

EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

2013 NC Cooperative Extension Macon County

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 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 the program 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 when fit as ripe vegetables have higher nutritional content.¹

Through a coordinated effort, families learned how to both grow and utilize fresh vegetables and herbs. Guided by Extension agents and master gardeners, the families worked together to grow a variety of vegetables. Tomatoes, green beans, and squash were grown and have been eaten fresh and also used as ingredients in recipes like EFNEP's homemade salsa, a recipe learned while attending the EFNEP series. 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 and herb 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.

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

Distributed in furtherance of the acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914. North Carolina State University and North Carolina A&T State University commit themselves to positive action to secure equal opportunity regardless of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, sex, age, or disability. In addition, the two Universities welcome all persons without regard to sexual orientation. North Carolina State University, North Carolina A&T State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments cooperating.



United States Department of Agriculture
National Institute of Food and Agriculture



Youth Now Selects Vegetables for Family, Increases Health

During an EFNEP lesson on the health benefits of eating vegetables, a fifth grader shared that he did not eat vegetables. Accepting this as a challenge to broaden his mindset, the EFNEP program assistant drew the child into discussions about the importance of eating a variety of colorful vegetables to gain the nutritional benefits offered. They discussed the need to choose vegetables that are in-season to lower cost and take advantage of freshness and the *MyPlate* recommendations for vegetable consumption each day.

Several weeks later, the EFNEP program assistant ran into the child's mother who couldn't wait to share the dietary changes she'd seen in her son since his EFNEP experience. Not only had he become more aware of the vegetables she was serving, he had taken an active role in selecting and preparing a variety of vegetables for family meals. He'd even made the veggie pizza that the class had made in EFNEP and served it to the family! The mother credited EFNEP for being the trigger that sparked her son's interest in eating a greater selection of healthy vegetables. She confessed the task of preparing meals for her family was so much easier now that a variety of vegetables could be served. It was fun to cook for a family who looked forward to eating a variety of vegetables! Most importantly, it gave her peace of mind knowing her son was now getting the important nutrients vegetables provided. EFNEP had made the difference!

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.