

EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

2012 NC Cooperative Extension Ashe County

EFNEP Lessons Translate to Real Life Situations

Changing behavior can be very challenging for anyone because diet and lifestyle is greatly influenced by a person's culture, physical environment, and social networks; these challenges are often compounded for limited resource families because of constrained budgets. The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (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. This program improves the lives of each one of these families through the positive changes they have made to reducing their risk of obesity related illnesses and supporting healthy lifestyles.

One reason why EFNEP participants are successful at changing lifestyle habits is because EFNEP uses real life situations to reinforce the skills learned in class. This is because people are more likely to adopt a new practice when they are able to translate class lessons to their own environment. Through collaborative efforts with the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service, Ashe Center's EFNEP and the West Jefferson Wal-Mart, a "Shopping Matters Tour" was given for EFNEP participants in Wal-Mart as a part of a series of classes where participants learned how to feed their families healthier foods on a limited budget. Participants used the tour to practice using the skills they learned in class, such as comparing nutrition labels and practicing unit pricing on many different healthy foods. All the participants practiced finding foods low in fat, sodium, and high in nutrition. Using the \$10.00 gift card Wal-Mart gave each person, participants were challenged to shop for nutritious foods from each food group to take home and prepare for their families. Each participant purchased a whole grain product, vegetable, fruit, low fat dairy item and a lean protein using skills gained in EFNEP. Everyone shucked fresh corn for the first time! As a result of the tour, participants said they had become more confident in their ability to shop for healthier foods, and the experience connected the lessons learned in class to their real life shopping needs. Each participant expressed greater confidence in their ability to feed their families healthy foods on limited incomes.



Little Chefs Program Encourages Healthy Food Choices

In Ashe County, the number of overweight and obese children has steadily grown in recent years. This problem has serious consequences; schools and other agencies have seen the negative health implications associated with excessive weight in children and value prevention programs that promote healthy lifestyles. Ashe County's ongoing input from advisory leadership places significant value on programs centered on the health and wellness of families.

Through collaborative efforts with the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), 4-H Summer Parks, and the livestock agent at the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service, Ashe Center, 69 youth gained knowledge and developed life skills. They achieved this through an integrated and holistic approach and learned the connection between agriculture and their food supply and the value of consuming locally grown foods in a week long "Little Chefs" program.

In the "Little Chefs" program, youth learned how to plant vegetable seeds, how to harvest the vegetables and then how to cook a healthy meal with the vegetables they grew. 100% of participants prepared and tasted new foods; 90% added fruit and vegetables to daily snacks; 100% took home food/supplies/equipment; 100% increased daily physical activity; 100% improved decision making skills (e.g. reading labels, and making healthier food choices at home and when eating away from home). Through this team effort, youth experienced the connection between agriculture and food production and gained the necessary skills to choose and prepare healthier meals and snacks.

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EFNEP
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