

# EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

## 2012 NC Cooperative Extension Congressional District 13

Serving Durham, Edgecombe, Franklin, Nash, Vance, Wake and Wayne counties



### Participant Encourages Coworkers to Exercise

In Durham, approximately 65% of adults are overweight or obese this year.<sup>1</sup> Being overweight or obese is a significant risk factor for many chronic diseases, including diabetes, heart disease and some cancers. It is also very expensive: if the adult obesity rate remained at the 2008 rate of 29.5% rather than increasing, North Carolina would save an estimated \$851 per adult in health care costs by 2018, which is a savings of \$6 billion dollars.<sup>2</sup> Obesity is extremely damaging for North Carolina's health, quality of life, and finances.

To improve these concerning statistics, the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) partnered with Healthy Start Academy (HSA) to host a series of nutrition classes for parents in Durham County. One of the participants attended the sessions faithfully and loved the concept of the walking at home. She began an exercise group with her coworkers. The *Walk Indoors* DVD became a daily routine for the group Mondays through Thursdays for one hour.

This participant even influenced a fellow co-worker who struggled with weight gain. As a result of exercising on a regular basis, she lost four pounds and increased her water intake while cutting back on sodas. With the EFNEP participant's encouragement, the coworker began packing a healthy lunch instead of eating fast food every day.

Using *Walk Indoors* gave the participant a push to move more during her spare time. Now she walks the Duke Trail for two hours, four days a week and even uses the Total Gym system for six hours per week. She has lost weight, has a boost of energy, and rests better since incorporating more physical activity into her schedule. EFNEP shows how adding just a few more steps to your day can motivate a total lifestyle change.

*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.*

### Mother Learns New Ways to Save Money and Improve Her Family's Health

Currently in Wake County, 152,494 households, (almost half of all households) are considered low income. Of that number, 79,709 households live below the federal poverty line, which means they earn less than \$22,050 for a family of four.<sup>3</sup> This is a major concern because poverty is strongly associated with a wide range of health problems, including chronic disease. Research shows that the highest rates of obesity occur among population groups with the highest poverty rates.<sup>4</sup> This is partly influenced by the fact that the lowest cost food options are usually composed of unhealthy calories, including refined grains, added sugars and fats. Poverty is associated with low fruit and vegetable consumption and lower-quality diets.

But even families with limited resources can save money while still eating healthy. Attentiveness to details is one way that can help save money on groceries. In order to demonstrate how families can achieve healthy living on a budget, the Wake County Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) hosted a series of nutrition classes for parents. Budgeting food dollars was one of the most vital topics discussed throughout the sessions.

One married mother of two shared that before her first EFNEP class, her life and habits were very different. EFNEP changed not only her life, but her husband's and children's lives too. Before attending EFNEP, this participant never considered to buy generic brand groceries, believing they were lower quality than name-brand products. She had the misconception that "cheap is bad" and "expensive is good". Her first class explained to her those store brand names are as good as others. She tried the next time she went shopping and they realized at home that there were no differences between the two. The kids enjoyed the groceries, and they did not notice the brand difference.

Her lifestyle changes did not stop there. She was very thankful for EFNEP, and now she plans menus and makes shopping lists before going to the grocery store. She also taught her husband the skills she learned at EFNEP and now they shop together, which they enjoy spending time together and saving money. She even shared the lesson to the other family members too, such as her in-laws. Now, they are all eating healthier and saving money. They would not have made that change without the EFNEP class. They appreciated the WIC-EFNEP program to help the community.

1. State Center for Health Statistics, NC Department of Health and Human Services. North Carolina Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey System (BRFSS), 2005-2009. <http://www.schs.state.nc.us/SCHS/brfss>
2. Thorpe K. (2009) The Future Costs of Obesity: National and state estimates of the impacts of obesity on direct health care expenses. Collaborative report from United Health Foundation, the American Public Health Association and Partnership for Prevention.
3. Wake County Human Services Housing and Community Revitalization Division, 2010-2015 Consolidated Plan, Wake County. <http://www.wakegov.com/NR/rdonlyres/C122E410-5C8F-4657-9D1F-6B102A0072A2/0/2010WakeCoConsolidatedPlan.pdf>
4. Drewnowski A, Specter SE. (2004) Poverty and obesity: The role of energy density and energy costs. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 79(1): 6-16.

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