



## GROWING COMMUNITY

A FULL HARVEST OF  
LOVE, STRONG VALUES,  
AND SUPPORT MOVES  
OUR MISSION FORWARD

THE FIT AND FOOD CONNECTION FALL NEWSLETTER | 2022



# LETTER TO OUR READERS:

## MESSAGE FROM OUR PROGRAM COORDINATOR

What comes to mind when you think of the word community? Merriam- Webster defines it as, “A group of people with a common characteristic or interest living together within a larger society.” A wise person once told me that the community of St. Louis isn't simply pockets of smaller communities, we're one large community. If one part of St. Louis is struggling, then that impacts all of St. Louis.” What am I saying?

Underserved community members are not simply people who should be forgotten or othered. They are people who deserve support from other community members (who have access to health and wellness resources) with hearts to love, serve, and desire under-resourced areas to have more. More involves access to fresh quality foods. More involves creative and practical fitness opportunities. More involves helpful wellness education and tools so generations of chronic disease in underserved areas can become eradicated. The Fit and Food Connection envisions underserved community members to have strong minds and healthy bodies. How can we build upon that? With more passionate people who want more for those who have been displaced in areas that are designed for them to have less.

Continue to join us on our vision and mission to have more for the underserved communities throughout St. Louis, so the community at large can be well-resourced and healthy.

Warmly,

Raven Alade, Program Coordinator

# FIT AND FOOD HAPPENINGS

CHECK IT OUT!

## GROWING COMMUNITY 2026 PROJECT

The Fit and Food Connection team is excited to announce the kick-off of our Growing Community 2026 Project! Through 2026, we plan to work alongside neighborhood residents and other community partners to build our capacity and expand our garden footprint. This growth means we'll be able to move our important work forward where it's needed most while prioritizing safety, sustainability, and community engagement. 100% of profits earned that day will be donated in support of our mission.

Our successful Growing Community 2026 project means that we will be able to address urgent and ongoing community health and wellness needs through investment, volunteerism, transparency, and community empowerment.





In addition to focusing on expanding our programming, eliminating our Food Access & Delivery waitlist, and getting creative on how to better serve our community, this project includes these expansion plans at our organic garden site!

Elements of the expansion plan include substantially increasing our garden beds for increased produce for our community members, outdoor learning space, nature play areas,

a butterfly house for education and research, a walking trail, open air market, picnic grove... the list goes on! Stay tuned for more information and invites to get involved. For now, join us in this important period of expansion, collaboration, and growth to support lasting positive change in the health of our community!



Fit and Food Connection | Growing Community 2026  
Garden and Covered Patio



or email us your interests at  
[info@fitandfoodconnection.org](mailto:info@fitandfoodconnection.org)



or visit us at  
[fitandfoodconnection.org/donate](http://fitandfoodconnection.org/donate)



## FARM TO TABLE FUNDRAISER RECAP

On Saturday, September 24th, the Fit and Food team welcomed a crowd of supporters, community members, family, and friends to the garden on St. Louis Avenue for an afternoon of delicious garden-fresh bites, great music, exciting raffles, and connection.



It was such a beautiful time to come together in support of our mission, get to know one another better, and learn more about our exciting capacity building and expansion plans in the

## Growing Community 2026 Project!



Through this event, we were able to raise funds to further the life-changing mission of The Fit and Food Connection, and we look forward to growing this event year after year!



# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

CHECK IT OUT!

## SUMMER WELLNESS SERIES

The Fit and Food Connection's Summer Wellness Series continued to focus on building and maintaining a foundation of wellness by offering a variety of fitness classes and nutrition education each Wednesday evening throughout the summer. Classes included boxing inspired cardio, strength building functional moves to prevent injury, and yoga fusion that



incorporated tai chi, yoga and pilates moves.



The series concluded with a FREE Health Screening where volunteers from the Lifestyle Medicine Interest Group measured weight, blood pressure, glucose, cholesterol and triglycerides, and reviewed the results with community members to set goals focused on maintaining overall wellness.



A special thanks to each volunteer who made these opportunities possible and to St. Vincent's Community Park for the use of their tennis courts each week! We also partnered with the St. Louis County Library where volunteer, Shelby Grammar taught Yoga Flow and Chair Yoga at different branches throughout the county. We enjoyed working together to offer safe, in person programming!

Community members also enjoyed our Summer Walking Group each Saturday, walking the trails at various local parks throughout St. Louis. A true highlight of the summer was the return of our Tennis Clinic offered by volunteer Coach Harold Webb and his son, Max. Community members of all ages learned the basics of tennis and enjoyed some friendly competition!





In conjunction with these opportunities to move and build connections in a group setting, we continue to build the One-on-One Coaching Program! This is a six-month commitment where a community member works with a coach who offers personalized nutrition and fitness guidance to help reach their wellness goals.



