

EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

2014 NC Cooperative Extension Jackson and Swain Counties

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.

Young Moms Learn Strategies for Healthy Pregnancy

In Swain County, the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) collaborated with the Women's Infants and Children's Clinic (WIC) to deliver a series of lessons that ensured optimal nutritional status for women during pre-conception, pregnancy, and breastfeeding.

One young mother, knowing the importance of preconception health, shared that although she wanted to learn how to better prepare her body nutritionally for the pregnancy of a second child, she was afraid to attend the group lessons because she struggled with social anxiety. She felt that she would become so uncomfortable being around other women in class, she would not be able to fully participate. However, over time, she decided preparing nutritionally for a second pregnancy was important so she decided to register for the lessons.

Before long, the young mother began to open up and develop friendships. She said it was the topic of food and nutrition, something everyone has in common yet often knows so little about, that made her keep coming back. Shy at the beginning of the series, she quickly learned that her classmates valued her life experiences just as she valued theirs. By sharing their personal experiences, they were helping each other apply EFNEP's nutritional concepts to their daily lives. For example, EFNEP taught the importance of eating foods high in iron, vitamin C and folate prior to and during pregnancy. Those in the group who had personal experiences creating tasty dishes containing these nutrients shared recipes with the others. When discussing stretching their food dollars, one classmate shared that she made an omelet when wondering how to use fresh vegetables that would soon spoil. This gave her the protein, vitamins and fiber she needed and kept the family from wasting food. Another shared how she stretched her food dollars by buying fresh greens in season and freezing them for later use. And, they all shared money saving experiences related to reading nutrient facts labels and practicing unit pricing when shopping.

The young mother who confessed to having social anxiety quickly found she was no different than her classmates when trying to meet the challenges of eating healthy prior to and during pregnancy, or any other time during her life.

Since graduating from EFNEP, she has volunteered with several organizations around town that feed or distribute food to the hungry. Knowing the importance of preconception nutrition and health, she most recently enjoyed sharing EFNEP's healthy eating concepts with a group of local teenagers at a dinner she helped plan through her church. Her mantra is good nutrition is the universal language that brings everyone together, especially those wanting to become healthy and fit in preparation for and during the childbearing years.



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