

EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

2012 NC Cooperative Extension Congressional District 2

Serving Cumberland, Franklin, Harnett, Lee, Nash, Sampson, Vance and Wake counties

Family Changes Their Diet for Better Health

In Lee County, cancer, heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes are among the leading causes of preventable death and disability; these diseases often stem from underlying risky health behaviors such as physical inactivity and poor diet.¹ By addressing these preventable, underlying health risk factors, the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) provides a cost effective education system for families who want to change their lifestyle choices, but need some initial support and training. Most people know that eating vegetables is a smart and healthy choice and can reduce the risk of chronic disease, but families with limited resources are less likely to implement healthy vegetables in to their and their children's diets.² EFNEP works to bridge the gap between knowledge and action.

In Lee County, one participant says that, after attending EFNEP's Families Eating Smart and Moving More, she is eating differently, has more energy and no longer feels weak. Her family has significantly reduced eating meals at unhealthy restaurants, and as a result they are cooking healthy meals at home and saving money. Before participating in EFNEP, this participant shared that she would often skip breakfast but now understands the importance of eating something healthy every morning. Now she will grab a piece of fruit or wheat toast as she leaves the house. Before EFNEP, potatoes, rice and refined pasta were dinner staples. Now she is preparing more vegetables and whole grains. In addition, she is involving her son in the kitchen so he can learn healthy habits as well.

EFNEP supports families who struggle overcoming the barriers to living a healthy lifestyle through education, budgeting, community support, and creative ways to prepare and cook healthy foods. With EFNEP, many families impacted by the program have made the necessary changes in their lifestyles to decrease their risk of chronic disease and improve their family's overall health and wellbeing.

1. Hastings J et al (2010) Prevention for the health of North Carolina. NC Med J, 71(1): 30-47.

2. Blisard N, Stewart H, Joliffe D. 2004. Low-income households' expenditures on fruits and vegetables. Agric. Econ. Rep. 833. Washington, DC: USDA; Leibtag ES, Kaufman PR. 2003. Exploring food purchase behavior of low-income households: How do they economize? Current Issues in Economics of Food Markets, United States Department of Agriculture, 747-07.

3. 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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Teacher See Improvement in Students' Food Choices

Prolonged unhealthy eating and physical inactivity significantly contribute to chronic disease and obesity. Childhood obesity has become a major problem in recent years; in fact, more than 3 out of 10 children between the ages of 2-18 in North Carolina are overweight or obese. This places them at an increased risk for developing diseases such as type 2 diabetes or hypertension and makes them more likely to face social discrimination and have low self-esteem.³ In order to reverse this unhealthy and dangerous trend in young people, the NC Cooperative Extension has conducted programs aimed at reducing the number of youth impacted by this epidemic.

The Cumberland County 4-H EFNEP partnered with Gallberry Farms Elementary School to implement a six-week program for 10-year-old students. The program focused on basic nutrition education, physical activity, and tasting nutritious foods. Through hands on activities, students learned how to read ingredient labels on common grain foods such as breakfast cereals, so that they could identify whole grain food products.

Post-evaluation results indicated that 100% of participants increased their food selection skills and 92% increased their physical activity level. A teacher reported the following about her students, "I have noticed an improvement in their food choices at lunch. Many of them are choosing and eating more fruits and vegetables. I have also observed an increase in students participating in group games at recess."

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.



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