December 4, 2017

***Press Release***

**Chichester & Bognor residents ‘go back to school’ to learn how to Cook with Confidence**

Residents from Chichester and Bognor who struggle in the kitchen are being offered a series of free, fun courses to help them cook up basic, healthy dishes without breaking the bank.

The Chichester courses, from 5.45 – 7.45pm, are run by West Sussex-based social enterprise company Health Champions and are being funded by Chichester District Wellbeing. The small group sessions kick off on January 9 at Chichester High School in Kingsham Road. Additional courses start on January 10, 20 and 21.

New Year courses in Bognor, funded by Arun Wellbeing, will be held at The Laburnham Centre in Lyon Street and at Bognor Regis Youth and Community Centre in Westloats Lane.

They are aimed at people who need a confidence boost in the kitchen and offer hands-on help for creating easy to cook, healthy meals on a budget. The courses also encourage people to ditch ready meals and take-aways and to create delicious meals and snacks from scratch.

Elaine Thomas, Chichester Wellbeing manager, said: “Nationally levels of obesity are rising and the impact that this has on heart disease, cancer and diabetes is of real concern. Learning how to cook and what to cook is important, as well as understanding the value of cooking and the impact a good diet can have on our health. It’s so important to avoid processed food, which often contains high levels of fat, salt and sugar.”

During a recent Health Champions' course run at the University of Chichester student Tania Smith said: “It’s useful to learn new and different meals. It’s been great cooking with housemates - it’s nice to cook and eat with them afterwards. I have enjoyed learning to cook things for myself.”

Health Champions is currently running a course at Bognor Regis Youth and Community Centre in Westloats Lane, Bognor. Participant Nigel Coates, who is registered blind, had never been able to cook and usually eats out every day. With help from course leader Katie Torode and carer Jo Evans he learned to cook using an induction hob. He said: “People think because you are blind you can’t do anything, but I have really enjoyed leaning to cook. I’ve baked a crumble and made flat breads and it’s given me confidence and I want to cook more now.”

Ron Livermore, of Upper Bognor Road, Bognor said; “I came on the course to learn the basics because I am diabetic and now I cook all the time at home. I don’t want ready meals or takeaways now I prefer to cook – it’s healthier and cheaper. The courses are brilliant and are also a great social gathering.”

George Wilkinson came on the course to learn to cook after losing his wife. He said; “My wife did all the cooking and when she passed away my son told me I needed to get out and do things so I joined the course. I am cooking for myself all the time now and joining this course is the best thing I have ever done.”

Sarah Wyatt, of Drift Road, Bognor, said; “I lost my Mum before starting the course and it was just what I needed to get me out of the house to socialise again. Going on the course has helped me deal with my grief and I have also met some wonderful people. I urge anyone to attend a course if they can as they are great and you learn so much.”

Health Champions director Karen Dennison said: “The courses we run are free to local people and they help to improve cooking, eating and shopping habits by encouraging small changes that people can make every day. They are also lots of fun and any nerves at the start are soon banished!”

Data published in medical journal The Lancet shows that between 1991–1993 and 2011–2013 the proportion of overweight or obese people increased from 66·7% to 76·8% for men and from 54·8% to 63·4% for women.

**Chichester area 2018 courses**

9th Jan - 6th Feb, 5.45pm - 7.45pm Chichester High School

10th Jan - 7th Feb, 5.45pm - 7.45pm Chichester High School

19th January - 23rd February, 10.45am - 12.30pm Swanfield Park Community Centre, Chichester

19th January - 23rd February, 12.30am - 2.30pm Swanfield Park Community Centre, Chichester

1st March - 29th March, 12.30pm - 2.30pm Selsey Town Council offices, Selsey

**Bognor 2018 courses**

##### 4th January - 8th February, 4pm - 6pm, The Laburnum Centre, Bognor Regis

##### 21st February - 27th March,  11.30am - 1.30pm,  Westloats Community Centre

Contact Karen Dennison for information and to book a place on any of these courses.  07747 017372

Courses are also running across the Worthing and Adur areas. A full list is on the Health Champions’ [website](http://www.health-champions.co.uk/single.htm?ipg=14683) .

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