



Film: 9 minutes

Students at Common Threads don aprons and chef hats and learn basic kitchen skills, cooking techniques, how to read recipes, and the importance of fresh ingredients from the organization's Chef Instructors. In the process of preparing and sharing a healthy ethnic meal, they learn how to connect with their bodies, their neighbors, and the outside world — in bite-sized lessons. Common Threads provides programs in 18 different Chicago neighborhoods, one in Miami, and two in Los Angeles.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Grades 3 - 8
Health

Health - Standard 6. Understand essential concepts about nutrition and diet

- Know healthy eating practices (e.g., eating a nutritious breakfast, eating a variety of foods, eating nutritious meals and snacks at regular intervals to satisfy individual energy and growth needs)
- Know factors that influence food choices (e.g., activity level, peers, culture, religion, advertising, time, age, health, money/economics, convenience, environment, status, personal experience)

Resource - [McREL Content Knowledge – Standards & Benchmarks](#)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 🗣️ *Art Smith's mantra says, "Our world is a quilt. Its people the fabric. We are joined together by common threads - food, family, music, art." What does this mean to you? Do you agree? Can you give an example?*
- 🗣️ *Not only do the students who participate in the Common Threads program learn about the world through food they also learn about health, wellness, and nutrition. What have you learned about these things? Where did you learn about them? At home? At school? Why is it important to learn about health, wellness and nutrition?*
- 🗣️ *Art Smith says, "Kitchen is the heart of the home, and an important part of the kitchen is the table. If you've got issues with your family you need to spend more time at the table." What does he mean by this?*

ACTIVITY

Around the Dinner Table

Imagine you could invite anyone to your dinner table - even people from the past. Your goal is to "bring like-minded people together for a greater good and a better world".

Who would you invite?

What would you talk about?

What food would you eat?

🗣️ Charlie says, "It is my intent to bring like-minded people together for a greater good and a better world." What does Art Smith do that is for a greater good and a better world?

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Excerpts from interview at [explore.org](https://www.explore.org)

Art Smith is a chef, author, and television personality whose goal is to bring back meaning to the word "table" and unite families and friends through the sharing of a meal.



What is your dream for [Common Threads](#)?

My dream for Common Threads is to expand and deepen our programming to reach even more low-income children across the country, in every city in America. Today, we serve nearly 1,000 children across 18 sites in Chicago, two in Los Angeles, two in Miami, one in Washington, D.C., and a licensed Common Threads program that will operate independently at the Oprah Winfrey Boys & Girls Club in Kosciusko, Mississippi, as well as through our summer camp program and special classes. In some sense, I dream of bringing Common Threads to my little southern hometown of Jasper, FL.

What would you consider your organization's greatest accomplishment?

In only five years Common Threads has become one of Chicago's most respected new nonprofits. Our success has been a perfect recipe comprising a visionary leadership team, support of the nation's leading philanthropists, wide-spread media coverage and a program that has taught children about the role food can play in their health and personal development, as well as in their appreciation for cultural diversity and community.

- In January 2009, Common Threads piloted parent outreach meetings in Chicago. Based on the success of those meetings, we will launch a full-scale parent outreach initiative in 2010 comprising two parent meetings a year at each of our program sites; a last-day-of-class celebration to which we invite the families of our students; and the Common Threads cookbook, *Eat the World: Good for your Food for Families*, which we hope will become a beloved resource for children and their families to use together in the kitchen.
- In January 2009, Common Threads piloted a cross-cultural exchange field trip program in Chicago. During this field trip, children from two ethnically different communities came together to learn how to prepare a simple, healthy meal, and to build tolerance and respect. Based on the success in Chicago, we will launch field trips in each of our national sites in 2010.
- In September 2009, we added one new class in Miami, and we launched a brand new program site in Washington, D.C.

When a woman came up to me and said, "You're the man that taught my child how to cook!" I knew I had arrived!
