



CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

Road Map To Health

THE OFFICIAL QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR THE
CENTER OF EXCELLENCE FOR NUTRITION, HEALTH,
WELLNESS AND QUALITY OF LIFE
WWW.SUAGCENTER.COM

Center of Excellence Symposium



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Instagram



SUCENTEROFEXCELLENCE

New Orleans, LA - On March 31st, the Center of Excellence hosted its second COE Symposium titled Connecting Cultural Practices and Modern Research for Improved Nutritional Health and Wellness. The event welcomed students, faculty, staff, and administrators from 1890 land-grant institutions. Participants attended a keynote presentation by Dion Dawson, founder of Dion's Chicago Dream, and four RFA funded pilot projects shared updates on their progress and impact. Each attendee also received seasonings curated by Chef Celeste Gill, and cookbooks authored by Chef Celeste were raffled during the event.

The funding for "COE for Nutrition, Health, Wellness and Quality of Life" has been provided by USDA/NIFA #1026396

Center of Excellence Symposium



New Orleans, LA - The COE sponsored a line dancing wellness moment during the ARD Student Workshop, facilitated by COE Scholars and Southern University College of Agriculture Ambassadors. Attendees also participated in chair yoga led by Mrs. Nicole Nikky Scott. COE Student Scholars Elisheba Clay and Destinae Davis presented their research at the ARD Symposium. Executive Director Kiyana Kelly also had the opportunity to highlight COE initiatives and share how current efforts align with the Make America Healthy initiatives during the plenary session.

Agenda Booklet:



Investing in Sustainable Partnerships: Strengthening Our Community



Mr. Bryant Thrasher, MS, RDN, LDN planting dill and tomato plants at the Seeds to Success: School Gardening for Sustainability training



Day 1 of the growing process on Thursday, February 26th



Baton Rouge, LA - The Center of Excellence continues its investment in community partnerships by supporting the East Baton Rouge Parish School System Child Nutrition Program, by sending Mr. Bryant Thrasher, a Registered Dietitian, to the Seeds to Success School Gardening for Sustainability training on Wednesday, February 25. Mr. Thrasher serves as one of our garden leads, overseeing six hydroponic towers across the district.

During the one day training, participants attended lectures and engaged in hands on learning, including educational lessons and activities designed for student instruction. Mr. Thrasher successfully started dill and tomato plants from seeds and is applying these skills directly to support school gardens throughout the district.

Mr. Thrasher shared, "It was truly an educational day attending the Louisiana State University AgCenter Seeds to Success School Gardening for Sustainability training. The goal is bigger than just farm to cafeteria meals. It is about empowering students to be part of the entire journey, from planting the seeds to preparing healthy, delicious meals."

Reaping the Harvest

Baton Rouge, LA - Our community partners have planted the seeds and are beginning to reap the benefits of their harvest. See how our community partners are greaouxing.

Southern University Child Development Laboratory



On February 27th, the Southern University Child Development Laboratory proudly harvested 1 pound 9 ounces of Great Lakes head lettuce. Planted in the Tower Garden on February 3rd, the lettuce matured into a healthy and vibrant crop in just over three weeks. The fresh harvest was used to prepare wraps, which the students enjoyed for lunch.

On March 11, Chef Tate also harvested 1.12 pounds of dinosaur kale and prepared a kale dip for the Baby Jags to sample.

East Baton Rouge Parish School System Child Nutrition Program



The East Baton Rouge Parish Child Nutrition Program harvested five pounds of Florida broadleaf mustard. These mustard greens were planted on January 22nd and harvested on February 9th.

GMAREC Hydroponic Highlights

THE NEWS

We're excited to share that The Advocate recently interviewed Mr. Cornelius Jackson about the incredible hydroponic gardening efforts happening in our early childhood centers!

This initiative is giving our youngest learners hands-on experiences with growing food, exploring science, and building healthy habits from the start.

