

Family day: A day to eat dinner with your children

Once upon a time – actually not so very long ago – families sat down together for a nightly meal. This ancient family ritual provided a chance for the clan to gather and, while nourishing their bodies, also nourish their souls. They actually spent time sharing events from their day.

Does it sound like a fairy tale? Not really. That's the story of many of our lives from days of yore. Actually, it wasn't so long ago that we used to sit down and eat dinner together as a family. But today's families are busier than ever before. Even to get everyone into the same house at the same time, let alone for dinner, is a challenge.

That's why the folks behind the national campaign, Family Day: A Day to Eat Dinner with Your Children have set aside Monday, September 27 as a day to do just that.

Strange, that we now have to tell folks to sit down and do this. Kind of like an assignment. What used to be commonplace has now become something unique, quaint and maybe even a bit old-fashioned.

Communities That Care of Lorain County, a countywide coalition working to prevent and reduce underage substance abuse, is reminding everyone to support the national campaign. Try to take this one day to sit down with your family and break bread.

The Family Day concept was founded in 2001 by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University. Did you know that something as simple as sitting down with your kids can protect them? Research shows that youth who have dinner regularly with their parents/caregivers are less likely to smoke, drink or do drugs. Pass the plates!

Last fall, Communities that Care of Lorain County surveyed 10,883 youth in grades 6, 8, 10 and 12 and asked how often



they sit down for dinner with their family.

Nearly 46% of all youth surveyed said they have dinner 5-7 times a week with their parents/caregivers. That sounds pretty good, given how busy we all are multi-tasking and doing this thing called living and making a living.

But consider that the national statistics for the same age group hover around 60% - as a county we have a long way to go toward making an improvement.

So, here's the simple and happy end to the story. You can have a positive impact on the lives of your children.

The recipe is simple: take a box of noodles, a pound of ground beef, chicken or beans or tofu if you're of the vegetarian sort; stir in some veggies and seasonings. Sit down for 15 minutes together, eat and talk. Find out about the simple, but important things that happened that day. And remember, there's nothing like leftovers – you can do this tomorrow night or any night for that matter ... and it just keeps getting better and better.

At my house we play 'high point, low point' where everyone goes around the table and gets a chance to talk about his/her high point of the day and their low

point. It keeps it very real.

Sometimes we get side-tracked (and yes, there have been a few fights – none of them food fights, though), but we always find ourselves hearing the stories behind why something was good/bad. Now, when it comes to grading the food, that's completely off limits.

Keep it simple. The Family Day website has lots of great recipes at www.casafamilyday.org.

If you don't want to cook, get takeout, plop a blanket on the floor and have an indoor picnic. The point is to come together over food with your family and have fun. It can happen. Log onto our coalition website

and take the STAR pledge that encourages you to spend time with your kids.

We'd also love to hear your stories about favorite family moments around the dinner table. Share them with us by sending them by October 8, to Catherine Gabe, cgabe@lorainadas.org or send them the old-fashioned way by mail to Catherine Gabe, Lorain ADAS Board, 4950 Oberlin Ave., Lorain, OH 44053. If you have questions please feel free to contact Catherine Gabe at 440.282.9920.

Thanks to Stouffer's Brand – whose corporate headquarters are located in our own backyard in Solon – for their generous donation of VIP coupons, which we will distribute among the winners. Be sure to include your contact information/address/phone so we can contact you.

Story categories include:

- Best Family Day Memory.
- Best Family Dinner/Meal.
- Most Creative Way to Get Your Family Together.

So see you around the dinner table Monday, September 27. We can't wait to hear your stories.