

# EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

## 2012 NC Cooperative Extension Pasquotank/Camden County

### Young Mother Learns How to Prepare Healthy Meals

Changing behavior can be very challenging for anyone because diet and lifestyle are 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. In addition, limited resource families often have a difficult time gaining access to information on nutrition and health related data. This is a major concern because poverty is strongly associated with a wide range of health problems, including chronic disease. Research shows that the highest rates of obesity occur among population groups with the highest poverty rates.<sup>1</sup> This is partly influenced by the fact that the lowest cost food options are usually composed of unhealthy calories, including refined grains, added sugars and fats. Poverty is associated with low fruit and vegetable consumption and lower-quality diets.

In Pasquotank County, the Expanded Food and Nutrition Program (EFNEP) helps address the challenges limited resource families face when introducing healthy lifestyle 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 with the positive changes they have made by reducing their risk of obesity related illnesses and supporting healthy lifestyles.

One of the participants, a young single mother, was referred to EFNEP by the office management of the Housing Authority to learn how to prepare healthier meals for her family. After attending the classes, she says she now practices food and kitchen safety, meal planning, organizing and storage, and understands how to read food labels. EFNEP also provided skill builders to aid with daily routines that make her chaotic life a little easier and healthier for herself and her children.

### Children Get Excited about Healthy Foods

The number of overweight and obese children has steadily grown in recent years. This problem has serious consequences; schools and other agencies have seen the negative health implications associated with excessive weight in children and value prevention programs that promote healthy lifestyles. Prolonged unhealthy eating and physical inactivity significantly contributes to chronic disease

and obesity. Childhood obesity has become a major problem in recent years, and NC Cooperative Extension has conducted programs aimed at reducing the number of youth impacted by this epidemic.

EFNEP partnered with the Elizabeth City Pasquotank School system to help children make healthier food choices and increase their physical activity. During a series of six classes, emphasis was placed on eating more fruits and vegetables. The children were encouraged to choose healthy snacks at home and school, and to include fruits and vegetables in their lunches. After the EFNEP classes, parents and teachers have noticed that their children are asking for more fruits and vegetables for snacks and are willing to eat more healthy foods during meals.

### Youth Get Moving

Today's youth have many advantages and opportunities because of technology and the computer age. They can play games and visit with friends for hours without taking a step or leaving their seat. Yet while these advances may expand their knowledge and socialization, it can also expand their waistbands and could lead to obesity. These sedentary activities are some of the leading causes of childhood obesity. When connected with a nutritious diet, physical activity an important component in combating obesity. Physical activity provides many benefits, including lowered blood pressure, decreased cholesterol levels, and a reduced risk of obesity related diseases.

To combat the problem of childhood obesity and increase physical activity in youth, 4H EFNEP in Pasquotank/Camden Counties provide physical activity programs at after school programs. The youth are encouraged to get an hour of physical activity every day. In addition, they are encouraging their families to participate with them.



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1. Drewnowski A, Specter SE. (2004) Poverty and obesity: The role of energy density and energy costs. American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, 79(1): 6-16.

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efnep@ncsu.edu • www.ncefne.org

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