

EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

2013 NC Cooperative Extension Mecklenburg County

Community Comes Together to Improve Health and Family Bonds

Research suggests that families who eat together are less likely to dine out (fried food and soda) and are more likely to serve fruits or vegetables and other healthy foods during dinnertime.¹ Family meals provide parents a learning opportunity where they can teach social skills, table manners, and basic cooking skills.²

Cooperative Extension's Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) in Mecklenburg County offered a series of EFNEP classes to the residents of a low-income apartment complex. During the lessons, participants learned strategies to make healthy choices, including preparing more meals at home. At each lesson, participants met in the kitchen of the property's rental office and prepared a healthy recipe as part of the lesson.

Following the lesson each week, a few of the participants would combine their money to purchase the ingredients for the recipe, and one participant would host the other participants and their families for dinner that week. The weekly dinner featured the EFNEP recipe alongside other family favorites. In case one participant missed the lesson that week, the others would teach the participant how to make the recipe.

One participant shared that before the EFNEP lessons, she didn't like to cook, and her family ate mostly convenience foods and fast food. She said because of the lessons, they now select healthier choices—foods lower in sugar and sodium. Her son enjoys the Easy Fruit Salad recipe, and she prepares it for him to eat as an after school snack. After a recent class, the participant shared, "I love that I decided to learn, enjoy, and see firsthand how to eat smart and move more!"



This community's story is a great example of how simple changes can make a dramatic impact on health and wellbeing of all members of the families served by the program. With the knowledge and support EFNEP provides, families and communities are encouraged to live healthier lives.

Couple Puts Money Saved at Grocery Store toward Upcoming Wedding

After a series of lessons, a participant shared that he was incorporating the strategies he learned from EFNEP. Two months after the completion of the lessons, he shared that his family was following the food safety practices he learned, such as using a homemade sanitizing solution and thawing meat safely in the refrigerator. He shared that they are now preparing the EFNEP recipes together for family meals instead of eating fast food, as they did before. The participant stated that his family didn't realize how much money they could save by following the simple strategies shared during the lessons, and he was surprised by how inexpensive it could be to feed his family. Because of the skills he and his family have learned, they now have money to set aside each month to pay for their upcoming wedding.

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. Marino, M., & Butkus, Sue (n.d.). Background: Research on family meals. <http://nutrition.wsu.edu/ebet/background.html>.

2. Family Nutrition: The Truth about Family Meals. Family Youth and Community Sciences Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Original publication date September 2008. Revised January 2012. <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>

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