

# EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

## 2012 NC Cooperative Extension Brunswick County



### EFNEP Participant Overcomes Obesity

Prolonged unhealthy eating and physical inactivity significantly contributes to chronic disease and obesity. Overweight and obesity are major risk factors for developing heart disease, which is one of the leading causes of death in the county. In Brunswick County, 68% of adults are overweight or obese, and only 18.5% of adults consume recommended 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables.<sup>1</sup> Because of these alarming findings from a 2012 Community Health Needs Assessment, the Brunswick County Health Department has made obesity reduction a top priority over the next five years.<sup>2</sup>

Prevention programs such as the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) are an effective way to reduce obesity in Brunswick County because EFNEP teaches participants how to make sound nutrition decisions, as well as teaching realistic strategies to increase physical activity. One Brunswick County EFNEP participant has been overweight all her life. After learning inexpensive ways to be more active and using smaller plates when eating, she has begun to lose weight. This has encouraged her to begin a regular exercise routine by walking at least a mile every day. EFNEP has helped her realize that small steps now can lead to a long and healthy life.

### EFNEP Uses Real Life Examples

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, EFNEP participants have the opportunity to tour a grocery store 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. 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 for under \$10. 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.

1. Brunswick County Health Department & Doshier Memorial Hospital. (2012) Community Health Needs Assessment. [http://www.doshier.org/docs/COMMUNITY\\_HEALTH\\_NEEDS\\_ASSESSMENT\\_APPROVED\\_6042012.pdf](http://www.doshier.org/docs/COMMUNITY_HEALTH_NEEDS_ASSESSMENT_APPROVED_6042012.pdf)

2. Ibid.

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