Regular check-ins provide accountability and a grocery shopping tour valued at \$100 at the beginning and the end of the six months provides education on how to plan, shop for, and prepare the foods that fuel their bodies!

This amazing program is FREE just like all of our programs because dedicated personal trainers and nutrition coaches volunteer their time and expertise. We thank you for the difference you are making in the lives of the community members you work with!



We had fun this summer at our Organic Garden hosting Kids Club, where children enjoyed an interactive learning experience, and harvesting produce to include in weekly food deliveries to ensure community members have access to healthy food.



We also continue our efforts to address food scarcity by partnering with LINK Market to offer cooking demonstrations at locations where access to healthy food is limited. Chef Robert Rusan led these cooking demonstrations, teaching how to prepare meals with ingredients available at LINK Market. Community members in attendance received the recipe and a free food bundle of the ingredients.

We also offered regular programming at Room at the Inn to educate families on how to shop and prepare healthy meals on a budget. Monthly programming included two cooking demonstrations and one grocery shopping tour. Families participated in the cooking demonstrations and learned how to cook healthy meals together.



We are so thankful for these opportunities to offer programs with other organizations passionate about ensuring that everyone has access to healthy food.

## FALL PROGRAMMING

We are looking forward to our Fall Wellness Series that begins with an Open House on October 5th at St. Peter's Church, 1425 Stein Rd, Ferguson MO from 6:00pm – 8:00pm. This event includes a FREE Health Screening with wellness professionals to review results and help set goals that our six-week program is designed to help community members achieve!



Health Fair stations will be available to include a physical therapist to review movements that build strength safely. A registered dietitian will provide recipes and samples of healthy recipes. Additionally, a counselor will provide tips on how to get a good night's sleep, and a counselor will discuss ways to reduce substance use. A fun fitness class will be offered, and the evening will conclude with a moment of mindfulness.





Following the Open House, a fitness or nutrition class will be offered each Wednesday night at 6:00pm. These programs are FREE to underserved community members and structured for all ages and fitness levels! In November, veteran Fit and Food volunteer, John Meyer, will offer a Senior Fitness class in partnership with the St. Louis County Library. These classes will be at various locations and times throughout the county.

Our annual Food Drive begins in October and continues through November. We are seeking organizations willing to host a food donation bin and promote the drive! Fit and Food volunteers will drop bins off and pick them up at agreed upon dates so those who frequent the organization have the opportunity to donate healthy food that we will then distribute to community members living in food deserts.

You can be a part of our cause by contacting our Program Director, Julie Golinghorst at [julie@fitandfoodconnection.org](mailto:julie@fitandfoodconnection.org).



# VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

## ERIN SHAW

Our Volunteer Spotlight for this issue is Erin Shaw. Her help at the Organic Garden and with delivering food to community members are invaluable to Food Access Program operations. Here is what she has to say about supporting The Fit and Food Connection Mission.



I first heard about Fit and Food from my yoga teacher, who suggested we attend the annual harvest celebration at the garden. I was immediately drawn to the friendly volunteers who made my husband, friends and I feel so welcome. And of course, hearing how passionate Gabi and Joy are about their mission made me keen to learn more. As someone raised in the bubble of white privilege in West county, it was many years before I fully understood the glaring disparities in access to jobs, education, healthcare, housing and food. My drives around St. Louis became less about the beautiful parks, shops and architecture, and more about vacant lots, liquor stores and fast food outposts.

Where were the cafes and grocery stores? Where do kids play when their neighborhood isn't safe? And what about the older adults facing diabetes, heart disease and cancer who need healthy food and exercise the most, but can't afford routine check-ups, fitness programs and healthier food options?

Having struggled with weight gain, addiction and chronic pain myself, I understand all of the hurdles to a healthy life. I also know how lucky I am that I can afford to completely revamp my life through food, exercise and wellness. Which is why I so appreciate Fit and Food Connection's commitment to offering a healthier life to those living in food and fitness deserts - these founders and volunteers are incredible!



I am honored to help in any way, from the food pantry to weeding and harvesting in the garden. However, I have most enjoyed connecting with the recipients on my food delivery route. I love hearing about their lives and how much they enjoy the food and programs provided by Fit. And meeting their adorable grandbabies, family members and neighbors only strengthens my resolve to push for a healthier St. Louis.



# VOLUNTEER NEEDS

**SIGN UP NOW!**

## FALL FOOD DRIVE

We are looking for food drive volunteers to help pick up donation bins from the pantry, drop them off at an assigned organization, and return the bins to the pantry on a later date. Drop off dates fall on October 14th and October 28th, and pick up dates fall on October 28th and November 11th.



Volunteers are also needed to help sort the donated food items on November 18th at the pantry.



