

EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

2012 NC Cooperative Extension Columbus County

Participants Learn How to Increase Their Physical Activity

The North Carolina Cooperative Extension's Expanded Food and Nutrition Program (EFNEP) in Columbus County partnered with the Columbus County Health Department to teach classes to 160 families on the importance of getting at least 30 minutes of physical activity on most days of the week. Participants learned that consistent physical activity could reduce chronic diseases, reduce stress, help reduce obesity as well as improve their physical and mental well-being. They were given a walking DVD and stretch bands to help them achieve their goal to improve physical activity. They were also taught how to include physical activity into their daily activities such as parking farther away, washing their cars instead of taking them to car wash, and playing outside with their kids instead of watching TV.

At a follow up class, 50% of the participants said they were now getting at least 30 minutes of physical activity on most days of the week.

WIC Participants Increase Fruit and Vegetable Consumption

A diet rich in fruits and vegetables can help the body grow strong and can help to prevent disease. A Program Assistant in Columbus County partnered with the Health Department to offer a series of EFNEP classes to WIC participants. One class in particular focused on the importance of eating a variety of colors when consuming fruits and vegetables.

At the beginning of the class, 90% of participants were only eating one or two colors of fruits and vegetables and had no knowledge of the importance of eating a variety of fruits and vegetables. At the end of the class, 75% of participants reported that they now eat a greater variety of healthy produce.

Boy Decreases His Soda Intake and Uses EFNEP Water Bottle to Drink More Water

The increased consumption of soda and other sugar-sweetened beverages is directly linked to rising rates of obesity and diabetes among children and youth.¹ Americans consume about 65 more calories a day from soft drinks than they did 30 years ago, which can add up to about 7 pounds of weight gain every year, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It is critical that children and teens develop proper nutrition habits early in life because overweight or obese children are 70-80 percent more likely to become obese adults.² Beginning in childhood, they are at increased risk of Type 2 diabetes, cardiac problems, bone and joint problems, and the psychosocial impact of weight-related teasing.³

1. Ludwig DS, Peterson KE, Gortmaker SL. (2001) Relationship between consumption of sugar-sweetened drinks and childhood obesity: A prospective, observational analysis. *Lancet*, 357: 505-508.

2. http://www.heart.org/idc/groups/heart-public/@wcm/@fc/documents/downloadable/ucm_304175.pdf

3. Boston Public Health Commission. Think about your drink. Newsroom, 2008.

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One way EFNEP is working to reduce children's consumption of sugary drinks is teaching families about the benefits of water. Not only is water a healthy alternative to sodas and other sugary drinks because it is calorie-free, but water also transports nutrients and oxygen to cells, carries waste products away, and protects the body's organs and tissues.

The Columbus County 4-H EFNEP in partnership with Hallsboro Artesia Elementary School, taught a series of nutrition classes to students that emphasized health choices like replacing soda with water. After the lessons, students could distinguish different food groups and the different nutrients the body needs. The students also learned the important role water plays in transporting nutrients in the body.

Parents reported that their children were drinking more water; one parent in particular stated that she could never get her son to drink water before the EFNEP class, but now he drinks water out of his 4-H EFNEP water bottle. She said he fills it up every day before and after school. She was so excited that her child was finally drinking water instead of soft drinks. Because of the success and continued community interest in this first nutrition class series in Columbus County, EFNEP will continue to teach classes about healthy nutrition to students and families.

Students Remind Teachers about Food Safety Techniques

There are many common foodborne illnesses that are dangerous to people's health, including E-Coli, Salmonella and Norovirus. In many cases, these illnesses occur because of improper food handling. Without proper knowledge of food safety skills, there is an increased risk of illness. In order to decrease this risk, Columbus County North Carolina Cooperative Extension's 4-H EFNEP in partnership with Family Champions, taught a series of nutrition classes to students. One of the classes focused on proper food safety to decrease the risk of foodborne illnesses. Youth participated in hands on food demonstrations and practiced food safety rules, such as proper cleaning, cooking, and storing food.

One fun way the students were tested on what they had learned was at the end of the lesson while the participants were eating their fruit kabob snacks, the EFNEP instructor asked them if she could have a bite of their tasty looking fruit kabob. The youth participants were quick to let the instructor know that they would not share their fruit kabobs because of the possibility of spreading germs. Students thought that this was quite funny, but remembered what had been taught in the classes.

Due to the interest and success of the 4-H EFNEP program, the nutrition programs for Columbus County youth will continue.



EFNEP
EXPANDED FOOD AND NUTRITION
EDUCATION PROGRAM

efnep@ncsu.edu • www.ncefne.org

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