

EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

2014 NC Cooperative Extension Bertie County



Children Eat More Fruits and Vegetables After EFNEP

Childhood obesity has been associated with cardiovascular risk factors, increased health care costs, and premature death.¹ According to the Center of Disease Control, approximately 17% (or 12.7 million) of children and adolescents aged 2–19 years are obese.²

West Bertie Elementary was one of 158 elementary schools throughout North Carolina to receive the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP). The FFVP provides students in participating elementary schools with a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables as healthy snack options throughout the school day. The school partnered with Bertie County 4-H Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) to provide nutrition education and creative fruit and vegetable recipes in the classroom. This collaboration with EFNEP and the FFVP has been an important catalyst for change in combating childhood obesity.

One of the teachers told the Program Assistant teaching the EFNEP lessons, “The school offers healthy fruit and vegetable options for snacks. The options consist of carrots, broccoli, apples, oranges and bananas. Before the EFNEP session I really had to encourage the students to taste them. Because of the EFNEP lessons I have seen students become more open to trying the fruits and vegetables.” The teacher stated that she overheard one of her students tell another student, “The EFNEP teacher told us fruits and vegetables are good for our bodies.” 4-H EFNEP is making a positive change in the students’ food choices and their willingness to try new fruits and vegetables.

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.

EFNEP Partnership with Faith Community Helps Member Make Healthy Changes

The NC State University Institute for Emerging Issues reported that in Bertie County, 38 percent of adults are obese, compared to the national benchmark of 25 percent.³ Furthermore, 66 percent of residents in Eastern NC consume fast food each week and more consume sugar-sweetened beverages daily (60%) than the recommended fruits and vegetables (18%) and only 45 percent exercise the daily recommended amount.⁴

Faith-based organizations have a long history of involvement in supporting low-income people by providing a wide range of social services. These organizations are important long-standing partners in efforts to provide nutrition assistance to those in need. The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) Program Assistant created a partnership with the Greater Wynns Grove Church to deliver lessons covering MyPlate, portion control, importance of fruits and vegetables, physical activity and label reading over a nine-week timeframe.

At the end of the lessons, participants are encouraged to share what they have learned. One participant wrote, “Just by being in the nine week nutrition class, (it) has encouraged me to be aware of how to take care of my body and also of what I am putting in my body.” She goes on to state that she was eating and doing things she did not realize were bad for her because of the food choices she was making. The participant also stated she knew to eat fruits and vegetables but did not know that she needed different colors and that she needed a variety. She is now trying to make sure she eats a variety of colors and different fruits and vegetables. She also states, “By coming to the class I am hoping to see a whole lot of changes to come. I know I am already feeling better, lighter, and can move more. I’ve also lost a few pounds.”

1. <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/childhood.html>

2. http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/downloads/jama_highlights_final_data_source_added_011013.pdf

3. <http://iei.ncsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Bertie.pdf>

4. Ibid

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