

EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

2014 NC Cooperative Extension North Carolina Report

FOOD WASTE

EFNEP Helps Food Bank Participants Utilize All Foods Received

According to the 2012 Albemarle Regional State of Health Report, overweight and obesity rates among adults and youth continue to rise to epidemic proportions.¹ The 2011 Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance System data reported 36% of adults were overweight and 32% were obese in the Eastern Region including Pasquotank, Perquimans, Camden, and Currituck counties.

The North Carolina Cooperative Extension and the Food Bank of the Albemarle have partnered to provide an avenue of nutrition at selected mobile sites and food pantries. The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) Program Assistant and Family and Consumer Science Agent are providing hands-on nutrition education at selected mobile sites and food pantries. The Food Bank of the Albemarle received shipments of cereal from Kashi Foods and apples from one of the orchards from the western part of North Carolina. The program assistant learned that participants were giving back the cereal not knowing what to do with that type of cereal. After finding this out, the program assistant has been able to share how to utilize the food commodities that the participants receive in their distribution boxes. Program participants receive handouts during each session to help guide them in making better choices for meal planning. Participants are also able to taste the sample recipes.

While participating in the Choosing More Fruits and Vegetables session the participants observed a demonstration and tasting of Apple Crisp using the Kashi cereal being distributed in participant food packages. One program participant shared that she, "had no idea that she could use the cereal to make a wonderful tasting dish like that." All that attended that session said now that they know what to do with the cereal they "would be using it instead of feeding the birds or taking it back to the food bank."

Because of this collaboration, participants have decreased the amounts of food waste and foods given back at the food banks sites and have also increased their fruit and vegetable consumption.

1. http://www.arhs-nc.org/assets/media/pdf/HCOTA_2012_SOTCH.pdf

NUTRITION PRACTICES

Healthy Choices Results in Better Concentration at School

According to the most recent State of the County Health Report, the pregnancy rate in Forsyth County was 32.7 per 1000 population in 2013.² Pregnancy during the teen years places teens at nutritional risk because of the increased demand for calories and nutrient requirements. Forsyth County Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) partnered with the local school system to address the nutritional risks of pregnant teens in the county. A pregnant teen participating in EFNEP revealed that she missed breakfast on most mornings and almost always ate unhealthy foods for lunch. She worried about gaining too much weight especially because she was not being active. As a result, this pregnant teen often felt extremely tired and found it difficult to concentrate causing her grades to decline.

In response, the EFNEP Program Assistant focused her lessons on the importance of eating well-balanced meals using MyPlate as a guide. Participants practiced making their own plates using a variety of food models. They were able to visualize how much they needed to eat and what their plates should look like. Additionally, participants were given a walking video to encourage physical activity indoors.

As a result of EFNEP, one of the participants shared that she has since started eating breakfast at home and packs healthier lunches. Her energy level has increased too, and she began walking at least 20 minutes every day and even began practicing yoga. She reported having better concentration and saw improvement in her grades.

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.

2. http://files.www.appcnc.org/data/map/northcarolina/2013_pregnancies_15-19_ranked.pdf



FOOD SAFETY

Young Military Mom Learns Safe Food Handling

In Onslow County, Cooperative Extension's Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) works closely with young military families enrolled in Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) at Tarawa Terrace to improve nutritional, food resource management, and food safety behaviors. Pre-program surveys taken by the clients often reveal the need to address improper thawing of frozen foods, particularly meats. EFNEP approaches this common problem by teaching the clients how to plan meals ahead of time and how to follow USDA food safety guidelines when preparing meals at home.

After discussing the safe ways to thaw meat, a young mom stated that she hadn't been aware that thawing meats at room temperature or in hot water could lead to the reproduction of bacteria. She stated, "When I arrive home from work, I grab a package of meat or chicken and use hot water to thaw it fast."

By practicing the skills taught in EFNEP, this mother soon realized that planning meals ahead of time allowed her to defrost meats in the refrigerator so they would be ready to cook when she arrived home after work. She no longer experienced the stress of deciding what to have for dinner on the way home! Plus, she saved time and money as trips to the grocery store for needed food items were not needed. Most importantly though, she was keeping her family safe from food borne illness by handling and preparing their food in the proper manner.



WELL-BEING

Homeless Father Gains Confidence and New Start with EFNEP

With a rate of 21.8%, Asheville ranks ninth on the 2012 Food Hardship in America list of metropolitan areas experiencing food insecurity.³ Add to that a homeless rate that rose 8% in the past year and it is easy to understand why the cost of food insecurity and homelessness is a major concern in terms of poor health and lost productivity.⁴

To help ease the pain for those suffering from these conditions, the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service in Buncombe County delivers the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) to limited resource residents. The program recently worked with a young man who was experiencing both hunger and homelessness. Having heard about EFNEP, he asked if he could attend a series of classes scheduled at a local Christian Ministries site as a way to regain a more solid footing in life. He explained that he was currently living out of his car so would not be able to practice cooking the dishes made during class. However, if allowed to listen to the information shared, he would learn to better manage his food resources and make healthy food choices once he was in a position to shop and prepare meals again. His goal was to become a productive citizen and regain custody of his daughter.