Check out the full article to learn more about how we're cultivating curiosity and sustainability in our classrooms!

Link: <https://bit.ly/4dqABM1>

La Capitale Chapter of The Links, Inc. Black Family Wellness Expo



Baton Rouge, La.—The COE Nutrition Guru, Ms. Evan Egana, and student scholars facilitated a food demonstration featuring strawberry quinoa salad at the Black Family Wellness Expo hosted by The Links, Inc. La Capitale Chapter. Attendees sampled the strawberry quinoa salad.

Seaux and Sew



Baton Rouge, La.—Seaux and Sew has continued to thrive for two consecutive years. This semester, participants created a Valentine-inspired crocheted coaster and a mini Easter basket while learning crochet techniques and exploring the looming method. Seaux and Sew is a collaboration with the Southern University Fab Lab and is facilitated by Dr. Samii Benson and the Fab Lab Fellows. We invite you to join us this fall - sew with us!





Mediterranean vs. Southern Diet: Farmacist Scholars Dig into the Science



Kannapolis, North Carolina - The Spring 2026 Farmacist Scholars cohort has been studying the differences between the Southern diet, the Mediterranean diet, and the modified Mediterranean diet, as well as their respective impacts on health. Using this knowledge, they are developing strategies to effectively communicate the health benefits of the Mediterranean diet. As part of this effort, they are designing informational flyers to share with study participants. In addition, the scholars have been evaluating different food diary software platforms to determine which options may be most convenient for participants while also providing reliable monitoring and guidance for researchers. Finally, they have been conducting a literature review on food biomarkers associated with staple foods commonly consumed in the United States.

<https://www.suagcenter.com/center-of-excellence/coe-factsheets>



TUSKEGEE UNIVERSITY



Wallace Community College Wellness Session



Dothan, AL - Tuskegee University conducted a one-day nutrition and wellness education session for healthcare students at Wallace Community College. The session focused on promoting practical strategies to support both personal health and future patient care.

Key topics included:

- **Gardening and food access:** Students were introduced to simple ways to grow fresh produce and incorporate more fruits and vegetables into their diets.
- **Stress management:** Discussion centered on recognizing stress and implementing realistic coping strategies to support overall well-being.
- **Balanced meals:** Guidance was provided on building balanced plates to support energy, focus, and long-term health.

This event aimed to equip future healthcare professionals with foundational knowledge and tools they can apply in their own lives and when educating patients and communities.

UPCOMING EVENTS

**SU TOGETHER:
MOVE MORE, EAT BETTER**

COME COOK AND EXERCISE WITH US THIS SPRING
ON THURSDAYS AS WE EXPLORE FOOD AS MEDICINE!
Vegan Options Provided For All Classes!

<p>FEB. 5TH</p>  <p>FOOD: HEALTHY YAKAMEIN</p>	<p>FEB. 19TH</p>  <p>FOOD: SPAGHETTI SQUASH BOWLS</p>	<p>MAR. 5TH</p>  <p>FOOD: KUNG PAO CHICKEN WITH BROWN RICE</p>
<p>MAR. 19TH</p>  <p>FOOD: OVEN BAKED CHICKEN TENDERS WITH COLESLAW</p>	<p>APR. 2ND</p>  <p>FOOD: CHICKEN SHAWARMA WRAPS WITH HOMEMADE TZATZIKI SAUCE</p>	<p>APR. 16TH</p>  <p>FOOD: BURGER SLIDERS</p> <p>SOUTHERN ROOTS: HERB POT WORKSHOP</p>

4:15 PM - 5:30 PM | Pinkie Thrift's Teaching Lab - Room 157
If you would like to participate in these classes, please RSVP using the QR code or register at <https://forms.office.com/r/58qrsY1xfw>
For any additional questions email: brittany_howard@suagcenter.com or evan_ejans@suagcenter.com



SU **SU** LINKING CITIZENS... OPPORTUNITIES... SUCCESS!

