



Lisa Clawson

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Child Care Center

In 1997, the Mercer County YMCA transitioned from a half-day preschool to a full-time childcare center. They now have 1 full-day center, 3 afterschool sites, and 1 summer day camp working together to serve about 200 children. Lisa Clawson, Mercer County YMCA Children's Director, values the importance the YMCA has in relationship to the health of the children, realizing that for many of them, the team is serving much more than just a lunch. As nutrition educators and mentors, they are also responsible for serving knowledge.

"Nutrition is where it all starts for the day. You have to feel well to learn, work and play."

Megan and Brenda, the YMCA chefs, serve as the champions, or YMCA leaders, for child nutrition. The Y values the importance of education and has sent the chefs to conferences such as the National Child Nutrition Conference and schedules them for consistent nutrition education training. The chefs then act as nutrition ambassadors for the children, while also ensuring that the teachers and program leaders are also educated. Through the CATCH curriculum, games, and cooking classes, the children are learning about a variety of nutritional topics.

CACFP is an indicator of quality child care.

Parents are sent information about each lesson and the Y also hosts family nights where a nutritious meal is prepared by all. The health department has joined with the Y to teach nutrition and cooking classes. Together they hope to make nutritious choices a family lifestyle where children develop lifetime healthy habits. If kids understand what it means to be healthy when they are young, it will hopefully combat problems later in life.

Lisa realizes that their work at the Y is not yet complete. They would like to join the Summer Food Service program and are applying for food grants to be able to develop a senior food program which is an area where they see a definite need. They are heavily involved in the community with canned food drives, donations to the food pantry, activities at the nursing home and healthy taco fundraisers. Through education and active involvement, they are working diligently to combat food insecurity in their area.

In Aledo, IL Mercer County YMCA has been a member of the CACFP since 1998.

