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Healthy Eating on a Budget workshop coming to Shelburne Library

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LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Join the Dufferin Area Family Health Team (DAFHT) on Feb. 7, for an informational workshop to show you new ways to eat healthier on a budget.

There is a common belief that it's sometimes more expensive to eat healthier than to eat unhealthy foods. When money is tight and time is limited, fast food is an easy substitute. But Mackenzie Clarke, a registered dietitian with the DAFHT who will be running the workshop, wants you to know that there are options available without breaking the bank.

?It is very difficult for some people, and I totally understand the economy right now that options might be limited,? Clarke said. ?Public Health did a report on the food affordability in the area, and they found that a family that wanted to produce nutritious meals for their family while still paying rent would still be in the negative.?

?What we want to do is give people some tips and tricks and some resources to hopefully help people eat healthier and not have to skip meals.?

Clarke's approach to healthier eating is far from a radical reimagining of a normal diet. In fact, it relies on supplementing what you already eat, rather than altering your diet altogether.

The strategy is simple. If you're eating foods that are less than ideal, health-wise, add some affordable ingredients to balance out the meal as best you can.

?There's some things I will discuss in the presentation about adding instead of subtracting,? she said. ?If something is cheaper, a little bit higher in calories or higher in carbohydrates, being able to add more protein, being able to add more fibre to make it a bit more balanced is what I'm suggesting.?

?A lot of the time we talk about instant ramen, so adding frozen vegetables to that, or canned vegetables? and protein of some kind, like some chicken or adding some beef, can help make it a more balanced meal without changing your habits too much,? Clarke added.

She said that a lot of the food discussed is often distributed by local food banks, meaning that if you're not able to afford everything yourself, you can fall back on existing safety nets, giving you more options in a pinch. DAFHT will also provide information at the workshop to help with meal prep with the food options they cover.

This approach underlines the workshop's approach to food education ? a focus on cooperation, rather than dictation. Clarke doesn't feel it's useful to tell people what to eat or what not to, as DAFHT recognizes that it's not easy to change a diet on a whim. It's also extremely adaptable to any diet.

?I think sometimes people think dietitians are going to act like food police, but I want to say it's just going to be more informative,? Clarke said. ?Instead of telling you, ?Don't have that and have this,' it's just, ?how do we make a more balanced meal from what we have?'?

?Adding, not subtracting, can work for any kind of meal or snack in any culture. It doesn't have to be just eliminate this or this,? she added.

The healthy eating workshop is free to attend, and will run from 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Shelburne Public Library on Feb. 7.

Registration is not required, but is preferred. Call 519-925-2168 if interested in attending.