

# EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

## 2013 NC Cooperative Extension Cumberland County

### Children Increase Physical Activity Levels by 57%

The Centers for Disease Control reports that regular physical activity in children prevents obesity and other chronic diseases like diabetes and colon cancer, feelings of anxiety and depression, and promotes healthy bone growth, academic behavior, and focus in the classroom.<sup>1</sup> Encouraging children to be active from a young age is key when it comes to meeting the daily requirement of 60 minutes of physical activity per day. By instilling these principles early, children may have a better chance of continuing to exercise throughout adulthood, according to the CDC, because participation in physical activity declines as young people age.<sup>2</sup>

To encourage a lifelong habit of daily physical activity, the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) in Cumberland County includes fun, physical activities in every lesson within each series of nutrition education classes. Children learn confidence in their ability to be physically active and they learn creative ways to keep moving outside of the classroom. The EFNEP program assistant used a variety of games, dancing, walking programs, and educational tools to teach youth participants about the importance of physical activity. Youth were encouraged to share what they learned with their families as well. After completing the EFNEP series, 57% of the participating youth reported that they had increased their level of activity. Through EFNEP, these youth learned the value of being physically active. They have begun to develop a daily habit that will help them live a healthy life and reduce their risk of chronic disease.

*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.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/physicalactivity/facts.htm>

2. Ibid.

3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Strategies to Prevent Obesity and Other Chronic Diseases: The CDC Guide to Strategies to Increase the Consumption of Fruits and Vegetables. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2011.

4. (2009) North Carolina Nutrition and Physical Activity Surveillance System.

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United States Department of Agriculture  
National Institute of Food and Agriculture



### After EFNEP, Youth Increase Fruits and Vegetables

Eating a diet high in fruits and vegetables is associated with a decreased risk of many chronic diseases, including heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, diabetes, and some cancers.<sup>3</sup> In Cumberland County, 76% of residents do not consume the recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables.<sup>4</sup>

During a recent series of lessons, the 4-H Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) program assistant taught a group of second graders at a local elementary school about the importance of eating from each of the food groups on USDA's *MyPlate*. The youth also learned the importance of being active throughout the day.

One lesson in the series focused on fruits and vegetables. During this lesson, the youth tasted vegetables with dip, but they were most excited about the fruits they tried. The program assistant shared with them frozen versions of their favorite fruits: bananas, strawberries, and grapes. The students were encouraged to think about what other fruits they would like to try frozen.

Following the lesson, the classroom teacher stated, "I'm surprised to see them eat the same fruits that they often throw away at lunch every day." Later during the series, the teacher shared even more success. Referring to one young boy in her class who had said he didn't like fruits and vegetables, she stated, "he never, ever eats any type of fruit or vegetable, even the other students are surprised to see him eating bananas and grapes." After the series of lessons was completed, the teacher shared, "I have really noticed that the kids are eating more of their fruits at lunch time. I even had one student ask if she could take her banana home so she could freeze it and eat it like she did in class." Through their participation in EFNEP, these second graders were introduced to new ways to enjoy healthy foods. Because of EFNEP, they have adopted healthy eating behaviors that will help them meet the daily recommendations for fruits and vegetables and reduce their risk of chronic disease.