The EFNEP program assistant welcomed the homeless man into her class. As promised, he listened intently to the lectures and worked diligently along side other participants during the hands-on food preparation session of each class. Impressed with his drive and determination, a fellow participant offered to share a spare room with the man until he could get on his feet. Together, they planned meals and pooled their SNAP benefits to purchase the ingredients needed to recreate EFNEP recipes practiced in class. Meals prepared in a kitchen sure trumped a diet of chips and Vienna sausages eaten in a car.

By the time he graduated from EFNEP, this once hungry and homeless young man had secured a job and regained his self-confidence. He said, "Graduating from EFNEP has helped me realize I can finish what I start. This was the first goal I have ever set and actually achieved. My plans now are to continue working, secure a home of my own, and work through the system to regain custody of my daughter." He said he no longer considered himself a "liability." Instead, with EFNEP's help, he had become a healthy, productive citizen and now felt he was an asset to society.

3. http://frac.org/pdf/food_hardship_2012.pdf

4. <http://ncfoodbanks.org/hunger-in-north-carolina/>

DIETARY INTAKE

EFNEP Helps Young Boy Overcome Iron Deficiency

In Jackson County, the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) partners with the local schools to deliver a series of nutrition education

lessons focused on developing healthy lifestyles. During a recent fourth-grade series, one of the students told the EFNEP program assistant that he had passed out over the weekend. Test results showed his iron levels were dangerously low.

He was concerned, "I want to choose nutritious snacks, but most of the time there are no healthy options at home. What should I do?"

Upon questioning the boy, the program assistant learned that because his mother worked at night, he and his older brother were often left to plan and prepare their own evening meals. If there was not enough food for a meal, they often snacked on whatever they could find in the cupboards.

The program assistant took the time to review with the young boy major nutrients found in each MyPlate food group, pointing out the foods in each group in which iron could most easily be found. They discussed foods found in the protein group like meat, fish and chicken, and various vegetables like beans and greens in which iron could be found. They also discussed how to read the food label so when shopping with his mother he could easily find food products like cereals and breads that were enriched or fortified with iron. Lastly, because cooking meals could be a safety concern for young children, the program assistant provided recipes the boy and his brother could create themselves with little or no cooking. She also provided recipes their mother could prepare ahead of time and be warmed by the boys when she was not at home.

Most appreciative, the boy took home the information about foods high in iron and reviewed it with his mother and brother. Together, they chose recipes the boys could prepare in which those foods were main ingredients and discussed how those dishes could be used to create simple evening meals when their mother wasn't home.

By teaching this young boy about the nutrients provided in each of MyPlate's dietary food groups and sharing easy yet nutritious recipes young children could prepare at home, EFNEP had positively impacted the boy's iron level and provided the family with nutritional knowledge that would improve their dietary intake for years to come.



DIET AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Local Partnership Helps Families Tackle Obesity

In October 2013, Premiere Pediatrics started a pediatric obesity program entitled "Kick Start Today." This program is conducted with children who have elevated Body Mass Indexes (BMIs). Specially trained nurses and a case manager assist with patient/family education and goal setting after a physician visit. The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) has partnered with Kick Start Today to deliver a series of lessons to the children and parents/caregivers, separately. Kick Start refers parents and their children to EFNEP if the child has been diagnosed as overweight or obese.

The EFNEP Program Assistant working through NC State University teaches the adult participants and the 4-H EFNEP Program Assistant working through NC A & T State University teaches the children.

After a few lessons, one father shared that "he has become more aware of what his family puts into their bodies," and as a result of what he has learned, "they now try to eat healthy, good food." Recently, he stated that he believes his son has made some progress in his weight loss.

Before the EFNEP classes, the father said "the family was just going through the motions when it came to eating, never thinking about what they were doing. They were never consistent in reading labels and not very mindful about what they ate."

Because of what he learned in the class, the father now discusses portion sizes with his son and understands the difference between an adult-sized portion size (for him) and a child-sized portion size (for his son). The father said his son was upset with him at first because his son wanted a larger portion than he was allowing him to eat. However, because the father began talking with him about the appropriate portion size for him, the son became more understanding that his father was concerned for his health.

Now because of the EFNEP classes, they are making better food choices by reading labels together and paying attention to calories, sugar, and sodium. In addition, the father has shared the information he has learned with his son's mother, and he stated that the communication about food and nutrition in his family has improved greatly.