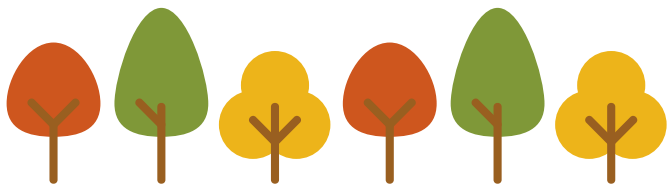
**HELP BRING OUR MISSION TO LIFE!**

If any of these positions interest you, reach out to our Volunteer Coordinator **Nia** at [nia@fitandfoodconnection.org](mailto:nia@fitandfoodconnection.org).

# THE FIT AND FOOD CORNER: YOUR HOLISTIC WELLNESS RESOURCE

## MOTIVATIONAL THOUGHT

There are two sure signs that the change of season is upon us, the magical color changes of the leaves and the crisp autumn air. Autumn isn't the only thing capable of making magical changes. So are you.



“We do not need magic to change the world, we carry all the power we need inside ourselves already. We have the power to imagine better.”

- J.K. Rowling



## STRESS RELIEF

Tip for the Season: If the change will lead to more changes that make you feel better, then make that change.

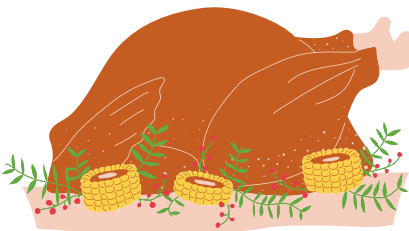
## HEALTHY EATING HABITS

Don't let the season change make you fall into unhealthy eating habits. During the fall you can indulge in some great comfort foods without getting off track with the following tips.



Stick with whole grains! Bread, pasta and rice can be enjoyed, but try to opt for whole grains to get the complex carbohydrates and long-lasting fuel.

Go for soups not based with milk, cheese or cream! When in need of a little warmth, try something like chili or chicken noodle soup.



Eat more lean meat! Meats such as turkey or chicken versus red meats.

Swap out the pasta noodles for squash! Many types of squash are harvested in the fall making it a great time to eat some vitamin A rich butternut squash.



Incorporate more berries into meals. Blueberries can be cooked into many different dishes, and they are high in fiber. They also lower the risk of diabetes and heart disease.





## TRY THIS HEALTHY RECIPE!

### SKILLET LASAGNA

This delicious recipe makes 8 servings and can be prepared within 30 minutes!

For 8 servings, you will need:

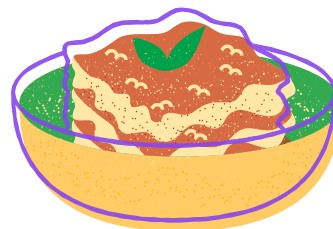
- 8 uncooked lasagna noodles
- 15 oz carton small curd cottage cheese
- ½ cup grated parmesan cheese, divided in half
- 1 tbsp Italian seasoning



- Nonstick cooking spray
- 24 oz jar tomato pasta sauce, without meat
- 10 oz frozen spinach, thawed and squeezed dry
- 8 oz mozzarella cheese, shredded (2 cups shredded)



You can find all the ingredients and directions on the following pages!

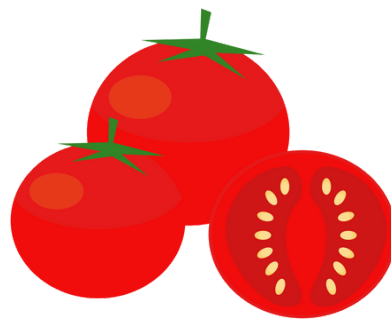


Follow these steps!

1. Cook lasagna noodles following package directions.
2. In large bowl, mix cottage cheese,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup parmesan cheese, and Italian seasoning.



3. Spray skillet with cooking spray. Do not place on heat until all ingredients are in.
4. Spread half jar of sauce in sprayed skillet and top with 4 lasagna noodles.
5. Spread half cottage cheese mixture over noodles.
6. Top with half spinach.



7. Sprinkle half mozzarella cheese over spinach.
8. Repeat with remaining ingredients in the same order.
9. Sprinkle with remaining parmesan cheese and cover.
10. Place skillet on medium low heat. Cook for 20 min until cheese melts and sauce bubbles. Remove from heat, and let stand for 5 min (covered), then serve.



# JOIN FIT AND FOOD'S HEALTHY GIVING CLUB

BECOME A MONTHLY DONOR TODAY  
AND HELP SUSTAIN US AND THE  
HEALTH OF OUR COMMUNITY!

CLICK HERE TO SIGN UP



GIVE THE GIFT OF HEALTHY LIVING



# TOGETHER WE GROW!



## FIT AND FOOD COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

Members of the community coming together to support  
The Fit and Food Connection's vision where people in underserved  
communities all have strong minds and healthy bodies.

