

EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

2013 NC Cooperative Extension Harnett, Moore and Lee Counties



Teenager Opens Mind to New Healthy Foods and Recipes

Eating a variety of foods from each of the food groups on *MyPlate* is important for good health. Research shows that children who cook their own food are more likely to eat those foods.¹ During a recent 4-H Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) lesson, youth at a Cooperative Extension summer day camp in Harnett County learned about the importance of choosing foods from each of the food groups on *MyPlate* and incorporating ways to be physically active throughout the day. As part of a lesson on protein and dairy foods, the group prepared a cheesy scrambled egg dish. During the food preparation, one participant, a 14-year-old girl, helped prepare the recipe but was vocal about her dislike for the way it looked and the ingredients in it. Her mother, a volunteer for the group, shared that her daughter was a picky eater so she would be hesitant to try new foods. As she and the other helpers prepared the recipe, the group became excited about the new dish. Each had a role in the preparation of the recipe. When everyone tried the recipe, the participant stated, "Mom! We should make it this weekend!" Her mother shared that she felt encouraged to try new recipes with her daughter. She felt that since her daughter eventually tried the recipe in class and was surprised she enjoyed it, she would have better chances of feeding her new foods at home. Through hands on preparation of healthy recipes, 4-H EFNEP participants learn how to prepare recipes that include the food groups on *MyPlate*, and, as a result, are able to meet the recommendations.

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.

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%).¹ 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.² 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://www.ecoliteracy.org/essays/feeding-our-kids-right-foodand-inspiring-them-eat-it>

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