

## by Dr. Janice Stanger

If you are vegetarian, you probably enjoy getting together with others who choose a plant-based diet. A local vegetarian group is a fun, convenient way to meet like-minded new friends. [Lin Silvan, Executive Director, Eugene Veg Education Network \(EVEN\)](#) has some thoughts on how you can start your own.

**Silvan:** First of all, there are a variety of reasons why a person would start a veg group. Being with like-minded people is a popular one. Some find it **socially** comforting. Probably the next



most common reason is that those who believe strongly enough in veganism as "a lifestyle and not just a diet," frequently feel the need to share the info they have with others. To advance the movement, they believe there needs to be **giveback**.

One can start a vegan **meet-up** or veg dining **club** where you can enjoy the social aspect as well as share recipes. A group can also organize a **dine-out** at a veg restaurant and have fun socializing as well as supporting a local business. And then, of course, there is the vegan **potluck**---one of the best known forms of socializing and recipe-swapping.

Potlucks are especially popular in November to honor Thanksgiving in a more peaceful, gentle way and also at those times of year to celebrate other occasions that have special significance to vegans---e.g., March for the Great American Meatout or perhaps during the summer to host a fun, healthful veg picnic. Great family fun. Wholesome.



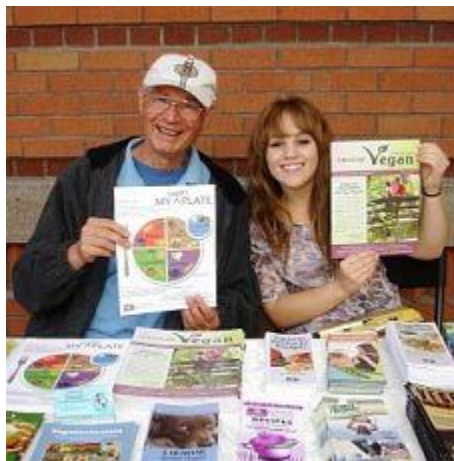
As fun as it is to be around kindred spirits, it is also extremely rewarding to bring **new folks** into the fold as well. Consider supplementing the social aspects of your group with **education** by sponsoring lectures by speakers in the vegan field who have information to share.



- **Authors, teachers, dietitians, environmentalists, animal rights advocates, cooks**, and other leaders in veg related fields.
- Related local and national non-profits.
- Local and national veg businesses.

The list can grow long with potential!

The best form of education is made through **outreach**, such as information tabling or leafleting. You can take advantage of special events to bring your information forward, such as Earth Day, or you can simply choose your favorite corner on any day to distribute brochures.



*(You can request free literature from national veg non-profits when they learn your interest in supporting the veg movement--- Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine [PCRM], Vegetarian Resource Group, Farm Animal Rights Movement [FARM], People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals [PETA], Compassion over Killing, American Vegan Society. There are many who will help your endeavor in whatever way they can. Just call them or visit their websites.)*

You can build a **website**, start a **Facebook** page, or design a **Veg Dining Guide**.

You can make yourself known in the community through flyers, posters, newsletters, networking, and Letters to the Editor.



Early on it is extremely helpful to contact other, larger, veg groups for ideas.

Scour the web for free social calendars on which to list your events. Use the power of the group to brainstorm ideas.

An organized group has a lot more clout than an individual. e.g., you're more

likely to be able to persuade a restaurant to add more veg options to its menu if you are a group rather than simply a lone patron.

Some good general rules of thumb: Don't preach. Just try to walk the walk in your *own* life.

Don't judge. Just inform.

Don't get into combat with anyone. *Help the people who want the help* and don't deplete your precious energy and time with any dunderhead or two you might encounter.



Don't be defensive. Stay on track and on topic with information that is relevant and don't take things personally.



Most importantly, read, read, read, and read some more. After all, how can we inform others if we're not well-versed ourselves!

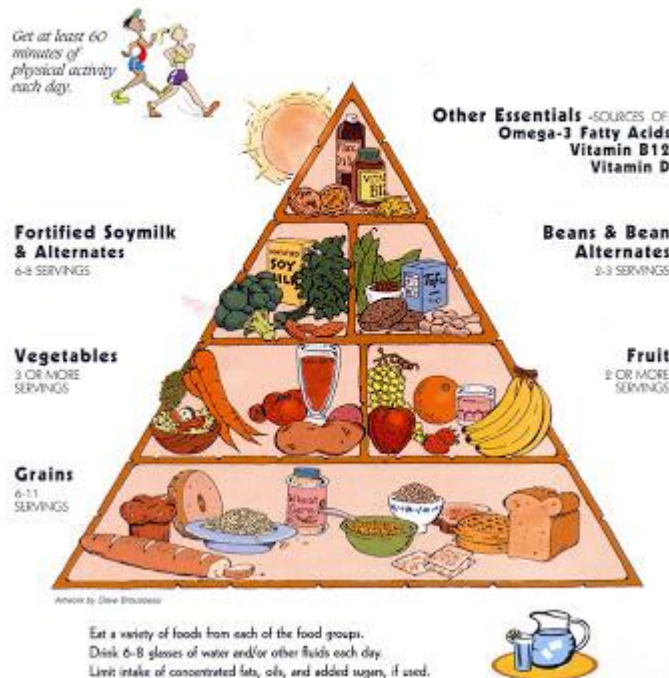
One of the most important ways to direct your group is to establish a clear purpose or Mission Statement. It helps keep you on

track with what you are trying to accomplish. Read the purpose and missions of other longer-established veg societies and see if any suit your own vision. Then design your own.

The possibilities for what type of group you want to form and how to proceed are absolutely limitless. Whatever you do, chances are excellent that your noble efforts will help advance kindness and compassion in the world, and enrich your own life, too. And isn't that a beautiful thing?

## VEGAN FOOD GUIDE

### DAILY PLAN FOR HEALTHY EATING



Email us with qq: [eugvegedunet@comcast.net](mailto:eugvegedunet@comcast.net)

*Eugene Veg Education Network*

*---EVEN - serving as a vegan resource since 2005---*

Check Out [EVEN's News Blog](#) for hundreds of valuable, vegan morsels.

The **Eugene Veg Education Network (EVEN)** is an **official 501(c)(3)** non-profit based in Eugene serving as a resource for those seeking information on a **healthful, vegan lifestyle**. EVEN's emphasis is one of **non-violence, compassion and sustainability**. Focus is on the **interconnectedness of all life** and how a plant-based diet benefits the earth, non-human animals, and the individual. EVEN's Mission Statement is **to inform, educate & encourage our members**--- as well as the larger community ---by providing pertinent information on veganism and its positive impact on the health of the planet and all its inhabitants. [www.eugeneveg.org](http://www.eugeneveg.org) **Peace.**