

# EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

## 2012 NC Cooperative Extension Congressional District 12

Serving Cabarrus, Forsyth, Guilford, Mecklenburg and Rowan counties



### Participants Have Fun Learning Healthy Cooking

In Mecklenburg County, the number of overweight and obese individuals has steadily grown in recent years. In fact, compared to other states, North Carolina ranks 41st in obesity prevalence, and fewer adults are physically active (44.0% versus 49.5%).<sup>1</sup> This trend is appearing in children as well; more than 3 out of 10 children between the ages of 2-18 in North Carolina are overweight or obese, placing them at increased risk for developing diseases such as type 2 diabetes or hypertension and making them more likely to face social discrimination and have low self-esteem.<sup>2</sup>

Prolonged unhealthy eating and physical inactivity significantly contributes to chronic disease and obesity. Childhood obesity has become a major problem in recent years, and NC Cooperative Extension has conducted programs aimed at reducing the number of youth impacted by this epidemic.

One of the ways the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) is helping to combat these alarming figures is working with parents and their preschool children to encourage healthy eating habits. Through a series of classes, parents are taught basic nutrition concepts and sample healthy recipes to reduce calorie consumption, lower fat intake and decrease sodium in their family's diet. In turn, their children are introduced to colorful fruits, vegetables, proteins, grains and dairy, through a fun and engaging storytelling. One participant stated, "To be honest, I never had a desire to cook, until I attended EFNEP. Because of the nutritious and no sodium added recipes prepared at each session, I am able to recreate healthy recipes for my family to enjoy. Now I find joy and personal satisfaction in preparing meals for them that could reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke!" In this manner, both parents and children are taught to Eat Smart and Move More, thereby bridging the gap to healthy eating.

*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.*

1. United Health Foundation. America's health rankings: North Carolina. America's Health Rankings website. <http://www.americashealthrankings.org/yearcompare/2008/2009/NC.aspx>
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Overweight and obesity. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website. <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/childhood/consequences.html>.

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