

# EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

## 2015 NC Cooperative Extension Congressional District 1

Serving Bertie, Chowan, Craven, Durham, Edgecombe, Franklin, Greene, Halifax, Hertford, Lenoir, Martin, Nash, Northampton, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Pitt, Vance, Warren and Wayne counties



### Participant Learns Strategies to Save Money on Healthy Family Meals

Edgecombe County is designated as a Tier 1 county, which means it is one of the more economically depressed counties in the state. According to the NC Department Of Commerce, Labor and Economic Analysis Division figures, the unemployment rate for North Carolina is 5.5%. Currently Edgecombe County has an unemployment rate of 10.5%, twice that of the state average.<sup>1</sup>

The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) encourages limited resource families and youth to explore and learn how to Eat Smart and Move More. The nutrition education classes include food safety, portion control, increasing physical activity, and food resource management. EFNEP partners with community stake holders and agencies to offer classes to help families get the most value from their food dollars as well as provide fun and simple strategies designed to improve participants knowledge and understanding to obtain and maintain good health.

The EFNEP Program Assistant partnered with the Edgecombe Community College GED Program to offer classes to the students. One of the instructors shared she was concerned since most of her students had limited resources available to spend on their food budgets. She saw that often times the foods they were choosing were inexpensive but not necessarily nutritious.

Throughout the series of lessons, one participant shared how she was applying the information learned to her family's food budget. Before participating in the EFNEP lessons, she thought "using coupons was a waste of time", but after taking time to clip coupons for items her family used regularly, she stated that she now saves \$15 or more per shopping trip. This mother has also learned to plan each grocery store trip by making a shopping list and buying items, like paper products, in bulk when the price is a good deal. In addition to saving money, the participant learned to try new foods and prepare new recipes for her family. One of their favorites has become EFNEP's Easy Lasagna, a low-cost stovetop version of a traditional dish.

*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.*

### EFNEP and Food Bank Partner To Help Families in Need

The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) and the Food Bank of the Albemarle have partnered to provide an avenue of nutrition at selected mobile sites and food pantries. The EFNEP Program Assistant provides hands-on nutrition education at these selected mobile sites and food pantries. This year, the Food Bank of the Albemarle received shipments of fresh tomatoes from a local farmer and apples from one of the orchards from the western part of North Carolina. They also receive shipments of cereal from Kashi Foods. The program assistant learned that participants "would have just thrown it out" since they were not familiar with how to prepare these foods.

After discovering this through class dialogue with participants, the program assistant met with the staff at the Food Bank to develop a better system to communicate specific foods distributed. She then planned her food demonstrations to utilize the foods being distributed as a part of EFNEP recipes so the participants could see how to use the foods they receive. As part of each lesson, program participants receive handouts to help guide them in making better choices for meal planning. Participants are also able to taste the sample recipes. As a result, participants have repeatedly shared their thanks for EFNEP's help in learning how to prepare the foods they receive for their families.

One participant shared that after sampling EFNEP's Fresh-Made Salsa recipe, his children liked the taste of it better than the jarred salsa they typically purchase. He said if they had not sampled the recipe at the food bank, they would likely never make it. However, since having the experience of tasting it before making it at home, this father will now make it at home using the fresh tomatoes he receives as part of his distribution box. He also stated that the homemade version would be a less expensive option since "it makes more than the kind that we buy out of the store."

Because of this collaboration, participants have made several changes. They have decreased the amount of food waste from their distribution boxes and decreased the amount of foods given back at the food bank sites because they didn't know how to prepare it. Because food bank participants are now using more of the foods they receive, they have also increased their fruit and vegetable consumption.

<sup>1</sup> <http://esesc23.esc.state.nc.us/d4/>

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