

EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

2012 NC Cooperative Extension Congressional District 3

Serving Camden, Craven, Duplin, Lenoir, Nash, Onslow, Pitt and Wayne counties



Children Learn the Importance of Healthy Living

The youth in Camden County, like most of the youth in our country, face the problems of childhood obesity, which can lead to other health concerns. These problems stem from a lack of adequate exercise, healthy eating, and basic nutrition education. To make sure our youth have the knowledge and skills needed to fight childhood obesity, the 4-H Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (4-H EFNEP) and the Grandy Primary After-School presented an after-school program to help combat these problems.

The 4-H EFNEP program helps youth explore ways to eat smart, move more, fight bacteria, and have fun. During the series of classes, 44 youth practiced how to choose foods for good health, the importance of physical activity, and how to keep foods safe. Pre and post evaluations showed an increase in knowledge and healthy behavior. Our goal is to continue the program with other groups.

The 4-H Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program also partnered with kindergarten classes in the Elizabeth City Pasquotank School system to help children make healthier food choices and increase their physical activity. The six class series emphasized eating more fruits and vegetables. The children were encouraged to eat healthy snacks at home and school, and to make fruits and vegetables part of their lunches. Parents and teachers have noticed that the children are asking for more fruits and vegetables for snacks and are willing to eat more during meals. They are even competing to see who brings the best lunches or snacks.

Many of the teachers have asked that the 4-H EFNEP curriculum be taught each year.

Participants Learn How to Safely Defrost Foods

Foodborne illnesses are almost 100 percent preventable, but the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that 76 million foodborne illnesses occur in the US each year, including 325,000 hospitalizations and 5,000 deaths.¹ Proper food safety practices in preparing and storing food can significantly reduce the risk of foodborne illnesses. Because of the dangers associated with foodborne illnesses, the NC Cooperative Extension, in partnership with EFNEP, has taken the initiative to teach proper food safety skills to families in Onslow County.

Participants learned about the harmful effects of food borne illness, the rapid growth of dangerous bacteria that can occur from thawing foods out at room temperature, proper hand washing, safe cooking methods, and acceptable defrosting procedures. Before taking the class, the majority of the participants indicated they were defrosting foods by leaving it out on the counter for several hours. Even though this was a common practice years ago, research has shown that other methods are safer. All participants said they were going to now defrost the foods using the recommended methods, and they were going to family and friends to stop leaving food out to defrost. EFNEP not only is teaching about the importance of food safety, but is also helping to reduce food borne illnesses in Onslow County, which will in turn improve people's health and help reduce health care costs.

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. Mead PS, Slutsker L, Dietz V, McCaig LF, Bresee JS, Shapiro C, Griffin PM, Tauxe RV. Food-related illness and death in the United States. *Emerg Infect Dis.* 1999, 5:607-625.

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