

# EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

## 2014 NC Cooperative Extension McDowell County



### Young Women Learn Importance of Food Safety

USDA research shows that an estimated 48 million illnesses and 3,000 deaths occur each year in the US due to foodborne illnesses. Because the symptoms are often similar to the flu, many people do not recognize that the illness is actually caused by harmful bacteria they have consumed when eating contaminated food.<sup>1</sup> Foodborne illnesses can be prevented if simple food safety procedures are taken.

In McDowell County, the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) was recently invited to deliver a series of lessons for women living at a local homeless shelter. During the series, the EFNEP program assistant taught a lesson on food safety. The lesson emphasized the importance of hand washing, sanitizing cutting boards and counter tops, and suggested ways to reduce cross-contamination of foods. The lesson also showed participants the dangers of thawing meats improperly.

Many of the participants admitted to the EFNEP program assistant that they left meats out on the counter to thaw, and used the same cutting board to cut raw meats as they used to cut fresh vegetables. One participant, a young single mother, shared that because she didn't like the feel, she used grocery bags on her hands instead of sanitized gloves when handling raw meat during meal preparation.

The EFNEP program assistant explained to the participants that under the right conditions, bacteria can double every twenty minutes. Therefore, placing frozen meat on the counter to thaw at room temperature was very dangerous. The program assistant also explained to the young mother how cross-contamination occurred when bacteria from the used grocery bags transferred to the raw meat she was preparing for her family's meal.

Hearing how easy it is to fall victim to foodborne illness really made an impact on all of the participants. Each one of the women vowed to practice food safety measures in their kitchen and even reminded each other during future meal preparations to wash their hands and sanitize counters before and after cooking.

By increasing the participants' knowledge on food safety, EFNEP gave these women the power to reduce their risk of contracting a foodborne illness in their home.

### First Grader Introduces Family to Whole Grains

MyPlate recommends that Americans make at least half of their daily grain group servings whole grains. Eating whole grains as part of a healthy diet may reduce the risk of some chronic diseases.<sup>2</sup> Dietary fiber contained in whole grains helps to reduce blood cholesterol levels, and lower the risk of heart disease and type 2 diabetes. Most Americans consume the recommended six grain-group servings daily, but few are meeting the whole grain recommendation. By not eating whole grains, they are missing out on the many health benefits whole grains provide.

In McDowell County, North Carolina Cooperative Extension partners with local schools to deliver basic nutrition information through the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP). While teaching first graders the health benefits of eating nutrient-rich whole grain foods, the EFNEP program assistant was approached by one of the students. The little girl explained that she had asked her mother in the past to purchase whole grain bread, but her mother had refused to do so. The program assistant suggested that the little girl share with her mother the information provided in class. Maybe after learning more about whole grains her mother would change her mind!

When the program assistant returned to school the following week, the girl excitedly shared that after telling her mother about the benefits of eating whole grains, her mother had agreed to try whole grain bread... and liked it! She said her mother promised the family would now be trying other whole grain food options.

Through one little first grader, EFNEP had successfully changed the eating behaviors of an entire family.

*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.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdamediafb?contentid=2011/06/0283.xml&printable=true&contentidonly=true>

2. <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/grains-why.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.



United States Department of Agriculture  
National Institute of Food and Agriculture