

Keeping families healthy

by **Nathan Howes**

Special to the Beaver

Knowing how to put food on the table can keep you healthy and bring you closer to your family and the community.

That's the message restaurateur Julia Hanna wants people to take away from her new HealthyFam initiative, which is comprised of three cooking communities — Family Culinary Community (FCC), Seniors Culinary Community (SCC) and Kids Culinary Community (KCC).

HealthyFam partners with other non-profit organizations to provide free services. The program teaches participants to cook and educates them on where their food comes from while instilling the value of connecting with the community and family at the dinner table.

Hanna, a local chef and entrepreneur, officially launched the program Saturday at Longo's on Cornwall Road.

"Food is just as important to seniors as it is to young families as it is to children because it is a thing that sustains us. So many health issues can be prevented by how we eat and how we live," said Hanna. "We're trying to improve the quality of life, (which) should be a right and privilege for us, whether we're young or old."

KCC, Hanna's first culinary offering, was founded in 2009 and is a not-for-profit or-

ganization that educates children for free on developing healthy eating habits and basic cooking skills.

In addition to attending classes at Longo's Lofts on Wyecroft Road, participants get to tend a KCC community garden where the food is grown before it is used in meal preparation.

"Before we get them there, they have to know how to do it. They have to know how to prepare a meal. We provide (those skills)," said Hanna.

Rosanne Longo, consumer spokesperson for Longo's Family Charitable Foundation, said partnering with Hanna was a "natural fit."

"We're all about providing healthy meals and getting people to come to the table. Food is what brings families together. If we can do our part in providing fresh, healthy ingredients and helping them create the meals in terms of providing recipes, then we've done our part," said Longo. "We're helping people get back to the table. (Julia's) idea about starting it with kids just made sense."

The types of meals prepared by participants in the KCC varies, Longo explained, adding that it's a back-to-basics approach for children.

"Sometimes we start with things that can be snacks for school or it could be as simple as a spaghetti dinner. The key is showing

see Participants on p.14



Graduates gather with chefs and restaurateur Julia Hanna at the HealthyFam launch at the Cornwall Road Longo's Saturday afternoon. The event featured food prepared by the graduates and live entertainment. | photo by Nikki Wesley - Oakville Beaver (Follow on Twitter @halton_photog)

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