

EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

2014 NC Cooperative Extension Pasquotank and Camden Counties



4-H EFNEP Helps Families Provide Youth Healthy Options

According to the Center of Disease Control, today's youth are at greater risk of having health issues due to overweight and obesity. Research has shown that poor nutrition during childhood can lead to serious health problems as adults. Schools help children and adolescents adopt and maintain healthy eating and physical activity behaviors.

During the summer months many youth of limited and challenged resource families find it more difficult to consume the amounts recommended of fruits, vegetables and dairy foods. Some families have the added pressure of finding safe and affordable childcare for children during summer.

Collaborative efforts between the 4-H Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) of Pasquotank County and the staff and volunteers of Cora's Educational Center help low income families in their community meet these challenges by providing Kids in the Kitchen, a summer and after-school program for children, ages 6 to 15.

These experiences encourage youth to eat healthier meals and snacks by teaching the recommendations of MyPlate and how to use it. The youth learned to prepare simple, healthy, low-cost snacks. They were given opportunity to try different foods, and practiced skills learned to help plan healthy, balanced menus. In addition to learning about healthy eating, the children learned food safety in a hands-on setting during each lesson. Additionally, the 4-H EFNEP Program Assistant offered a fun and engaging learning environment through physical activity and games. Physical activities seem to bring equal enjoyment as food preparation and lesson activities. As the content, skills, and knowledge were reviewed at the end of each lesson, the Program Assistant heard from the students what they had learned.

The reviews and pre/post surveys demonstrated increased knowledge of the recommendations of USDA's MyPlate, basic nutrition practices, food safety practices, and physical activity. The camping experience with Cora's Education Center and 4-H EFNEP help children and adolescents gain knowledge, adopt and maintain healthy eating and physical activity behaviors that support overall health and well-being.

EFNEP Helps Food Bank Participants Utilize All Foods Received

According to the 2012 Albemarle Regional State of Health Report, overweight and obesity rates among adults and youth continue to rise to epidemic proportions.¹ The 2011 Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance System data reported 36% of adults were overweight and 32% were obese in the Eastern Region including Pasquotank, Perquimans, Camden, and Currituck counties.

The North Carolina Cooperative Extension and the Food Bank of the Albemarle have partnered to provide an avenue of nutrition at selected mobile sites and food pantries. The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) Program Assistant and Family and Consumer Science Agent are providing hands-on nutrition education at selected mobile sites and food pantries. The Food Bank of the Albemarle received shipments of cereal from Kashi Foods and apples from one of the orchards from the western part of North Carolina. The program assistant learned that participants were giving back the cereal not knowing what to do with that type of cereal. After finding this out, the program assistant has been able to share how to utilize the food commodities that the participants receive in their distribution boxes. Program participants receive handouts during each session to help guide them in making better choices for meal planning. Participants are also able to taste the sample recipes.

While participating in the Choosing More Fruits and Vegetables session the participants observed a demonstration and tasting of Apple Crisp using the Kashi cereal being distributed in participant food packages. One program participant shared that she, "had no idea that she could use the cereal to make a wonderful tasting dish like that." All that attended that session said now that they know what to do with the cereal they "would be using it instead of feeding the birds or taking it back to the food bank."

Because of this collaboration, participants have decreased the amounts of food waste and foods given back at the food banks sites and have also increased their fruit and vegetable consumption.

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.arhs-nc.org/assets/media/pdf/HCOTA_2012_SOTCH.pdf

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