

EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

2013 NC Cooperative Extension Yancey County



Cooking Camp Increases Fruit and Vegetable Consumption Among Youth

Fruit and vegetable intake among children is inadequate. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's State Indicator Report on Fruits and Vegetables suggests that less than 10% of North Carolina youth are consuming the required 2 servings of fruits and 3 servings of vegetables daily.¹ Because fruit and vegetable consumption lessens the risk of chronic disease caused by being overweight and obese, the EFNEP program associate in Yancey County accepted the challenge of implementing a week long cooking camp for local youth to encourage fruit and vegetable intake. Throughout the week, campers prepared fun fruit and vegetable recipes such as Fruit Salad with Lava Sauce and Fancy Fruit Smoothies. They also prepared (and liked!) a spaghetti dinner made with fresh spaghetti squash instead of pasta, and spinach that had been donated by a local farmer. Several children stated they were excited about cooking these new recipes at home for their families. One mother shared that her daughter, who had previously refused to try most vegetables, enthusiastically educated the family on the health benefits realized from eating a rainbow of vegetable colors. And then, to her surprise, her daughter proceeded to eat a fresh tossed salad for supper! At the end of the week, 100% of the campers vowed they would continue to include fruits and vegetables in their daily diets. As a result of this commitment, Yancey County youth will be healthier and at lower risk of contracting chronic disease as they become older.

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.

Youth Learn to Decode Marketing Messages, Make Healthy Choices When Eating Out

Fast food companies market their products to children who subsequently influence their parent's purchasing decisions. These decisions can be "unhealthy" to the family's food budget as well as the children's nutritional intake.² Parents who purchase fast food for their children do not always realize how they are contributing to their intake of excessive calories, fat, sodium, and sugary soft drinks. The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) a program of Cooperative Extension, provides families and youth with the necessary knowledge and skills to learn how to make healthy food choices including nutrient dense foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains and milk.

To enlighten Yancey County youth about the economical and nutritional costs of falling prey to fast food marketing, the EFNEP program associate asked them to calculate the nutrition values of their favorite fast food meal. Comparing their findings to *MyPlate* recommendations, the students discovered how much their favorite fast food selections contributed to their daily caloric, fat and sodium intake. Wanting to learn how to better manage their fast food decisions, the children practiced substituting nutrient dense foods for less healthy choices, thus getting more nutritional bang for their buck!

One young girl commented that after participating in this EFNEP activity she substituted a salad for French fries on a subsequent trip to a fast food restaurant. Another child stated he'd ordered a fruit parfait instead of a fried apple pie. The students now realize how the influence of fast food advertising can be costly both to their parents' budgets and their own health. The students stated that from now on, when eating fast food, they plan to choose healthier options.

1. <http://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/downloads/State-Indicator-Report-Fruits-Vegetables-2013.pdf>

2. <http://www.hap.org/health/children/chronic.php>

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