

BEE WELL

Thomas County Wellness Newsletter

August 2023

Vol. 40



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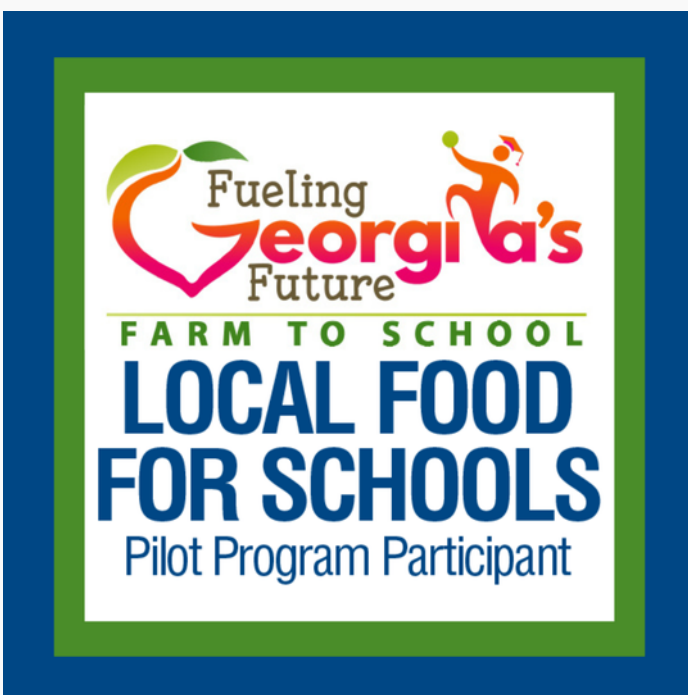
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"Breathe the sweetness that hovers in August."

— Denise Levertov



SCHOOL NUTRITION

Welcome Back!

We are so excited for the upcoming school year and have been working hard to get ready for you and your students! We have added new menu items at each of our schools and can't wait to see how they are received. In addition to Taco Tuesday at our elementary schools, we have also added "Ms. Char's 'Cutie Box' " and think this finger food option will be a hit with our younger students. At TCMS, we've added a Cuban Black Bean & Rice side that is sure to add a little extra flavor to your plate. At Bishop Hall, we were blown away by the response to our 2nd Chance Breakfast initiative last spring and will begin that program Day 1 this year with some great breakfast options! At TCCHS, we had such overwhelmingly positive feedback from our Taste of College Week that we have incorporated the Herb Roasted Red Potatoes, Cold Potato Salad, and Broccoli Salad to our menu. And at all of our schools, we've taken inspiration from some of our students' favorite fast food choices and have recreated our Chicken Finger Basket to include a tasty Texas Toast and the Chicken Sandwich will feature the waffle fries that our students love.

In terms of meal service and meal counts, breakfast will be served on the hallway at our elementary and middle schools and in the cafeteria at Bishop Hall and TCCHS, and our servers will use clickers and numerical charts to record meals served. At lunch, cashiers will be on hand as students will enter their lunch ID at the register. We had great success at our elementary schools last year using the homeroom option on our nutrition software to identify students in the lunch line and will use this feature again. Please be patient with us the first few weeks, though, as we get to know your classes!

Additionally, we would love to see your smiling face come through the line and promise that you will not find a better 'meal deal' in town! Adult meals are \$2.75 for breakfast and \$3.75 for lunch. To set up an online account in LINQ Connect (formerly TITAN family portal) for meal charges, please click [here](#).

All of these changes help us further our mission "to be a partner in the educational process by providing quality meals and nutrition education opportunities for students that promote healthy children, READY TO LEARN." We hope that these additions will help you too as you begin a new school year, and we look forward to serving you at your school.

Thank you for your continued support of School Nutrition!



Your favorite food is waiting for you!

From breakfast to lunch, our nutritious and healthy meals are offered at **NO COST** to your student.

With choices like pizza, PB&J combo plates, and preplated salads, we have something for every taste!

