2012 NC Cooperative Extension
Yancey County

Children Get Excited about Nutrition

In Yancey County, Bald Creek Elementary partnered with the local health department and Cooperative Extension's EFNEP program to produce a vegetable garden on school grounds through a grant received from the Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project. The purpose of the project was to promote the student's intake of fruits and vegetables and to increase the availability of healthy food retail sites in the community.

This summer, Bald Creek enlisted the county's 4-H EFNEP program assistant (PA) to lead the children in garden-based nutrition education camp. Meeting with the children twice a week for four weeks, the PA facilitated hands-on learning activities that taught gardening skills, basic nutrition, and food preparation skills. Each day the children prepared and taste-tested their own fruit and vegetable snacks. Snack recipes were sent home to help students share their experiences with family members.

One parent emailed the EFNEP PA and said, "I am thrilled that you were involved with the children's day camp happenings at Bald Creek! When the children came home, they tell me all about the fruit or vegetable dish they had made with you that day."

The children attending Bald Creek's garden-based education camp were equally as excited. When preparing a cooked cabbage dish, one child exclaimed, "This is a new food for me!" Another stated, "I've never seen anyone cook cabbage before!"

Post program surveys indicated the children participating in this summer gardening camp had increased their nutrition knowledge, preparation skills, and intake of fruits and vegetables. Specifically, 90% of the children enjoyed learning nutritional facts about the fruits and vegetables they grew, 97% of the children enjoyed preparing those fruits and vegetables as snacks, and 100% of the children enjoyed taste-testing the healthy snacks they prepared. These improvements help promote good health and prevent these children from contracting chronic diseases related to poor fruit and vegetable consumption as they grow older.

Students Are Shocked about the Amount of Sugar in Sodas

To reduce the health risks and medical costs associated with drinking sugar sweetened beverages, the EFNEP program associate in Yancey County facilitated the "Think Your Drink" activity with local 5th graders. She asked them to measure the number of teaspoons of sugar they thought were in a serving size of their favorite soft drink. The students expected high levels of sugar would be found in soft drinks, but were shocked to discover the average amount of sugar in one serving was 10 to 18 teaspoons.

To emphasize the quantity of sugar and calories consumed, the students were challenged to complete two math problems. They calculated the number of calories found in various sizes of soft drink containers. They also calculated the number of pounds of sugar they would consume in one year based on individual soft drink consumption.

After the program, pre/post behavior surveys showed 60% of the students had lowered their consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages. Because fewer sugar-sweetened drinks are now being consumed, health risks and medical costs associated with overweight and obesity should be reduced for 5th grade children in Yancey County.

> *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.*

EFNEP EXPANDED FOOD AND NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAM

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

NORTH CAROLINA A&T STATE UNIVERSITY

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

efnep@ncsu.edu • www.ncefnep.org