

EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

2012 NC Cooperative Extension Wake County

Woman Discovers She Has Increased Energy After Implementing an Exercise Routine

In Wake County, 26% of adults are overweight or obese.¹ In order to address the obesity epidemic in North Carolina, many organizations have collaborated with the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) to educate people about the importance of good nutrition and physical activity. EFNEP aims to reduce the rising tide of obesity by teaching youth and families practical skills to help them to eat smart, move more, and achieve a healthy weight.

The WIC program at Wake County Public Health Department in Raleigh is one of EFNEP's collaborating agencies where limited resource families are given skills to eat smarter and move more in their everyday lives. After attending the EFNEP lesson, one participant shared that she began walking for 30 minutes every day because of what she learned in class about the importance of physical activity. She even stated that she was attending the gym at least three days per week. She says she is happier, and she could also "keep up with her grandbaby." The participant also shared that she looks forward to attending EFNEP classes now, and she "can't wait for the next one to learn something else."

Another EFNEP participant said, "If it had not been for the EFNEP lessons, I would still be overweight and lazy today." Four months after completing the program, she says that she has so much energy because she is exercising more. She is very thankful for the EFNEP lessons given and all its knowledge helped her attain a healthier lifestyle.

Mother Learns New Ways to Save Money and Improve Her Family's Health

Currently in Wake County, 152,494 households, (almost half of all households) are considered low income. Of that number, 79,709 households live below the federal poverty line, which means they earn less than \$22,050 for a family of four.² 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.³ 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.

But even families with limited resources can save money while still eating healthy. Attention to details is one way that can help save money on groceries. In order to demonstrate how families can achieve healthy living on a budget, the Wake County Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) hosted a series of nutrition classes

for parents. Budgeting food dollars was one of the most vital topics discussed throughout the sessions.

One married mother of two shared that before her first EFNEP class, her life and habits were very different. EFNEP changed not only her life, but her husband's and children's lives too. Before attending EFNEP, this participant never considered to buy generic brand groceries, believing they were lower quality than name-brand products. She had the misconception that "cheap is bad" and "expensive is good". Her first class explained to her those store brand names are as good as others. She tried the next time she went shopping and they realized at home that there were no differences between the two. The kids enjoyed the groceries, and they did not notice the brand difference.

Her lifestyle changes did not stop there. She was very thankful for EFNEP, and now she plans menus and makes shopping lists before going to the grocery store. She also taught her husband the skills she learned at EFNEP and now they shop together, which they enjoy spending time together and saving money. She even shared the lesson to the other family members too, such as her in-laws. Now, they are all eating healthier and saving money. They would not have made that change without the EFNEP class. They appreciated the WIC-EFNEP program to help the community.

Students Challenge Their School to Improve Their Physical Activity

Currently, more than 3 out of 10 children between the ages of 2-18 in North Carolina are overweight or obese, which places them at increased risk for developing diseases such as type 2 diabetes or hypertension and making them more likely to face social discrimination and have low self-esteem.⁴ This is highly concerning because children who are overweight or obese have a 70–80 percent chance of being overweight or obese their entire lives.⁵ When combined with a nutritious diet, physical activity is an important component of decreasing the risk of obesity and obesity related diseases.

When a 2nd grade class in Wake County participated in the exercises as part of a series of lessons presented to them by the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), they became very excited and challenged each other to exercise for longer periods each day until they reached the daily recommended amount or more. With that in mind, the entire class and their teacher enjoyed the physical fitness section, especially the bean bag boogie. Each student increased their exercise to at least one hour or more each day. They also took it a step forward by challenging the entire second grade at their school to improve their physical activity habits. When exercise become a fun part of your day and becomes a habit you can become healthier, decrease your risk of disease, and live longer.

1. County Health Rankings, Wake, North Carolina <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/node/2116/11>

2. Wake County Human Services Housing and Community Revitalization Division, 2010-2015 Consolidated Plan, Wake County. <http://www.wakegov.com/NR/rdonlyres/C122E410-5C8F-4657-9D1F-6B102A0072A2/0/2010WakeCoConsolidatedPlan.pdf>

3. 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.

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

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

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