

# EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

## 2013 NC Cooperative Extension North Carolina Report

### FOOD SAFETY

#### Handwashing Increases And Colds Decrease After Youth Participate In EFNEP

It is estimated that 22 million school days are lost each year due to colds and illnesses, most of which can be avoided by practicing better hygiene. Hand washing and proper use of hand sanitizer are effective ways to prevent the spread of germs.

An important goal of the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) is to improve food safety behaviors that can help avoid illness. As part of a lesson with 4-H EFNEP in Bertie County, youth learned the importance of hand washing and what can happen if we are careless with food safety. They participated in activities that taught them about harmful bacteria and viruses and learned that although we can't see them, bacteria and viruses that can potentially make us sick are everywhere. Following the activities, youth learned proper techniques for washing their hands to prevent illness.

After the lesson, one teacher noticed her students washed their hands more frequently and did so without needing additional instruction. Most students kept their hand sanitizers close by and used them after playing outside, during recess,

before eating lunch, and before eating snacks. The teacher reported that her students had fewer colds than the previous year, and that because they were properly washing their hands, they were spreading fewer germs to each other and missing fewer days of school.

EFNEP supports school success by helping youth adopt healthy behaviors.

<http://www.itsasnap.org/snap/statistics.asp>



***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.***

### DIET QUALITY

#### Needy Families Make Big Changes in Fruit and Vegetable Intake



According to the data from the Map the Meal Gap project conducted by Feeding America (2011), the food insecurity in Harnett County (18.5%) is higher than the state average (17%).<sup>1</sup> Families facing food insecurity must choose from low-cost foods that tend to be high in calories and low in nutritional value. This can attribute to 31.9% of Harnett County adults being obese.<sup>2</sup> With the purpose to make a positive change on the factors attributing to obesity, Harnett County Cooperative Extension partnered with Martha's Place Food Pantry to offer a series of lessons from the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program's (EFNEP) *Families Eating Smart and Moving More* curriculum.

Martha's Place is a partner in the USDA research project, *Voices into Action: The Families, Food and Health Project* and had indicated a high need for nutrition education for their clients. The pantry director shared he was interested in providing clients with information and skills to utilize the foods they receive from the pantry. The Director also wanted EFNEP to help clients manage their food resources to provide healthy foods throughout the month at a low cost and rely less on emergency food supplies.

Twenty-two food pantry clients enrolled in the series of EFNEP classes offered on-site at Martha's Place. Throughout the series of lessons, participants learned to plan nutritious meals, save money at the grocery store, get more fruits and vegetables on their plate, make smart drink choices, read nutrition labels and get more physical activity. Of the eleven participants that graduated, pre and post food recalls showed that 53% increased fruit and 73% increased vegetable consumption.

As a result of the classes, one participant reported losing eight pounds. She said she replaced junk food with fruits and vegetables. Instead of potato chips and donuts for breakfast, she is now having scrambled eggs with wheat bread and water or milk. She has replaced meat with beans as a protein for many meals. She reported that her doctor is happy with the changes she has made and he asked her to keep it up. This is just one example of the positive feedback Martha's Place has received from participants sharing their excitement in the changes they have made.

1. <http://feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hunger-studies/map-the-meal-gap.aspx>

2. <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-environment-atlas/go-to-the-atlas.aspx#Uvz6TEjdWZc>

## FOOD RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

### Mother Reduces Grocery Bill, Involves Children In Shopping

The Bureau of Labor Statistics has reported that the consumer price index for food at home has increased 2.8 percent since February 2011.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, the prices of fruits, vegetables, grain products, meats, and dairy foods have increased over the last year.<sup>4</sup> Increasingly, it has become important for families, especially those of limited resources, to shop wisely and make the most of the foods they have on hand.

The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) offered a series of lessons attended by a mother with a family of five. The participant stated that she wanted to save money on her groceries because it was becoming very expensive to feed her family. The EFNEP Program Assistant taught the participant strategies to help her plan and prepare healthy meals for her family. The participant learned skills to help her plan healthy meals and shop on a limited budget using a shopping list, unit pricing, and comparing products to get the best nutrition at the best buy.

Additionally, the participant learned ways she could involve her children in the grocery shopping.

Following the lesson, the participant started allowing her children to select fruits and vegetables and retrieve some of the items on the grocery list. She shared that it became “a great way to keep the kids focused and teach them about healthier food options.” Also, she said shopping trips became quick and efficient. By following the strategies she learned from EFNEP, the participant shared that she learned to feed her family for about \$400 a month, instead of the \$800 she had been spending previously.



## NUTRITION PRACTICES

### Reading Labels Helps Participant Control Blood Pressure

Knowing how to read the Nutrition Facts Label found on commercial food products is an important skill for consumers. It is an especially important skill for individuals with chronic diseases like diabetes or hypertension. The label shares important information about the nutrients and ingredients found in the food product. Reading and understanding the label can help individuals with nutrition-related chronic diseases better control their health conditions.

