



'Healthy Heroes' Program Teaches Kids to Make Healthy Eating Flavorful, Colorful

By Mike Hedeem

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ROCHESTER, N.Y. -- Students in a fourth grade class at School No. 43 in the Rochester City School District have the opportunity to share their schoolwork with others. It's a battle between the boys and the girls in the Kids Cooking Competition.

As part of the **Healthy Heroes program**, a grant through the Greater Rochester Health Foundation allows the students to come up with unique and creative ideas to incorporate healthy choices.

"One of the things we thought would be fun is to have a chef come in and teach us about some healthy alternative foods, as well as incorporating exercising into daily activities for the students," said Michele Johnstone, School No. 43 teacher.

Chef Brian Van Etten, owner of **Swillburger Playhouse** in the South Wedge, volunteers his time twice a week to work one-on-one with the 4th graders. It's a natural fit for Van Etten, whose background is in education. His goal is to teach the kids how to make healthy eating flavorful and colorful. On Wednesday, fruit cups and smoothies were on the menu, all made with natural ingredients.

"It contained some ingredients that wouldn't be thought of for most people. We excluded heavy cream in making a smoothie or milk in making a smoothie and instead we threw in silken tofu," said Van Etten.

Many of the students say they take what they've learned in the classroom and put it to use in the kitchen at home.

"One of my favorite things to make with my mom is rice," said Ramzien Rodriguez, 4th grader.

When asked if Ramzien was a better cook than her mom, she said, "A lot of people like my eggs better than hers."

That may be why Ramzien Rodriguez wants to be a chef someday.