

# Kitchen of Life bringing more than culinary skills to Bexley space

**By Dan Eaton—Staff reporter,  
Columbus Business First**

The most important skill students at Kitchen of Life will learn is resiliency.

The new culinary arts program for Columbus-area teens is about to get up and running at 2525 E. Main St. in Bexley. That site was previously home to the Bexley Premier Restaurant.

“Food is a medium where kids can learn,” said co-founder Rabbi Areyah Kaltmann, who launched the venture with his wife Esther and son Shea.

While the students will gain kitchen skills and food knowledge, the founders believe those culinary skills will translate to good mental health and happy and healthy kids.

Shea Kaltmann described it as “building resiliency through the culinary arts.”

“It’ll build self esteem while you’re having a good time,” he said.

Kitchen of Life expects to have 5,300 students in its first year. It is working with area school districts to identify its initial participants, who will then attend four two-hour sessions throughout the school year. Whitehall already is committed and had students on site for a Tuesday morning unveiling.

Neither students nor parents have to pay for the program, which has received money from the state as well as backing from the Columbus Foundation and members of the Schottenstein family.

Shea Kaltmann described the recipes as gourmet, but practical and said it will utilize ingredients typically found



*Culinary program Kitchen of Life is now open in the former Bexley Premier Restaurant space.* DAN EATON

around the home. Students also will be exposed to different cuisines with opportunities to make dishes from Somalia, Bhutan, Nepal and more.

Kitchen of Life was inspired by Our Big Kitchen, a program in Sydney, Australia. Areyah Kaltmann is a native of the country and encountered it work on a visit several years ago.

Jeffrey Schottenstein, CEO of Tackma sportswear, speaking at a Tuesday morning event, said too often the mental health of young people isn’t addressed until college age. Kitchen of Life aims to give skills and control before that point.

“They’re teaching how to make food, provide sustenance and feed others,” Ohio Sen. Matt Dolan (R-Chagrin Falls) said Tuesday.

The program’s curriculum was evaluated by Stephen Gavazzi, who leads Ohio State University’s CHRR, focused on human resource research. Cameron Mitchell Restaurants is helping with recipes and other culinary arts contributions.

Kitchen of Life is an offshoot of LifeTown, another program designed to help young people develop life skills. That is located in the Lori Schottenstein Chabad Center and is run by Esther Kaltmann.