Check out your school's menu here -



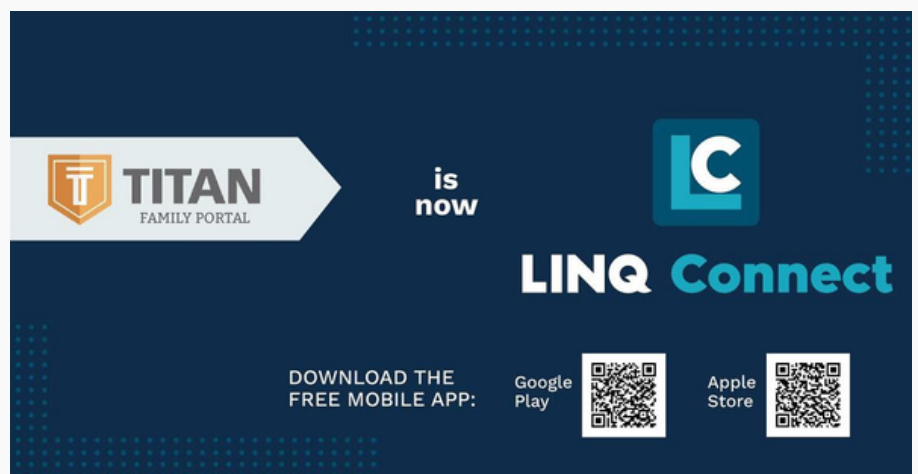
Yummy Breakfast



Healthy Salad



PIZZA!




TITAN
FAMILY PORTAL

is now


LINQ Connect

DOWNLOAD THE FREE MOBILE APP:

Google Play



Apple Store



HARVEST OF THE MONTH

The Harvest of the Month (HOTM) for August is Watermelon, with its red color coming from the lycopene found in them. Lycopene is a powerful antioxidant with many health benefits, including sun protection, improved heart health and a lower risk of certain types of cancer!

Watermelon contains a variety of nutrients, including potassium, magnesium, and vitamins A and C. It's also relatively low in calories due to its high water content which can help you stay hydrated during these hot, Georgia summers. And did you know, this delicious vine fruit is actually in the same family as squash, pumpkin, and cucumber. In season from June to August, Georgia is #2 nationally in watermelon production while Cordele, GA, is known as the Watermelon Capital of the world.

To learn more about watermelon, check out these [facts](#) and to preview class activities, click [here](#). And for some watermelon discussion prompts to use in class, click [here](#).

For an easy and healthy snack option using the HOTM, try this [Watermelon Salsa](#). And for a lighter summer dessert option, try this [Watermelon Pizza Recipe](#). In a recipe or on its own, this Harvest of the Month is always a good addition to any plate!



**If you were
a farmer,
what would
you want to
grow or
raise on
your farm?**

CAFETERIA CONVERSATIONS

As we start the new year, we are so excited to have been selected as a pilot participant for the GaDOE Local Foods for Schools program. This program is an initiative that will allow for the creation of model processes for seamless, sustainable integration of Georgia grown food in Georgia school meals. This collaborative effort between participating school nutrition departments and the Georgia Department of Education School Nutrition Division will offer financial assistance for local School Food Authorities (SFAs) for purchases of Georgia Grown food. This allows us to increase purchases of Georgia Grown foods and provide minimally processed Georgia Grown products in our schools.

Be on the lookout as we work within our community and beyond to source more local foods for our cafeterias and we encourage you to talk with your students about their food sources. As we continue our efforts, we will be sure to share more information about the farms, farmers, and products that we are adding!

MONTHLY OBSERVANCES

Children's Eye Health and Safety Month

Children's Eye Health and Safety Month is a national health observance that highlights the importance of protecting children's vision and eye health. This year's focus is nearsightedness as it has risen dramatically over the last 50 years. If nothing is done to help slow the increase, half the world's population may be nearsighted by the year 2050. That means much more than a lot of people in glasses. It means a lot of kids today are at risk of developing vision-threatening eye conditions tomorrow.

People who have myopia, also known as nearsightedness, can see close-up objects clearly, but objects farther away are blurry. Myopia that begins in early childhood often worsens as the child grows. If these changes are too extreme, it can be hard to correct the blurriness with glasses or contact lenses and the risk of potentially blinding eye conditions rises, including retinal detachment, glaucoma, early cataracts and myopic maculopathy, a leading cause of blindness world-wide.

Check out these resources, including a downloadable poster, infographics and videos, for more information about myopia and preventing its progression. For more information on eye health, visit www.eyesmart.org

The infographic on the left, titled "Kids and Screens: How much harm?", features a dark grey header. Below it, a teal background contains the text: "Eyestrain usually isn't serious and goes away once you rest your eyes or take steps to reduce discomfort." It shows two illustrations of a child at a desk. The first, marked with a red 'X', shows the child looking down at a laptop. The second, marked with a green checkmark, shows the child looking at a monitor with a distance of "18"-24"" indicated. A list of tips for parents includes: "Remind them to rest their eyes every 20 minutes", "Remind them to blink", "Reduce glare on the screen", and "Adjust brightness and contrast settings to their comfort level". The source "© 2020 American Academy of Ophthalmology" and "aao.org/eyesmart" are noted at the bottom.