Another participating parent and child had problems with portion control, meal planning and physical activity. The Program Assistants provided lessons that would address the family's needs. The curriculum covered MyPlate, increasing fruits and vegetables, provided creative ways to increase physical activity and provided healthy recipes that the family prepared in class.

As a result of their experience with EFNEP, the family has started following the MyPlate guidelines to plan meals and healthy snacks, started using 1% milk, using portion control to avoid overeating and has increased physical activity. The family is excited about the health changes they are making and the child is gradually losing weight.

MANAGE FOOD RESOURCES

EFNEP Tips Help Struggling Family Become Food Secure

Although the worst of the Great Recession is over, consumers continue to feel its effects. In March 2014, the Consumer Price Index rose due to increases in food and shelter costs. A colder than normal winter plus hikes in beef, milk and vegetable prices caused people to feel the pinch.⁵

In Macon County, the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) works with families to stretch their food dollars. Conscientious meal planning and conservative grocery shopping can stretch a family's budget. The money saved can pay household bills. Last spring, a WIC mother trying to feed a family of five shared with the EFNEP program assistant her struggle to make ends meet. The family owed over \$400.00 to the electric company. They didn't have the money to pay for both food and the additional heating costs. She needed help.

Upon learning from the mother about her food buying and meal preparation practices, the EFNEP program assistant shared possible ways she could stretch the family's food budget. She discussed ways WIC foods could be used in planning cost-effective yet healthy meals. She also suggested planning meals for two weeks instead of one, using food items already on the kitchen shelves, and shopping with a list. She showed the mother how to economically buy and serve more fruits and vegetables, and use eggs and dried beans instead of costly meat as a main course.

Practicing portion control was another money saving tactic EFNEP taught the mother. Serving large portions added calories to the waistline and dollars to the overall cost of groceries. Large portions that were not eaten would be wasted. Knowing that food wasted by an American family can total approximately \$500 a year, the program assistant taught the mother how to reduce costs even further by creatively planning for leftovers. Recipes that could be made with leftovers were provided.

Upon graduating from EFNEP, the mother shared that she had practiced the cost saving tips offered in class and had already seen results. Stretching her food dollars had saved on food costs and that savings had allowed her to pay the \$400 heating bill in full. In addition, she had been able to nutritionally provide her family with healthy meals that would help reduce doctor's bills. Spring's warmer temperatures were allowing for reduced heating costs so she was putting the money saved on groceries into a rainy day savings account. Having extra money gave her a sense of security she hadn't felt in some time.

5. <http://money.cnn.com/2014/04/15/news/economy/inflation-cpi/>

POLICY CHANGE

Partner Agency Matches Policy to EFNEP Lessons

Overweight and obesity continue to be a problem in Guilford County. According to the State of Guilford County Health Report for 2012, 28% of adults are obese and 23% of adults are physically inactive.⁶ Often times, poor diet and limited physical activity will result in obesity which can lead to other serious health concerns.

In an effort to address this problem, Guilford County Extension partnered with Carelink Solutions, a local nonprofit agency that provides educational opportunities to limited resource individuals, to deliver a series of Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) lessons.

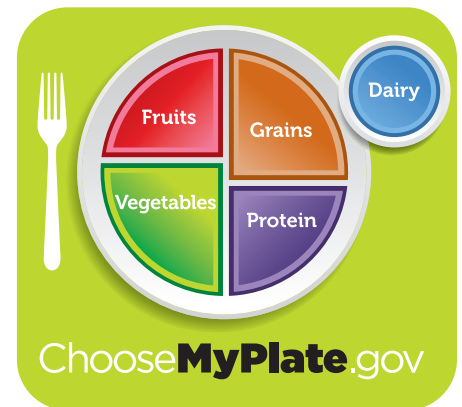
During the series, the local agency's coordinator, who serves as an EFNEP volunteer, observed the lessons. After listening to several lessons, the coordinator realized that the lunches served through her program, and to the current EFNEP participants, did not match with the nutrition messages that were shared as part of the EFNEP lessons. She discovered that her agency served a lunch that consisted of convenience foods, often high in calories, fat, and sodium.

After making this realization and with help from the EFNEP Program Assistant, the coordinator worked with her kitchen staff to develop a meal plan that incorporated all the food groups from *MyPlate*, especially fruits and vegetables. In addition, to encourage her participants to increase their physical activity, the coordinator built a physical activity component into the program that included three-times a week scheduled group physical activity classes led by a fitness instructor.

As a result of partnering with EFNEP, this local agency now serves their participants healthy nutrient-dense lunches that are high in fiber and low in fats and sodium. Furthermore, the agency has continued to offer physical activity. Recently, the coordinator reported that these changes have a positive effect on the learning environment as well as the health of the participants.

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6. www.co.guilford.nc.us/publichealth/divisions/wpcontent/uploads/2013/01/2012sotchfinal.df



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