

# EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

## 2014 NC Cooperative Extension Pitt County

### Teacher Observes Changes in Snacks Brought From Home Following EFNEP

The CDC's 2013 State Indicator Report on Fruits and Vegetables reported that four out of ten North Carolina high school students (44.5 percent) eat fruit less than one time per day, which is worse than the national rate of 36 percent.<sup>1</sup> About four out of ten N.C. high school students (39.6 percent) eat vegetables less than one time per day, which is lower than the national average of 37.7 percent.<sup>2</sup> Eating healthy foods, including fresh fruits and vegetables, can help maintain weight and prevent weight gain and can reduce the risk of chronic diseases, including heart disease, diabetes, and cancer.<sup>3</sup>

The Pitt County 4-H Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) program assistant partnered with Eastern Elementary School. The Program Assistant provided a 6-week series of nutrition classes that taught students the importance of fruits and vegetables in their diet. Parent newsletters were also sent home to encourage healthy food choices at home.

During the lesson focused on fruits, the program assistant taught the youth how to make rainbow kabobs, which include a variety of fruit, including pineapple. Many students commented that they had never tasted pineapple before. Because of this lesson this fruit soon became the class' favorite fruit. One of the kindergarten teachers, Ms. Morrison, stated that EFNEP was making a huge difference with her students as well as their parents. Over the weeks, Ms. Morrison noticed a difference in the snacks that were being sent into her classroom. Prior to EFNEP, students were bringing in unhealthy, pre-packaged snacks. After reading the weekly parent letters, the parents were choosing to send snacks similar to the recipes provided by EFNEP. Ms. Morrison also commented that the children were even making healthy choices by choosing the fruit option in the lunch line everyday.

### Single Father Learns Cooking Meals Saves Money

According to the 2011–12 National Survey of Children's Health, families with the lowest incomes have the highest percentage of children who are overweight or obese.<sup>4</sup> Unemployment Rate in Pitt County, NC was last reported at 7.4% in July of 2014, according to the United States Federal Reserve, which is higher than the state unemployment rate of 6.8%.<sup>5</sup>

Pitt County's Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) is a nutrition education program that focuses on enriching lives of limited resource families. While partnering with STRIVE, a job training program for the unemployed, the Pitt County EFNEP Program Assistant encountered a young father of five who was struggling to feed his family healthy foods on their limited budget.

He often fed his children fast food, frozen meals, and instant noodle soups. During the EFNEP sessions, the program assistant taught participants about unit pricing and ways to stretch their food budget. They also learned how to choose healthier options when eating away from home and how to prepare nutritious, low cost meals at home.

The program assistant challenged her participants to try to cook most of their meals at home for two weeks and to utilize the foods they received as part of their Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. After the lesson and completing the challenge, the father calculated the amount of money he saved. He estimated he saved about \$140 by cooking meals at home instead of feeding his children the convenience foods he often chose before. He was surprised by the amount of money he could save and was grateful for the information he learned because of EFNEP.



*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.cdc.gov/nutrition/downloads/state-indicator-report-fruits-vegetables-2013.pdf>

2. Ibid

3. Ibid

4. <http://mchb.hrsa.gov/nsch/07rural/moreinfo/pdf/nsch07tchs.pdf>

5. <http://www.bls.gov/web/laus/laumstrk.htm>

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