

EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

2012 NC Cooperative Extension Gaston County

Picky Eater Tries New Foods and Discovers He Likes Them

Research shows that fruits and vegetables can help protect from diseases, such as cancer and heart disease, and also promote overall good health. Yet only 16.9% of high school students in North Carolina are getting 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day.¹ In order to help increase Gaston County youth's consumption of fruits and vegetables, the Harvesting Healthy Youth program and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Program partnered with a Gaston County 4th grade class to share fun ways to eat more fruits and vegetables. Students planted and harvested vegetables, learned about nutrition, and actually sampled products that were grown in their school garden.

During one lesson, the Program Assistant (PA) noticed a child who would not participate in trying the various foods. Through the PA's encouragement, the child began to taste each vegetable offered, and to his surprise, found that he actually liked the vegetables. When his mother came to pick him up, he was excited to tell her about what he had tasted and asked her to make the same vegetables at home. All of the 20 students in the class tried the different vegetables and discovered not only how delicious the vegetables tasted, but learned the important role that vegetables have in their bodies. After being given the opportunity to try different healthy foods through EFNEP, the students said they will now eat more vegetables which will provide them nutrients for better health.

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.



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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/yrbs/>; 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/yrbs/pdf/us_overview_yrbs.pdf

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