

# EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

## 2013 NC Cooperative Extension Camden and Pasquotank Counties



### EFNEP Classes Improves 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>1</sup> This in turn results in more meals prepared at home and ultimately better health outcomes.<sup>2</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 go 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.

*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 Increases Fruit and Vegetable Consumption in Youth Participants

Fruit and vegetable intake among children is inadequate. In Pasquotank County, approximately 37% of youth are not consuming recommended fruit servings and 74% are not getting recommended vegetable servings.<sup>3</sup> Teachers at a local school concerned about their students' nutritional choices sought help from the 4-H Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP).

In a series of lessons offered through Pasquotank County's 4-H EFNEP, over 300 kindergarteners learned about the importance of eating fruits and vegetables as part of meals and snacks. The program assistant taught the youth about the food groups in USDA's guide for healthy eating, *MyPlate*. During each lesson, youth tried a new healthy snack, including in-season, local produce. Kindergarteners were encouraged to ask their parents to buy new fruits and vegetables to try at home.

After a lesson on fruits, one student shared that his family had bought mango and that they enjoyed it. Additionally, during the series of lessons, several teachers noticed that the kindergarteners brought more fruits and vegetables, rather than pre-packaged chips and cookies, for snacks. As a result of the program, 98% of youth improved the quality of their diet including an increase in fruit and vegetable consumption. In addition, youth reported more fruits and vegetables available in their homes, demonstrating that parents were buying more fruits and vegetables following the series of classes. 32% of participating youth reported more vegetables and 36% reported more fruits to eat in their homes.

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. <http://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/CountyProfiles/Texts/Pasquotank%20County.pdf>

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