over 40 community organizations during the past year to hear about the challenges they face in providing low-cost, healthy meals. We learned that many human service providers desperately need culinary skills and nutrition education, so they can support healthier food choices among the residents they serve," said Cindy Barry, coordinator of the ACHIEVE New London County Coalition.

The ACHIEVE Coalition recently hosted a Cooking Matters facilitator training for 33 local chefs and dietitians. ACHIEVE will offer the six-week Cooking Matters program for different populations and has begun to pilot several programs across the county in schools and community organizations. The program is currently being held at Cutler Middle School for students enrolled in the Student Wellness and Activity Team program. The program will eventually make its way to all New London County middle schools with school-based health centers.

A Cooking Matters Train-the-Trainer program for human service providers will begin Wednesdays, starting on October 23<sup>rd</sup> at the TVCCA Commissary. The program will feature guest volunteer chefs and dietitians who will lead hands-on preparation of full meals, using a combination of fresh produce and food pantry items.

"Our hope is that by providing this training to human service workers, they will teach what they have learned to the individuals and families that they serve," Barry said.

"I just find it so satisfying to share my passion for cooking with others. Facilitating the Cooking Matters program gives me the opportunity to teach others something that gives me joy and happiness – it keeps me going" said Tim Shelburn, chef at Flanders Fish Market in East Lyme. Shelburn is among seven guest chefs who will teach the program this fall: Ernie Koschmieder of Groton Public Schools, Tim Grills of TVCCA, Ben Guiney of the Mystic Boathouse, Heidi Buchholtz of Montville Public Schools, Kelly Walker of Big Belly Kelly BBQ, and Rachael Swanson of Waterford County School.

"Traditionally chefs and dietitians are coming from opposite directions regarding food. This program is unique in that dietitians and chefs are coming together for the good of the community," said Susan Beeman, R.D., of UConn Health Center and the Chair of ACHIEVE's Eat Healthy Workgroup. "Professional Dietitians are making a significant contribution by demonstrating that even on a budget, you *can* make great tasting meals using healthy foods."

The ACHIEVE New London County Coalition, an initiative of Ledge Light Health District, is working to prevent cardiovascular disease by making changes to the local food system, assisting organizations and worksites to improve policies that guide foods and beverage served at meetings and events, and promoting school gardens as a way to increase fruit and vegetable consumption and reducing childhood obesity.

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Promoting healthy communities

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