

» BUSINESS

You Are...

» James Jackson

You are what you eat. It's a common phrase that is more than 190 years old, yet one we still have trouble adhering to today.

Not to be taken literally, of course, but "you are what you eat" is the basic idea that the food you consume influences both your health and state of mind – and it's also the name of Conestogo resident Stephanie Forte's newest business.

Forte, who has spent the past 14 years as a registered massage therapist, has decided to expand her business to include nutrition and health coaching and some personal training as well.

"I've been in fitness and health all my life. That's where my passion lies," said Forte while sitting in her home office at 2180 Hunzberger Rd.

"What I want to do is help the general public learn to eat again, and dispel some of the myths that are out there about what is good, what's not, what you should eat, and what you shouldn't."

Forte said her passion for health started during her teenage years when she was 30 pounds overweight. Her struggle with trying to achieve a healthy lifestyle is what inspired her to want to do the same for others.

She studied physical education and biology, and after a brief stint as a teacher, decided to switch to massage therapy. She also has experience as a doula, providing support for women in labour, and said making the move to becoming a nutrition and health coach was a natural progression for her.

Conestogo massage therapist who's branching out says nutrition is a key factor in overall wellness



She said her aim is to make life simpler for people, and said she sometimes takes for granted the fact that not everyone has the same nutrition training as she does and have trouble making the right choice when it comes to eating healthier.

"I'll teach people to read labels, and I'll offer a service where I'll go shopping with people. We'll go through the aisles and learn to read the labels and learn to make better choices, because there is a lot of confusion," she said, adding she will also go to a client's home and help them look through their cupboards and fridge to spot the not-so-healthy choices.

"I'm not going to throw it out like they do on TV," she laughed. "I just want to help people understand what it is they're eating."

Forte will also give instruction on portion sizes, and help convince her clients that making dinner at home and eating healthy doesn't take a lot of time or money. She is not trained as a dietitian, she said, but instead all of her knowledge is self-taught by studying materials on the subject and through her educational background.

There are a few simple tricks that Forte uses to help clients achieve their weight goals or their healthy lifestyle changes.

One of the first things

What You Eat

CHOICES Stephanie Forte is expanding her massage therapy business to include health and nutrition coaching as well as personal training in 2012. Her aim is to help clients eat healthier foods and lead a more healthful lifestyle.

small changes that will go virtually unnoticed, such as using whole wheat pasta instead of white.

Forte also stressed making cooking a family affair where everyone can get involved, that way cooking will be viewed as less of a chore and more of an activity to do together.

"And start your child early on real food," instead of food bought in jars, said Forte, who has a three-year-old son of her own.

"I take a sweet potato, put it in the microwave until it's soft, mash it up and I'm done. It's easy, and cheaper."

Forte is a big proponent of what she also calls the six pillars of health, which are sleep, thoughts, breathing, drink, eating, and movement. She stresses to her clients that they need to get adequate sleep at night, drink enough water, eat the right food, and stay in motion. She purposely avoids the word "exercise" though, as it can have negative connotations for some people, which could then discourage them from doing any activity at all.

"The key is to find something that you enjoy; whether that's swimming or running or playing sports, go back to thinking like you're a kid again."

With a new year upon us, Forte also recognizes the urge by most to make a New Years resolution to lose weight or start exercising more.

While those are good goals, she suggests to her clients not to get too far ahead of themselves and to just view every day as a new day and

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- LEROY MARTIN



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