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## Village of Orland Park to Observe First "Family Day" on August 15



A new event has been added to the Village of Orland Park Summer Agenda --- Family Day on Saturday, August 15.

The Village of Orland Park, the Bridge Teen Center, South/Southwest Anti-Bullying Coalition and Mayor McLaughlin's Campaign to End Bullying are co-sponsoring the community's first Family Day for families to put their electronics aside and share a meal.

Family Day was created to encourage loved ones to share a meal together be it breakfast, lunch or dinner. The objective of this community-wide initiative is to encourage at least one hour unplugged --- free of social media and electronics allowing for meaningful conversations and quality time together.

"Now, more than ever, we need to come together as a community to address the serious issue of bullying," said Orland Park Mayor Dan McLaughlin. "One way that we can combat bullying is to stress the importance of family support. We hope that all families --- single parent, two parent, grandparents, guardians and caregivers --- will make Family Day a priority."

Writing for the Washington Post, Anne Fishel, an associate clinical professor of psychology at Harvard Medical School, wrote, "It turns out that sitting down for a nightly meal is great for the brain, the body and the spirit."

Fishel attributes dinnertime conversation with boosting vocabulary in young children and helping school age students score higher on achievement tests. Fischel noted, "Other researchers reported a consistent association between family dinner frequency and teen academic performance. Adolescents who ate family meals five to seven times a week were twice as likely to get As in school."

"Families are busy with parents working, getting kids to their activities and having full schedules all week long," said Trustee Dan Calandriello, chair of the village's Public Safety Committee and a member of the mayor's initiative. "We're hoping that our sponsoring a community wide event gives everyone the opportunity to sit down, put their phones aside and spend some time together," he said.

According to the Journal of the American Medical Association, "Family connection has been consistently related to healthy youth development and a reduced risk for emotional distress, substance use, violence involvement, unhealthy weight control and sexual behaviors." Research also indicates that spending time with family around the dinner table greatly reduces the effects of bullying among young people.

Priscilla Steinmetz, executive director of The Bridge Teen Center in Orland Park, combats bullying by providing free programs during after-school and unsupervised hours where students can develop mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually in a safe environment. Steinmetz worked with the village to make Family Day a reality in Orland Park.

"At the Bridge, we believe that family is the foundation on which a student's future is built. We are honored to be part of this community-wide effort that promotes the importance of something so simple yet so impactful --- sharing a meal together," Steinmetz said.

"We hope local families allow this day to become a catalyst for setting aside one day a month or each week to intentionally connect as a family unit," she said.

The Bridge Teen Center is a nonprofit community center that was designed around the interests and needs of teens in the suburbs. Located in Orland Park, the center serves teens and families from all over the Chicago Southland and northwest Indiana. The center provides free programs during after-school and unsupervised hours for students in seventh through twelfth grades. It is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization that receives no ongoing federal or state funding. Additional information about The Bridge Teen Center is available at [www.thebridgeteencenter.org](http://www.thebridgeteencenter.org).

McLaughlin and Steinmetz have asked community organizations, institutions, companies and religious groups to refrain from scheduling events on August 15.

"We're hoping that Orland Park's many community and youth sports groups come on board and keep their calendars clear on August 15, allowing their members to spend the day with their families," the mayor said.

Organizations and sports groups that join Orland Park's Family Day effort will be recognized via the village's online, print and social media outlets.

This joint effort formed from Mayor McLaughlin's involvement with the U.S. Conference of Mayors' Campaign to End Bullying and The Bridge Teen Center's South/Southwest Bully Coalition. The collaboration formed to address bullying.

Families wanting to participate in Orland Park's Family Day can download a free Family Kit with recipes, game ideas and conversation starters.

Hard copy Family Kits are free to Village of Orland Park residents and Bridge Teen Center families. There is a \$5 charge for others.

Kits are available at the Orland Park Village Hall, 14700 South Ravinia Avenue and at The Bridge Teen Center, 15555 South 71st Court. Kits and additional information will also be available at the Taste of Orland Park at the Village Center July 31 to August 2.

Online kits and additional information can be found at [www.orlandpark.org/bullyingstopshere](http://www.orlandpark.org/bullyingstopshere).