

# CIF FEATURE STORY: Chefs in Training



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## Feature Story: *Chefs in Training; CHEP Good Food Inc.*

Chefs in Training is an after school cooking program for youth to learn about nutrition and gain food skills in a safe, clean and fun environment. Over five weekly sessions, the program teaches 5-6 basic healthy meals that can be easily replicated at home. The meals are budgeted to be affordable and tasty, while promoting healthy eating. **“Students develop confidence in the kitchen and pride in being able to help out their families with meal preparation at home,”** shared Yvonne Hanson, Executive Director of CHEP. **“CHEP Good Food realizes that without adequate cooking skills and nutrition education, many youth become adults who lack the food skills and knowledge to choose and prepare a healthy diet. Chefs in Training equips youth with skills and confidence they carry forward for the rest of their lives.”**

Students who participate in Chefs in Training are between the ages of 10 to 15. Many live in lower income neighbourhoods, where it is not easy to access after school programs. **“Their families may struggle with food insecurity, due to limited access, affordability, or a lack of food skills. Children in this age group often help care for younger siblings, but have never had cooking lessons or direction about safe food handling,”** said Yvonne. Chefs in Training benefits the whole family as students bring home their skills in the kitchen to share with siblings, help out in preparing meals, and make healthy food choices.

For many of the students it is their first opportunity to try certain foods and have professional education in the kitchen. For students living in lower income neighbourhoods without grocery stores, sometimes referred to as “food deserts,” accessing adequate amounts of fresh fruit and vegetables can be a stretch. **“Students often comment on how it was their first time cooking a certain dish, or their first taste of a specific vegetable or fruit,”** shared Yvonne.

Every year a limited number of schools can participate in the program, despite its high demand. Often the children and youth picked to participate in the program have been identified by teachers as potentially coming from food insecure households and/or not having access to such programs. **“Many students comment on how they wish the program went all year, and how it has given them the opportunity to learn new cooking and kitchen skills. Learning these life skills as a youth, who can share their knowledge with siblings, family and peers, leads to greater health as an adult and a healthier community overall,”** Yvonne shared.

“We have been fortunate to have the program in previous years and would be thrilled to offer it to our students again.”

– Principal from partner school

