

# COMMUNITY

## Tots Learn To Be Food Sleuths

BY VIRGINIA GARRISON

Jennifer Taylor asked a group of little kids at the East Hampton Day Care and Learning Center if they remembered a food they'd talked about that's not good for your teeth.

"Cauliflower?" asked one boy.

Ms. Taylor picked up a box of Hot Fudge Sundae Pop-Tarts and asked if anyone knew what was inside.

"Ice cream!" one child answered.

The students heard a story, played with food, had a snack, then danced. The class, on March 23, was the last of four on healthy eating taught by Ms. Taylor, the executive director of the East Hampton Wellness Foundation, and Theresa Roden, the foundation's senior associate. The Food for Life program has been offered for years at the East Hampton Middle School, but this was the first time 4- and 5-year-olds at the day care center got a taste.

Sitting next to a basket of plastic fruit, Ms. Taylor asked for examples that come in red, blue, yellow, orange, and green. Rainbows are good—"the more col-

ors you eat the better," she told the children.

In a previous class, the kids made "superhero smoothies" with spinach. Their hero "packs" a blender, and his biceps are strong. In this class, the kids made butterflies out of orange slices, carrots and blueberries, and Ms. Roden took photos before they disappeared.

She also helped the children learn to be "food detectives" who can sniff out green-light foods, yellow-light foods and red-light foods. Among the latter: hydrogenated oil. "Can you say that?"

Eleven cross-legged children repeated back: "Hy-dro-gen-at-ed oil. Ohhhh yuck."

Ms. Taylor said after the session that it is essential to get an early start into educating children about healthy eating habits when your wholesome superhero has to compete against Spiderman on a box of artificial mac-and-cheese. Marketers know how to hook kids even before they can read, she said.

"If we can get to them before they get to them," she said, noting that peer pressure can be used, for instance, to get them to try spinach.



Theresa Roden, right, helped Alexa Espana, left, and Lyla Wilson make edible "butterflies" at the East Hampton Day Care and Learning Center on Wednesday.

KERILAMPARTER

The photos Ms. Roden took will go on invitations for three wellness workshops at the Day Care Center next month. There will be hands-on activities to show families how to read food labels, which ingredients are bad and why, and how to make healthy, budget-friendly meals.

Parents, kids, and the gener-

al public will be welcome. Ms. Taylor, who will lead the workshops, said the idea was to make eating well fun, "so that no one leaves the table in tears." The workshops, which are free, will be held at 6:30 p.m. May 5, 12 and 19. Advance registration has been requested and can be done by calling 324-5560.