

EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

2012 NC Cooperative Extension Cabarrus County

Fruit and Vegetable Show Teaches Nutrition in a Creative and Fun Environment

In North Carolina, only 16.9% of high school students are getting the recommended 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day.¹ This is concerning because of the negative impact poor diets have on obesity and chronic diseases; in fact, more than 3 out of 10 children between the ages of 2-18 are overweight or obese in North Carolina.²

In order to encourage youth to increase their fruit and vegetable consumption, the Cabarrus County's Expanded Food and Nutrition Program (EFNEP), in partnership with Cabarrus County Schools, participated in a Fruit and Vegetable Show for 700 students. The EFNEP instructors presented information in a fun and interactive way on the five subcategories of vegetables. The students learned about different vegetables they had never eaten before, and were excited to go home and share the information with their families. One student in particular went home and told his parents what he had learned from the presentation. His parents were so impressed by his comments that they emailed the Cabarrus County Food and Nutrition Supervisor the following comments:

"Kim, my son is in fifth grade and attended the show. I did not get to see it myself, however, he told my husband and I many different facts about fruits and vegetables in the days following the show. For example, 'Did you know that cabbage can be purple?' He also asked us to guess which items were classified as a fruits or vegetables. I'm sure it is difficult to come up with a presentation that appeals to the younger, as well as the older children. But, he seemed to learn a lot from it."

By exposing children to new healthy vegetables, EFNEP encourages children to be excited about healthy living and increases their knowledge on nutrition and making healthy food choices.

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. Youth Risk Behavioral Survey. North Carolina Healthy Schools. Department of Public Instruction and Department of Health and Human Resources. 2009. <http://www.nchealthyschools.org/data/yrebs/>; 2009 National Youth Risk Behavioral Survey Overview. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Division of Adolescent and School Health. http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrebs/pdf/us_overview_yrebs.pdf
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Overweight and obesity. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/childhood/consequences.html>.

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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.



EFNEP
EXPANDED FOOD AND NUTRITION
EDUCATION PROGRAM

efnep@ncsu.edu • www.ncefne.org

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