



## FORWARD CORNER

### February is American Heart Month

FORWARD is excited to join our partners the [American Heart Association](#) and the [National Institute of Health](#) to celebrate American Heart Month. This federally designated event reinforces the importance of heart health and the need for more research, with a reminder to get families, friends and communities involved. It is a tradition that is over half a century strong. Obesity in both youth and adults is at an all-time high and our youth are being diagnosed with heart disease earlier than ever. It is critical that we act now. The adults in a child's life can help set children on the right course. Make sure your policies, practices, curriculum, and parent communication include elements of heart health. When designing the menu, minimize red meats, added sugar, unhealthy fats, and sodium, and maximize fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Sprinkle in lean protein and healthy fats. Make sure to plan for vigorous physical activity daily. Vigorous activity is that which gets children's heart pumping, leads to some heavy breathing, and may even produce some sweat. Also help children learn early how to relax with meditation and mindfulness and activities that help them self-soothe and relieve stress.

In addition to your efforts to help children develop heart health, take time this month to focus inward. Let us take care of the caregivers/educators. Take time to adopt a set of best practices for your own Heart Health. Be a good role model for the children in your care and let your good habits trickle down (see the resource below).

**Resources for Early Childhood Educators:** Click [here](#) to view 28 Days Toward a Healthy Heart.

**Resources for Families:** Click [here](#) to view Heart Healthy Latino Recipes in English and Spanish.

### JOIN THE HEALTHY MOVEMENT TODAY BY TAKING ACTION!

**Families:** Eat vegetarian one day a week during February. To help in preparing your whole grains and vegetables (and to stay full longer), take time to add in "healthy fats" (avocados, eggs, nuts, seeds, and extra virgin olive oil).

**Early Childhood Providers:** Commit to being "part of the solution" and not a "part of the problem". Resist the urge to celebrate Valentine's Day with an abundance of candy, cookies, cakes and treats. Select one treat, add in heart-themed fruits, vegetables, and whole grains recipes, and fill the day with fun decorations, cups and plates, homemade valentines, acts of kindness and a smattering of heart health tidbits.

For information on healthy eating and activity initiatives in DuPage, check out [www.forwarddupage.org](http://www.forwarddupage.org).