The poster on the right shows a young boy in a red shirt standing in a room with colorful scribbles on the wall. The text on the poster reads: "Before they turn walls into masterpieces LET'S CATCH UP ON ROUTINE VACCINES". Logos for the National Immunization Awareness Month and the CDC are visible at the bottom.

National Immunization Awareness Month

August is National Immunization Awareness Month, making this a great time for all of us to catch up on our routine vaccines.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), thousands of American adults get sick each year from diseases that vaccines can prevent. For patients with asthma or COPD, vaccines are an important step in protecting their health from serious diseases like influenza and pneumonia.

Through National Immunization Awareness Month, the CDC is teaming with other agencies, such as the AARC, to help promote and educate patients on the importance of vaccinations. The CDC even prepared an online tool to help individuals know what vaccines they may need: The Adult Vaccine Quiz.

Due to the current political climate, some patients may be apprehensive to get vaccinated. The CDC provides a resource about why you should vaccinate. It is important for your patients to know the basic of vaccinations and for you to know the answers to common questions.

BE WELL - SHBP

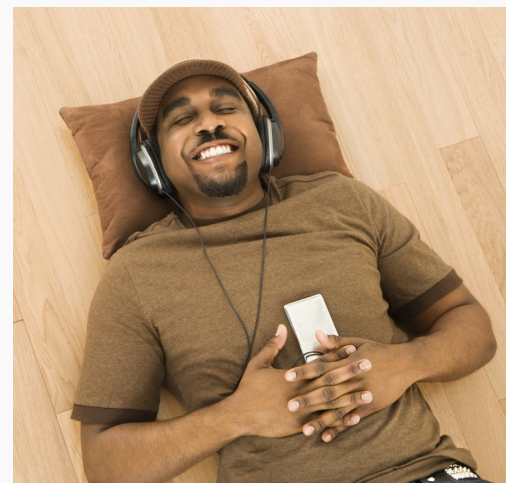
August Stress Less Challenge

Have a looming deadline or a stressful family dinner next week? Unfortunately, sometimes stress is unavoidable. When you have a stressful event approaching, anticipate your stress triggers and practice relaxation techniques by telling yourself positive, affirming messages before encountering stress. Keep your stress tracker in the green for at least 21 days this month by answering "never" or "sometimes" when asked how often you experience stress daily to earn 40 points.

Eligible Be Well SHBP members can enroll in the August "Stress Less Challenge" and track stress levels daily. Upon successful completion, you can earn 40 well-being incentive points (points can be redeemed for your choice of reward).

To join the August Stress Less Challenge, follow these steps:

- Log in to your [Be Well SHBP](#) account and make sure you have completed your RealAge® Test for 2023. (If you need to create an account, click [here](#)).
- Click on the "Achieve" navigational link and then proceed to the [Challenges](#) section. Switch to the "Available" view to see what is available to join.
- Register for the Stress Less Challenge. During the month of August, track at least 21 days of calm or productive stress levels to successfully complete the challenge.



WELLNESS CHALLENGE

Step it Up

For the fifth year in a row, our first wellness challenge will be to "Step It Up". This 6-week challenge allows you to compete as an individual and as a school team to rack up the most steps as we prepare for the annual 9-11 stair climb held here at the Jacket's Nest!

From August 1st through September 11th, see how many steps you can take each day and start the new school year with your health as a priority! For more information, click [here](#).

This is always a fun competition, so make sure you and all of your hallway friends join in the action!

** Google Sheet to log steps will be sent out Tuesday!

A graphic for the "Step It Up Challenge". At the top left, it says "SIX WEEKS" in large, bold, blue letters. To the right of this text are three blue arrows pointing to the right. Below this, there is a photograph of a man and a woman running up a set of stairs. To the right of the photo, the words "STEP IT UP" are written vertically in large, bold, blue letters, and "CHALLENGE" is written vertically below it. At the bottom left, it says "Individual and Team Winners" in small text. At the bottom right, there is a logo for "THOMAS COUNTY SCHOOL NUTRITION" with the tagline "Feeding Bodies, Fueling Minds" and an apple icon.