One woman participating in a Buncombe County Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) series had been recently diagnosed with high blood pressure. She knew she had to watch her sodium intake, but wasn't concerned as she thought she consumed a good diet. For example, she knew breakfast was an important meal so she ate a pre-packaged turkey sausage biscuit each morning before going to work. The participant asked, “How could a processed turkey sausage biscuit be high in sodium?” EFNEP helped her discover the answer to that question. Through EFNEP, she learned how to read the Nutrition Facts Label and compare products for health benefits. When doing so, she learned that pre-packaged turkey sausage biscuits were high in both sodium and fat. So when she asked, “What can I eat for breakfast instead?” the EFNEP program assistant suggested that she substitute fresh fruit and cottage cheese for the turkey sausage biscuits, and whole-wheat English muffins or toast for the high fat biscuits.

By the end of the EFNEP series, the participant stated that because she could now read the Nutrition Facts Label, her blood pressure had dropped and she was making healthier food choices for her family. Her breakfasts were healthier and so were the other meals she planned and prepared for her family!

3. <http://missourifamilies.org/features/nutritionarticles/nut401.htm>

4. <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/cpi.pdf>

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

### Participant Learns Way To Move More, Loses 30 Pounds

In North Carolina, approximately 65.3% of adults are overweight and obese. Only 18.3% meet the current recommendations for physical activity.<sup>5</sup>

In an effort to help combat this problem, the EFNEP Program Associate with Surry County Cooperative Extension partnered with the Workforce Development Center to teach classes that provide participants with strategies to make healthy choices. During each lesson, participants were encouraged to increase their physical activity and learned simple activities they could do at home.

At the end of the program, one participant stated, "Before, I could not even walk to the end of my driveway to get my mail without losing my breath. Now, however, I have lost over 30 pounds and walk all through the neighborhood feeling great. At my last check-up, my health had improved so much that my doctor said he thought he was examining a totally different patient."



## QUALITY OF LIFE

### EFNEP Classes Improve Family Meals And Reading Literacy

Research shows that improving food and nutrition knowledge and cooking skills can lead to healthier food choices and behaviors.<sup>6</sup> This in turn results in more meals prepared at home and ultimately better health outcomes.<sup>7</sup>

During a series of Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) lessons, participants learned about the importance of making healthy choices. As part of each lesson, the EFNEP participants were provided with an opportunity to practice basic cooking skills supporting the healthy eating strategies they were learning. At each meeting, participants learned to read a recipe and prepared the recipe as a group. The EFNEP program assistant guided participants in developing basic knife skills, basic measuring skills, including temperature measurements, and provided quick preparation tips to make healthy meals at home.

At one class a participant shared that she had improved her reading skills because of the way the program assistant reviewed the recipe during each meeting. She said that at the start of the lessons she was embarrassed to share with the class that she couldn't read very well. However, now the participant stated, "I'm proud of myself for reading along with the EFNEP Program Assistant as we went over the (recipe) handout. It helped me learn more words." While the program goals center around the adoption of healthy eating behaviors and this was achieved, this participant gained even more. She not only learned skills to improve her family's health, she learned skills to improve her life.

5. <http://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/Data/Texts/Quick%20Facts.pdf>

6. Michaud P, Griffin S, Condrasky M. Review and application of current literature related to culinary programs for nutrition educators. Topics in Clinical Nutrition. 2007;22(4):336-34.

7. Kitaoka K, Nagaoka J, Matsuoka T, Shigemura C, Harada K, Aoi W, ... Higashi A. Dietary intervention with cooking instructions and self-monitoring of the diet in free-living hypertensive men. Clinical and Experimental Hypertension. 2012;35(2):120-127.

## PERSONAL GROWTH AND SUCCESS

### Young Mother Becomes Counselor, Helps Other Young Mothers Succeed Too

Adequate nutrition for teenage mothers is vital. Cooperative Extension's Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) in Guilford County helps young women acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes and changed behavior necessary for nutritionally sound diets; which will contribute to giving birth to a healthy baby.

During a recent lesson at a group home, the Pregnant/Parenting Teens program assistant in Guilford County reconnected with a participant, now serving as an EFNEP volunteer, whom she had taught in 2005. At that time, the participant was an 18 year-old pregnant woman who wanted to learn how to care for herself and her new baby. The program assistant talked with her about the importance of making healthy choices by choosing fruits and vegetables as part of meals and snacks. Also, the program assistant taught her how to prepare healthy, inexpensive recipes at home and the importance of limiting unhealthy fast food items.

Recently, the participant shared that, following the series of EFNEP lessons, she enrolled and graduated from college and became an On-Site Counselor for the group home where she had been a participant. She shared that she

continues to make the EFNEP recipes at home with her son and teaches him about the importance of eating fruits and vegetables.

The participant stated, "I am very thankful for the information I learned from EFNEP because I know I needed to eat better." EFNEP not only provided her with nutrition education that resulted in a healthier lifestyle for both herself and her young son, the program gave her the confidence to pursue her dreams. The participant knows she is a role model to the other young women and teenagers at the group home. Recently, the participant began studying to become a nurse.

This is a great example of how EFNEP has helped a young mother learn the necessary skills to make healthy choices for herself and her young son. With the knowledge and support EFNEP provides, we are able to educate and encourage communities to live healthier lives.



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