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THE CENTER OF EXCELLENCE AND THE JAGFRESH FARMERS MARKET PRESENTS



SOUL 2 SOIL

THURSDAY, APRIL 30
10:00 AM - 1:00 PM

JAGFRESH FARMERS MARKET
Smith-Brown Memorial Union
300 Jesse K. Stone Ave.
Baton Rouge, LA 70813

JOIN US FOR A MINI GARDEN WORKSHOP at the JAGfresh Farmers Market! The first 100 participants will make their own FREE DIY Zen garden — plus, enjoy free tea samples while you're there!

FOR MORE INFO, CONTACT:
Kiyona Kelly kiyona_kelly@suagcenter.com
Brittany Howard brittany_howard@suagcenter.com

SU **SU** **JAGfresh**

**PHYTOFOCUS:
A Look Into the Science in Our Food**
Virtual Webinar



WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10 | 11 AM - 12 PM (CST)

GUEST SPEAKER:
Cheri Granillo, DNP, FNP-BC
Nurse Practitioner

Dr. Cheri Granillo got her Masters of Nursing degree at Johns Hopkins University and became a Nurse Practitioner for 20 years. She recently received her Doctor of Nursing Practice degree in 2023 from UNCC and is passionate about the power of prevention in healthcare. With a background in primary care and a certification in Therapeutic Horticulture, she integrates science, nutrition, and nature-based interventions to promote wellness. She has worked extensively in underserved communities, focusing on disease prevention and wellness through sustainable lifestyle changes. As the Transitional Nutrition Program Manager at North Carolina State University's Plants for Human Health Institute (PHHI), she helps bridge the gap between research and real-world application, developing programs that translate scientific findings into practical strategies for improving health.




Register for this webinar at:
<https://bit.ly/30P2Pqg>

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**FOOD AS MEDICINE:
A Community-Driven Solution for Health and Dignity**
Virtual Webinar



TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8 | 11 AM - 12 PM (NOON-CST)

GUEST SPEAKER:
Katie Cerda, MS, RDN
Director of Food Policy, Dion's Chicago Dream

Katie Cerda is the Director of Food Policy at Dion's Chicago Dream, a non-profit that combines nutritional philanthropy and last-mile logistics to address food insecurity and build community across Cook County. With an RDN and MS in Public Health Nutrition, she works to advocate for policies that support diet-related chronic disease prevention and management in low and middle-income communities. She has previously held positions in federal and city governments in direct care delivery and program management.



Register for this webinar at:
<https://bit.ly/4qf9M1b>

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THE PLANTER'S MEDLEY PASTA



SERVING SIZE: 3-5

INGREDIENTS

- 8 OZ BOWTIE PASTA
- 1 CUP BROCCOLI FLORETS (LIGHTLY STEAMED OR RAW)
- 1 CUP DICED SQUASH
- 1 CUP DICED ZUCCHINI
- 1 YELLOW BELL PEPPER, CHOPPED
- 1 CUP TOMATOES, HALVED
- ½ CUP CUCUMBER, CHOPPED
- ¼ CUP RED ONION, THINLY SLICED
- 2 TBSP YOUR FAVORITE COOKING OIL
- 1 TBSP LEMON JUICE
- SALT AND PEPPER TO TASTE

INSTRUCTIONS

1. COOK PASTA ACCORDING TO PACKAGE DIRECTIONS. DRAIN AND COOL. IN A LARGE BOWL
2. COMBINE PASTA, BROCCOLI, SQUASH, ZUCCHINI, TOMATOES, BELL PEPPER, CUCUMBER, AND ONION.
3. IN A SMALL BOWL, WHISK TOGETHER OLIVE OIL, LEMON JUICE, SALT, AND PEPPER.
4. POUR DRESSING OVER THE PASTA AND VEGGIES. TOSS TO COAT AND CHILL BEFORE SERVING.