

EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

2014 NC Cooperative Extension Lenoir County



Children Learn Importance of Eating Their Vegetables

The nutrients found in vegetables provide numerous health benefits. Vegetables contain important vitamins, minerals and fiber that help to maintain bodily functions and reduce the risk of chronic diseases like high blood pressure, heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, and cancer.¹

In a recent partnership between the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) and a local summer camp for low-income youth, the EFNEP program associate learned that many of the children were not eating the vegetables served on their plates during lunch. As the program associate taught EFNEP's vegetable lesson, she emphasized to the students that it was important to eat a variety of colors of vegetables because different colors provide different nutrients. By consuming a variety of nutrients, they would keep their bodies healthy. She also challenged the students to eat all the vegetables on their plates at camp and when they returned home.

As the EFNEP series continued and the participants were asked if they were eating their vegetables, many would say, "Yes!" By the end of the program, the director informed the EFNEP program associate that the students were now eating the vegetables served to them at lunch. She said that on one occasion she had entered the cafeteria during lunch and told the students how proud she was of them for eating their vegetables. The students replied, "EFNEP taught us that we would be healthy and live a long time if we ate our 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.

Participant's Positive Changes Lead to Doctor's Endorsement of EFNEP

The goal of Lenoir County's Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) is to teach healthy behaviors that positively change lives. By promoting the healthy lifestyle principles supported in USDA's MyPlate, EFNEP really did change the life of one EFNEP participant who saw significant health improvements after putting into practice what she had learned in EFNEP.

Prior to attending the program, the participant suffered from high blood pressure, was overweight, and was not physically active. As she participated in the program, she discovered how MyPlate's healthy living concepts promoted by EFNEP were directly related to one's health. She learned that by eating smart and moving more, she could lose her unwanted weight, and lower her high blood pressure.

She began to apply what she was learning to her own life. She counted calories, making sure she was burning off more than she was consuming. She also started watching her intake of high-sodium foods hoping to reduce her hypertension. And, she became more physically active, which was the key to both burning more calories and lowering stress, both of which would help better manage her hypertension.

By the end of the EFNEP series, this conscientious participant was exercising daily, had lowered her blood pressure, and had lost 10 pounds. She told the class her doctor was very impressed with the changes she made and encouraged her to continue practicing what she had learned through EFNEP.

1. <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/vegetables-why.html>

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