

EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

2013 NC Cooperative Extension Union County

EFNEP Graduates Improve the Economy and the Flavor of Their Food

Heart disease is the number one health related illness in Union County.¹ Heart disease can be partly attributed to diets high in sodium and fat and inadequate physical activity.

In order to help reverse the high numbers of heart disease in Union County, EFNEP recently worked with a group of participants to encourage a low sodium diet, alongside other healthy behaviors. Through EFNEP, the women were connected to a local horticulture Extension Agent who taught them how to grow herbs.

During the series of classes, three program participants became interested in promoting the use of fresh herbs to increase the health of their community by reducing the incidence of high blood pressure. They began selling fresh herbs from their gardens at local farmers markets. The women say that their herb gardening has been a great way to involve their grandchildren, whom they are raising, in physical activity. They also shared that gardening has been a great way to spend time with the kids and teach them how they can flavor foods with herbs. Currently, the ladies grow peppermint, chocolate mint, catnip, lemon mint, basil, parsley, chives, spearmint, and sage.

Because of EFNEP, these families had the opportunity to learn how to grow herbs and incorporate them in recipes to improve the health of their families, as well as, the health of their community. Additionally, they were able to connect with local farmers at the market and learn about small business ownership. The women were excited that they could contribute to the local economy by selling locally grown crops.

Community Outreach Event Sparks Youth's Interest in Fruits and Vegetables



Garden-based nutrition education programs offer a strategy for increasing fruit and vegetable intake in children. Union County Cooperative Extension combined the expertise of the 4-H EFNEP program assistant and the horticulture agent to teach a group of youth about how fruits and vegetables are grown during an all day outreach event for Latinos in the community. The youth visited a local garden and learned about different types of vegetables, root systems, stems, flowers, and seeds. The EFNEP program assistant taught the youth why fruits and vegetables are important for their health. After the garden visit, the EFNEP program assistant shared healthy recipes featuring new fruits and vegetables with the group. One participant learned to say her first word in English, "apple." In addition the participants learned fun ways to stay active throughout the day. At the end of the event, all of the youth stated they wanted to continue to eat healthy by trying new fruits and vegetables and being physically active.

Because of Cooperative Extension's EFNEP and horticulture programs, these youth have learned how eating local foods can help them have healthier diets.

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. Union County Health Department, 2011 Union County State of the County Health Report. http://www.co.union.nc.us/Portals/0/Health/Documents/SOTCH_2011.pdf

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