

# EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

## 2014 NC Cooperative Extension Buncombe County

### 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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>

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.

1. [http://frac.org/pdf/food\\_hardship\\_2012.pdf](http://frac.org/pdf/food_hardship_2012.pdf)

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

### Food Diary Reveals Need for More Fruits and Veggies to Youth

If used conscientiously, a food diary can reveal what, how much, and why people eat the foods they eat.<sup>3,4</sup> It can also detect overeating, under eating, avoidance of specific food groups, and eating patterns related to certain emotions.<sup>5,6</sup> For this reason, educators, nutritionists, and medical practitioners encourage the use of a food diary to help people become more mindful of what they are eating.

To encourage Buncombe County youth to become more mindful of their eating habits, the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service partnered with local schools to deliver the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP). Through EFNEP, the children were introduced to the USDA's MyPlate healthy eating and physical activity recommendations. They were taught about the nutrients found in each MyPlate food group, and the role those nutrients played, in conjunction with physical activity, to make their bodies healthy.

During the series, EFNEP challenged the children to keep a food diary. They were asked to write down everything they ate or drank each day.

One fourth-grade student told the EFNEP program assistant that even though it was very annoying to record everything she ate, the assignment had allowed her to see that she was a picky eater. She did not eat many fruits or vegetables, and there was little variety in her food choices. On many days during the week, she ate the same foods at breakfast and lunch.

By the end of the EFNEP series, the student shared that because of EFNEP she had learned where and how to improve her diet. She had begun eating a greater variety of food at breakfast and was trying new fruits and vegetables offered for lunch at school. She had begun taking dried fruit to practices as an easy yet nutritious snack option.

This active fourth grader admitted that although keeping a food diary was a nuisance, it had made her more mindful of eating a balanced diet. After graduating from EFNEP she planned to continue the practice to ensure she stayed strong and healthy for softball and soccer.

3. <http://www.extension.org/pages/32325/mindful-versus-mindless-eating#.VADVu7xdUdo>

4. <http://www2.ca.uky.edu/agc/pubs/FCS3/FCS3561/FCS3561.pdf>

5. <http://www.webmd.com/diet/features/can-food-diary-help-you-lose-weight>

6. <http://www.webmd.com/diet/news/20120713/food-journal-write-it-down-shed-more-pounds>



United States Department of Agriculture  
National Institute of Food and Agriculture