

EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

2012 NC Cooperative Extension Congressional District 9

Serving Mecklenburg and Union counties

Teacher Uses Skills Learned in EFNEP to Influence Her Students' Health

The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) taught a series of lessons with adults in Union county. One participant, who is a teacher, shared that she has struggled with controlling the hyperactivity of one of her kindergarten students since the beginning of the school year. Upon learning how to read nutrition facts labels during an EFNEP class, the teacher taught her students how to do so as well in hopes that reducing his sugar intake would help improve his behavior. The class would go to the cafeteria together and read the labels on snacks and drinks to make healthy choices with less sugar. The lunchroom monitor, who is an EFNEP volunteer, stated that the particular student with hyperactivity has settled down and his teacher says his behavior and reading level has greatly improve. By educating teachers and adults the importance of good nutrition, this participant taught her student what she learned and he is now learning how to make healthy food and drink choices. This particular student has improved not only his health, but his ability to engage in the classroom and increase his learning potential.

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%).¹ 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.²

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 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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