

EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

2014 NC Cooperative Extension Duplin County



Children Make Pledge to Eat Healthy Snacks

Nutritionists agree that providing healthy snacks to young children can contribute good nutrition and help manage hunger. It can also contribute needed energy between meals. School-aged children are old enough to understand the importance of snacking periodically during the day. As they become more independent, it is important they understand the value of choosing healthy snack foods.¹

In Duplin County, teachers at a local elementary school noticed that more than half of their students were not eating healthy snack foods. Wanting to help their 2nd graders better understand the value of making nutritious snack food choices, they invited the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) into their classrooms to deliver a series of nutrition education lessons. Throughout the EFNEP series, the children learned MyPlate's basic nutrition recommendations for children their age. The EFNEP program assistant taught the children that to ensure they get all the nutrients needed each day, it was important they chose healthy snacks. She emphasized that healthy snack food choices were those low in sugar, salt and fat. The EFNEP program assistant encouraged fruits, vegetables and whole grain foods and foods high in protein for as healthy snacks. During the lessons, the children tried simple, healthy snacks foods they could make at home. The program assistant shared how the students could pack the snacks safely and bring their snacks to school to eat during breaks or during after school activities.

After being introduced to some of the healthy snacks made during the class, the students were amazed at how delicious healthy snacks could be. As a result of what they learned, five students told the EFNEP program assistant that they were going to make EFNEP's snacks at home and share them with their family. After learning the importance of healthy snacks to their overall health, these students committed to make an immediate change.

Children Choose Fruits and Vegetables as a Result of EFNEP

For the past several years, agencies at the state and local levels in North Carolina have partnered in the fight against childhood obesity. Teaching children healthy eating behaviors that include consuming the recommended number of fruits and vegetables is one method they use to combat the obesity trend. Their efforts continue to meet an uphill battle as according the CHAMP², approximately 1/3 of North Carolina youth do not consume the recommended fruit servings³ and approximately 1/4 do not consume the recommended vegetable servings⁴ each day.

In an effort to address childhood obesity in Duplin County, the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) partnered with a local community outreach program. EFNEP delivered nutrition education to children in 1st through 10th grades attending an afterschool program.

Upon delivering the fruit and vegetable lesson the EFNEP program assistant quickly learned that the students could not tell the difference between fruits and vegetables. Most of the youth claimed they did not like or had never tried them.

After teaching a variety of lessons containing evidence-based information regarding the nutritional importance of consuming fruits and vegetables, the students were able to name specific examples of fruits and vegetables, and were willing to try them. After tasting samples, 100% of the students reported having favorites they would continue to eat.

By continuing to eat a variety of fruits and vegetables, the students would lessen their risk of becoming obese and benefit from the other nutritional advantages of eating from these healthy food groups.

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. http://kidshealth.org/parent/nutrition_center/healthy_eating/snacking.html

2. <http://www.schs.state.nc.us/schs/champ/2011/topics.html>

3. <http://www.schs.state.nc.us/schs/champ/2011/html>

4. <http://www.schs.state.nc.us/schs/champ/2011/fruit3.html>

Distributed in furtherance of the acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914. North Carolina State University and North Carolina A&T State University commit themselves to positive action to secure equal opportunity regardless of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, sex, age, or disability. In addition, the two Universities welcome all persons without regard to sexual orientation. North Carolina State University, North Carolina A&T State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments cooperating.



NC STATE UNIVERSITY

NORTH CAROLINA A&T
STATE UNIVERSITY



United States Department of Agriculture
National Institute of Food and Agriculture