

# EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

## 2012 NC Cooperative Extension Congressional District 10

Serving Buncombe, Cleveland and Gaston counties

### EFNEP Uses Real Life Examples

Changing behavior can be very challenging for anyone because diet and lifestyle is greatly influenced by a person's culture, physical environment, and social networks; these challenges are often compounded for limited resource families because of constrained budgets. The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) helps address the challenges limited resource families face when introducing healthy changes through nutrition education, cooking classes, exercise strategies, and shopping on a limited budget. This program improves the lives of each one of these families through the positive changes they have made to reducing their risk of obesity related illnesses and supporting healthy lifestyles.

One reason why EFNEP participants are successful at changing lifestyle habits is because EFNEP uses real life situations to reinforce the skills learned in class. This is because people are more likely to adopt a new practice when they are able to translate class lessons to their own environment. Through collaborative efforts with the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service, EFNEP participants have the opportunity to tour a grocery store as a part of a series of classes where participants learned how to feed their families healthier foods on a limited budget.

Participants used the tour to practice using the skills they learned in class, such as comparing nutrition labels and practicing unit pricing on many different healthy foods. All the participants practiced finding foods low in fat, sodium, and high in nutrition. Participants were challenged to shop for nutritious foods from each food group to take home and prepare for their families. Each participant purchased a whole grain product, vegetable, fruit, low fat dairy item and a lean protein using skills gained in EFNEP for under \$10. As a result of the tour, participants said they had become more confident in their ability to shop for healthier foods, and the



experience connected the lessons learned in class to their real life shopping needs. Each participant expressed greater confidence in their ability to feed their families healthy foods on limited incomes.

### Successful Strategies to Reduce Sodium Intake

People with a high sodium diet have an increased risk of developing hypertension. Hypertension, or high blood pressure, is a chronic condition that is a major risk factor for stroke, heart attack, and chronic kidney disease. According to the American Heart Association, about 75% of the sodium that we consume comes from processed foods.<sup>1</sup> Many individuals are unaware of how much sodium they consume because they do not know how or do not take the time to read nutrition labels.

To help address this problem, NC Cooperative Extension partnered with Title 1 Parent Center at Graham Elementary to deliver the EFNEP series of nutrition classes to limited resource families. After completing a lesson on reading nutrition labels and healthy strategies to reduce sodium, one participant was so impressed with the information that she immediately began reading the nutrition label for each item she purchased, completely stopped using added salt in her cooking and began rinsing all her canned vegetables in a colander under cool running water. These healthy lifestyle changes can contribute to a better quality of life for all EFNEP participants.

These EFNEP lessons, like reducing added salt in cooking and choosing low sodium, less processed foods, demonstrate that simple and inexpensive changes can make a significant difference in the health and lives of people with limited resources.

1. Appel LJ. (2007) Food and Drug Administration, Salt and sodium: Petition to revise the regulatory status of salt and establish food labeling requirements regarding salt and sodium. [http://www.heart.org/idc/groups/heart-public/@wcm/@adv/documents/downloadable/ucm\\_312846.pdf](http://www.heart.org/idc/groups/heart-public/@wcm/@adv/documents/downloadable/ucm_312846.pdf)

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EDUCATION PROGRAM

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