



**HR Highlights
July 2022**

July is National Picnic Month!

Summer is here, and July is a great month for picnics! A variety of local fruits and vegetables are reaching peak ripeness and Virginia has an abundance of natural settings to dine alfresco. While everyone appreciates a good meal, enjoying one in nature can provide many health benefits. Getting outside for a picnic can boost mood, increase energy, and decrease stress. The health perks are further increased when physical activity is involved, and picnics pair perfectly with nature walks, games, sports, and exercise. Activities like yoga, frisbee, hiking, badminton, birding, fishing, and kite-flying can add some healthy movement to your outing. Many picnic locations also provide a serene spot to practice mindfulness, meditation, and journaling- all of which can be beneficial for mental wellbeing.

If you are looking for places to picnic, there are many beautiful parks across the Commonwealth that offer ideal settings - many with picnic shelters and other amenities, like trails, grills, and waterway access. The Engage Anywhere team has partnered with Virginia State Parks to offer “Capture the Moment”, an exciting challenge which includes a scavenger hunt and photo contest that can add some extra fun into a state park picnic day. Participation in the challenge takes place from July 1-July 25, and the link for contest submissions will become available at <https://www.dhrm.virginia.gov/> **from July 20-27**, with employee **voting from August 1-5**. For more information, visit <https://www.dhrm.virginia.gov/docs/default-source/special-events/ea-vsp-savenger-hunt-photo-contest.pdf>.

When deciding which foods to pack, keep in mind that farmers’ markets are a wonderful way to get local fresh produce for your picnics. To find one near you, search the map at <https://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/vagrown/index.shtml>. For those in downtown Richmond, OnTheSquareVA also hosts a farmers’ market centrally located on the Capitol Square Complex near the Madison Building every Thursday through September 15. Choosing whole foods from these farmers’ markets for your picnics provides more nutrients and can save on the excess calories that often come with prepackaged foods. Many of the fruits and vegetables that are in-season during National Picnic Month are also full of water to help keep you hydrated in the summer heat- especially cucumbers, melons, celery, tomatoes, leafy greens, bell peppers, and berries. For help planning a healthy picnic meal, check out CommonHealth’s Build a Better Meal campaign at <https://commonhealth.virginia.gov/body-programs.html>.

Whether you choose to bring a snack to the beach by yourself or to prepare a meal to share with friends and family in the park, grab a blanket, get outside, and enjoy a picnic this month!