From red and yellow to green and purple, a rainbow of nutritious food greets the Cape Ann children who attend The Open Door’s Emerson Avenue Summer Lunch site. The pilot program, designed to provide education around healthy food choices and portion sizes, offers children a chance to fill their trays with a variety of healthy food.

“Nutrition education begins with choice,” said Julie LaFontaine, The Open Door executive director. “By deconstructing the lunch bag, kids can take an active role in food selection.”

Children are encouraged to learn portion control when choosing fruits, vegetables, proteins and whole grains as well as increase their physical activity. Serving size is taught by using markers children can easily understand. For example, the size of a box of crayons is a standard serving for a lean protein.

“It’s a lot better than a bag lunch,” said thirteen-year-old Daniel C. as he tucked into his Mexican pizza with black bean and corn salad. “It’s made me choose more fruits and vegetables.” He admits that the variety, which includes such choices as kiwi fruit, okra, cactus salsa, mangoes, Jerusalem artichokes, and radishes, has taken him out of his “comfort zone.”

“The program introduces the palate to sometimes new and unusual foods,” said Jennifer Perry, who designed the pilot lunch menus. “We want the children to learn to make life-long healthy choices.”

Perry, promoted in June to the position of Nutrition Development Coordinator, now reviews and plans nutritional adequacy for all The Open Door programs.

Now in its ninth year, The Open Door Summer Lunch, a USDA Child Nutrition program, provides a free lunch for children up to the age of 18 during the months they are not in school. In addition to the pilot site on Emerson Avenue, The Open Door Summer Lunch is offered in Gloucester at Riverdale Park, Willowood Gardens, Cape Ann Y, and Kitefield Road in Rockport.

For more information, please visit: www.foodpantry.org

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Thursday, October 28
7:30 a.m. to 9 a.m.

For your chance to win, fill out the ticket stubs and return them in the envelope provided along with your donation. (See tear-off on other side.)

*3-Minute Shopping Spree will be held at the Gloucester Crossing Market Basket on Saturday, December 11 at 6:30 a.m.

Rules and regulations are available at: www.foodpantry.org

**Her smile says it all!** Ten-year old Yvette P. reports checking the boxes on her 5-A-Day-The Color-Way chart makes it fun to “choose and eat foods with lots of different colors.”

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