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## Thrive of Southern Lorain County organizing surprise business visits to promote healthy eating

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[Thrive of Southern Lorain County](#), a collaborative funded by [United Way of Greater Lorain County](#), is currently in a campaign to surprise local businesses in the Wellington area with healthy food alternatives to their regular meals.

“The campaign, ‘Surprise, It’s Thrive,’ is something we came up with to bring the healthy food ideas to the workplace,” said Jenny Arntz, executive director of [Main Street Wellington](#) and member of the Thrive collaborative. “It serves as an outreach for us. Thrive has been around for a few years now, but there are still plenty of people in southern Lorain County who are unaware of who we are.”

Arntz said the collaborative is hoping to expand its reach. “It’s all about exposing fresh food to these businesses,” she said. “The campaign shows folks they can eat healthy during times they may be prone to making poor eating choices. It can be a meal or something as simple as a snack. It’s easier to eat healthy than people think, and that is something I hope we are able to get across to folks.”

Arntz said the campaign kicked off during a February Wellington Village Council meeting.

“We brought some Mixed Berry bars made by Libby Showalter (registered dietitian with [YMCA of Greater Cleveland](#)),” she said. “Council members loved them and there were some Wellington students there who also really enjoyed them. It was definitely a successful start to the campaign.”

Arntz said the bars were the perfect example of the food that Thrive is about.

“They are basically a cereal bar, so they are a very convenient snack,” she said. “The bars, and this is the goal of all the foods we present, are high in antioxidants and as low as possible in fats and calories.”

Showalter, who also serves as a consultant with the collaborative, said her recipes are very practical.

“I make sure to keep things simple,” she said. “Not everyone is a world-class chef, so the recipes are very simple step-by-step processes. I also make sure to bring the recipes with us when we go to businesses to make sure folks can replicate the food from home. They are also low-cost recipes. You get a lot of nutrition bang for your buck.”

Showalter said she also focuses on healthy essentials with the recipes.

“They have antioxidants, vitamins, minerals, are low in fat and high in fiber,” she said.

“We also brought some yogurt parfaits when we visited the (Wellington) police station April 4 as the second stop in the campaign. When we make these business visits, we’ll provide information on recipes, where to shop healthy and where to find free exercise.”

Carol Burke, facilitator for Thrive, said the collaborative was formed to combat health issues in the southern part of Lorain County.

“Some changes needed to be made,” she said. “There was an increase in metabolic syndrome in the southern part of the county compared to the northern part. Metabolic syndrome includes obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease and stroke. The goal is to draw attention to this fact and inform folks about what options are available to prevent these things.”

Burke said the increase in metabolic syndrome in the southern part of the county is mostly due to access.

“Folks down here are limited in their options and also don’t have the transportation to get to a gym,” she said. “Public transportation is bad enough in this county, but it is especially bad in Wellington and the surrounding areas. The hope is that we will be able to prevent metabolic syndrome by promoting a health way of living.”