

# EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

## 2013 NC Cooperative Extension Congressional District 3

Serving Camden, Chowan, Craven, Gates, Greene, Lenoir, Martin, New Hanover, Onslow, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Pitt and Washington counties



### EFNEP Partners With Schools To Change Student Food Choices

Craven County has 15.4% of children, ages 2-4 who are overweight and 12.5% who are obese.<sup>1</sup> Teaching children to make healthy choices is key to reducing their risk for overweight, obesity and other nutrition related chronic diseases.

In Craven County, the Kindergarten teachers in one elementary school found that although nutrition education was taught as a part of the healthy living unit in their classes, student food choices did not change. The teachers observed that students continued to bring in processed snacks and packed lunches that were high in fat and sugars. Seeking help to improve their students' nutritional choices, teachers contacted the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) program assistant to request that she conduct a series of classes with each kindergarten class at their school.

During the series of interactive nutrition education classes, the 4-H EFNEP program assistant taught the students the importance of making healthy eating choices and helped students identify foods that would be a healthy choice. The hands-on food tasting activities allowed the students to try different choices for snacks. Children learned to use the USDA's *MyPlate* to help them identify good choices for both meals and snacks. They were encouraged to make fruits and vegetables one of their top choices for their snacks. The program assistant facilitated games to teach about the food groups, which made learning engaging and fun. By repeating the concepts taught each week, the students were better able to remember what they learned. They also shared the handouts and recipes with their parents.

As a result of the program, one Kindergarten teacher shared that she has observed her students discussing the food groups during lunch. She stated that she has observed the children talking amongst each other about what groups they could identify and how closely their lunch looks to the recommendations of *MyPlate*. The snacks the children now bring from home include fruits and vegetables as well as trail mix and low-fat cheese. Making healthy choices in the school

cafeteria and bringing healthy snacks and packed lunches to school demonstrates a transfer of knowledge resulting in changed behaviors. It also indicates that not only did the children learn to make healthy choices, but they also shared what they learned with their parents and parents are now providing healthy foods in meals and snacks they pack for their children to take to school.

### EFNEP Helps Participant Make Smart Drink Choices

An Onslow County EFNEP participant relied on energy drinks for that extra boost throughout the day. She rarely drank anything else and ate very little. Her frequent intake of energy drinks gave her a false sense of energy and fullness.

After the lesson "Making Smart Drink Choices," the participant realized the negative impacts of sugary and caffeinated beverages on her body. She didn't know that the empty calories and added caffeine reduced her appetite. In addition, she learned that in order to feel more energized, she needed to eat whole grain foods and increase her daily physical activity.

As a result of EFNEP, the participant has replaced energy drinks with water. She has increased her daily intake of whole grain foods and uses *MyPlate* to guide her food choices. She also has made time to be more active every day. The participant shared that she feels healthier and has more energy that lasts throughout the day.

*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. 2011 NC N-PASS, North Carolina Nutrition and Physical Activity Surveillance System County Obesity Rates found at: [http://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/Data/Texts/NC%20NPASS%202011TABLE\\_County%20obesity%20rates.pdf](http://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/Data/Texts/NC%20NPASS%202011TABLE_County%20obesity%20rates.pdf)

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