

EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

2014 NC Cooperative Extension Gaston County



Young Boys Take EFNEP Lessons Home

The 2011 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) reports three out of four (74.7%) Gaston County residents are either overweight or obese. Of these, 31% are obese (defined as an individual having a body mass index of greater than 30). In contrast, 65.1% of North Carolina state residents are overweight or obese.¹

The 4-H Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) Program Assistant in Gaston County partnered with a local elementary school to teach Show Me Nutrition. This EFNEP curriculum teaches the youth the importance of eating fruits and vegetables, provides creative healthy recipes for the students to make in class and fun ways to increase physical activity.

The Program Assistant has partnered with a local elementary school for a couple of years and before one of her classes a third grader stated that his brother had taken EFNEP last year. As a result, the brother started eating better, increasing physical activity and getting stronger. The 3rd grader stated that he wanted to get strong like his brother, so he started following the recommendations from EFNEP as well. After a couple of lessons the teacher reported that she had observed the young boy trying new foods for lunch in the cafeteria and that he actually ate four new items for lunch that week. The young boy told the EFNEP Program Assistant how much he liked the new foods he was trying and that he was eating healthy snacks too. He was avoiding the snacks with sugar and eating more vegetables instead.

The 3rd grader also shared that his entire family was eating fresh vegetables and fruit instead of less healthy foods. The family is now choosing vegetables like celery, carrots, cucumbers, and other vegetables for snacks and meals. They are also making better beverage choices. Because of EFNEP both boys and their entire family are now eating better!

Youth Adopt Healthy Behaviors/ Lower Disease Risk

Worldwide, insufficient intake of fruit and vegetables is estimated to cause around 14% of gastrointestinal cancer deaths, about 11% of heart disease deaths and about 9% of stroke deaths. According to evidence presented in World Health Report, low fruit and vegetable intake is among the top 10 risk factors contributing to mortality.²

The Gaston County North Carolina Cooperative Extension Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) Program Assistant, has partnered with local elementary schools to provide Show Me Nutrition. The EFNEP youth program provides creative ways to increase fruits and vegetables, increase physical activities, and provides fun, hands-on learning to make healthy recipes. The Gaston County Program Assistant also sends newsletters homes to promote healthier choices at home.

After the 6-week program, pre and post survey results from the third to fifth graders targeted for the program showed 44% of the students improved the vegetable intake, 31% improved their fruit intake, 45% increased their ability to choose healthy snacks, and 34% increased their daily physical activity. As a result of EFNEP, these children have adopted behaviors that will reduce their risk of chronic disease.

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://www.gastongov.com/docs/default-source/health-department/final-gaston-cha-2012.pdf?sfvrsn=4>
2. http://www.who.int/whr/2002/en/whr02_en.pdf?ua=1

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