

7th Annual ARCC Community-Engaged Research Partnership Award Recipient: *Cooking Up Health: Docs & Kids in the Kitchen*

The [Alliance for Research in Chicagoland Communities](#) (ARCC), a program of the [Center for Community Health](#) serving the Northwestern University's [Institute for Public Health and Medicine](#) and [Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute](#), developed the [Community Engaged Research Partnership Award](#) to recognize research partnerships that exemplify strong collaborative research principles and are working to impact the health of their community.

The 2018 award acknowledges the efforts of *Cooking Up Health: Docs & Kids in the Kitchen*, the exemplary partnership between lead community partner, Stephanie Folkens of [Common Threads](#), a community organization fighting childhood obesity through cooking and nutritional education, and lead academic partner, Northwestern's [Melinda Ring, MD](#) of the [Osher Center for Integrative Medicine](#).



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Cooking Up Health grew out of the recognition that solving the obesity epidemic and its downstream health consequences depends on preventative efforts at the individual, community, and public health level. A 2013 analysis of childhood obesity in Chicago revealed an overall overweight/obesity prevalence of 43.3% among public school students. Additionally, although physicians are at the frontline of assessing and advising patients on nutrition and weight, only 27% of medical schools teach the recommended 25 hours of nutrition, and fewer than 14% of practicing physicians believe they were adequately trained in nutritional counseling.



In 2016, an [ARCC seed grant](#) award enabled the strong partnership foundation to address these issues and foster the development of a sustainable program for the delivery of cooking and nutrition education in the community by future physicians. The unique *Cooking Up Health* elective teaches Northwestern medical students about nutrition through the lens of culinary medicine and community health and hands-on cooking. The medical students then deliver the healthy habit messages to [Chicago Public Schools](#) elementary school children in underserved communities. *Detailed*

description of partners below.

The partnership has yielded several concrete positive outcomes so far including: 1) development of a scalable and innovative curriculum; 2) measurable impact on Northwestern medical students' and Chicago Public Schools students' health and nutrition behavior and attitudes; and 3) multiple presentations at scientific and community forums. *Cooking Up Health* recently received a [NUCATS](#) Dissemination [Pilot Grant](#) to support implementation efforts including hosting a Train-the-Trainer workshop this Fall to help spread *Cooking Up Health* to other community-academic partnerships across the country.



Partner members and award reviewers praised the partnership's strong commitment to collaboration, creativity, and innovation and attributed the success of the partnership in part to the time that the ARCC

partnership grant allowed the partners to dedicate to fully understand and appreciate the missions, capacity and resources of their respective programs.

Partner Descriptions:

Osher Center for Integrative Medicine (OCIM) at Northwestern University ascribes to the concept of “food as medicine”, and believes nutrition is critical to disease prevention and treatment. We have been exploring strategies to solve the current lack of adequate training in nutrition in medical school curriculum, with its downstream effect of a physician workforce lacking skills necessary to effectively counsel patients in how to change food-related behaviors. OCIM is a member of the Teaching Kitchen Collaborative, a consortium of 30 influential organizations committed to improving health through healthy eating and cooking. The lead academic partner is Melinda Ring, MD, FACP, the executive director of OCIM. Additional key OCIM faculty are Rupa Mahadevan, MD and Elaine Cheung, PhD.

Common Threads (CT) accomplishes their mission by offering cooking and nutrition education to children and teachers in underserved elementary and middle schools. Since inception, CT has reached 141,060 students and adults, trained 2800 teachers, and provided over a million snacks and meals with over a million hours of education. CT now operates in eight cities and is projected to reach over 100,000 individuals nationally (25,000 in Chicago) in school year 2017-8. A hallmark of the programming is hands-on, experiential learning by cooking. Past external and internal evaluations indicate that CT programming brings about statistically significant improvements in nutrition knowledge, exposure to, liking for, and consumption of vegetables, communication within the family about healthy eating, preference for home-cooked meals, and confidence in cooking skills. Common Threads’ curriculum has been reviewed and approved by Chicago Public Schools, Los Angeles Unified School District, and New York City Department of Education. They are a proud member of the Healthy Out of School Time Coalition and National Ally of the CACFP program. The lead community partner is Stephanie Folkens, head of programming at CT. Additional members include Neile Edens, PhD and Mattie Young-Burns.

Further information about the award can be found at www.ARCConline.net