

# EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

## 2013 NC Cooperative Extension Congressional District 11

Serving Avery, Buncombe, Clay, Jackson, Macon, Mitchell, Swain, Transylvania  
and Yancey counties



### Local Gardens Reduce Food Costs And Increase Health

The recession continues to affect many North Carolina families. Needing to better manage their food resources, a group of former Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) families decided to use the information gleaned while in the program to collectively grow a garden of fresh vegetables and herbs. They had learned while in EFNEP that the bounty would outweigh the start-up costs and allow them to stretch their dollars throughout the year. Harvard Medical School Publications explains that the benefits of growing your own food include: higher fruit and vegetable consumption, control over the use of pesticides and fertilizers, and the power to harvest at peak freshness, as ripe vegetables have higher nutritional content.<sup>1</sup> Through a coordinated effort guided by Extension agents and master gardeners, the families worked together to grow a variety of vegetables. Tomatoes, green beans, and squash have been eaten fresh and used as ingredients in recipes like the salsa made while attending EFNEP. These vegetables have also been either canned or frozen for enjoyment throughout the winter months. As an added bonus, the families have experimented with flavoring their foods with the herbs grown in their garden. They learned during their EFNEP experience that herbs could be substituted for salt as flavoring in foods and doing so would reduce their sodium intake. For health reasons, this had been a goal for several families. The vegetable garden has been an educational experience for all involved, including the children of these families. They have learned that using the land to produce a bountiful harvest is hard work, but can produce the healthiest and best tasting foods. It can also bring food costs down, stretching the family budget so other needs can be met.

*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.*

1. <http://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/backyard-gardening-grow-your-own-food-improve-your-health-201206294984>

2. <http://www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure/sodium.htm>

### Reducing Sodium Intake Results In Healthy Baby

The Center for Disease Control has reported that Americans consume too much sodium, which has been associated with negative health effects including increased blood pressure.<sup>2</sup> High blood pressure in pregnant women is especially dangerous.<sup>3</sup> The Mayo Clinic and The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute agree that high blood pressure in pregnancy can cause low birth weight, premature delivery, kidney issues, and other birthing complications.<sup>4</sup> The March of Dimes Campaign research shows that babies delivered preterm can have an average added cost of \$51,000.<sup>5</sup> Through on-site nutrition education classes offered by the Clay County Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), pregnant women visiting the Women Infants and Children's (WIC) Clinic in Clay County learn ways they can monitor their salt intake throughout their pregnancy. Recently, WIC was especially concerned about the sodium intake of one young pregnant client. In an effort to make her more cognizant of her salt intake, WIC referred her to EFNEP.

The EFNEP program assistant explained the health risks associated with high salt intake. She taught the pregnant client how to read the Nutrition Facts Label and during the classes, the pregnant participant learned how to make dishes at home using spices other than salt for flavor. She was encouraged to practice what she learned as part of EFNEP at home. Now, understanding the risks, the young client cautiously reads the Nutrition Facts Label on foods when shopping. She has been amazed at the amount of sodium contained in the processed foods found in her pantry. She can't afford to discard them, so she has vowed to eat them in small portions until they were gone.

Since participation in EFNEP, this client has now delivered a healthy baby. She shared that learning to prepare recipes at home has not only helped her lower her salt intake, but also, helped her save money on her weekly grocery bill. By applying what she learned through EFNEP, she has now successfully eliminated high-sodium, processed foods from her shopping list. She is preparing low-salt EFNEP recipes at home to ensure her sodium levels remain low. Having a healthy baby was important to this young client, and she credits EFNEP for helping her deliver a healthy baby and avoid delivery complications.

3. [http://kidshealth.org/parent/nutrition\\_center/dietary\\_needs/eating\\_pregnancy.html](http://kidshealth.org/parent/nutrition_center/dietary_needs/eating_pregnancy.html)

4. [http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/hbp\\_preg.htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/hbp_preg.htm)

5. <http://www.marchofdimes.com/research.aspx>

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