

EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

2012 NC Cooperative Extension Cumberland County

Teacher See Improvement in Students' Food Choices

Prolonged unhealthy eating and physical inactivity significantly contribute to chronic disease and obesity. Childhood obesity has become a major problem in recent years; in fact, more than 3 out of 10 children between the ages of 2-18 in North Carolina are overweight or obese. This places them at an increased risk for developing diseases such as type 2 diabetes or hypertension and makes them more likely to face social discrimination and have low self-esteem.¹ In order to reverse this unhealthy and dangerous trend in young people, the NC Cooperative Extension has conducted programs aimed at reducing the number of youth impacted by this epidemic.

The Cumberland County 4-H Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) partnered with Gallberry Farms Elementary School to implement a six-week program for 10-year-old students. The program focused on basic nutrition education, physical activity, and tasting nutritious and unique foods. Through hands on activities, participants learned how to read ingredient labels on common grain foods such as breakfast cereals, so that they could identify whole grain food products.

Post-evaluation results indicated that 100% of participants increased their food selection skills and 92% increased their physical activity level. A teacher reported the following about her students, "I have noticed an improvement in their food choices at lunch. Many of them are choosing and eating more fruits and vegetables. I have also observed an increase in students participating in group games at recess."

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 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. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Overweight and obesity. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website. <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/childhood/consequences.html>.

Distributed in furtherance of the acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914. North Carolina State University and North Carolina A&T State University commit themselves to positive action to secure equal opportunity regardless of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, sex, age, or disability. In addition, the two Universities welcome all persons without regard to sexual orientation. North Carolina State University, North Carolina A&T State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments cooperating.



EFNEP
EXPANDED FOOD AND NUTRITION
EDUCATION PROGRAM

efnep@ncsu.edu • www.ncefne.org

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

NORTH CAROLINA A&T
STATE UNIVERSITY

NC State University
A&T State University
**COOPERATIVE
EXTENSION**
Empowering People • Providing Solutions