

# EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

## 2015 NC Cooperative Extension Brunswick County

### Program Volunteer Uses EFNEP Experience to Control Diabetes

Type 2 diabetes is a chronic health condition that can be exacerbated by unhealthy eating and inactivity. In North Carolina, almost 750,000 adults report having been diagnosed with diabetes by a health professional. Assuming that national rates also apply to North Carolina, then up to an additional 280,000 North Carolinians may have diabetes but are unaware of their condition.<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 stakeholders 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 program also utilizes volunteers to assist in recruitment of groups, program promotion, program set-up, and program presentation.

In Brunswick County, EFNEP has had a long-standing relationship with a program volunteer. In 1996, as a young mother of one daughter, she participated in a family-based cooking program offered through Cooperative Extension called, *Out for Lunch*. She was interested in “finding new ways to cook healthier meals for her family and how to encourage her daughter to eat the right foods instead of junk.”

After completing the program, the mother learned about EFNEP and became an EFNEP volunteer and has continued to volunteer ever since. On a recent visit to her doctor, she was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes. He recommended that she change her diet and begin a regular exercise routine. He also prescribed her with medication to control her blood sugar levels.

Because of her many years of volunteering for EFNEP, she was able to easily understand and put into practice the recommendations her doctor suggested. As a result, she has already lost 15 pounds, which has aided in the maintenance of her condition.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.communityclinicalconnections.com/\\_downloads/CCCPH\\_FactSheet\\_Diabetes\\_%20FINAL\\_Aug2014.pdf](http://www.communityclinicalconnections.com/_downloads/CCCPH_FactSheet_Diabetes_%20FINAL_Aug2014.pdf)

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### Participant Embraces Daily Activity As a Result of EFNEP

During a recent series of lessons, one participant shared how the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) helped her increase her physical activity. The participant shared that she had a family history of arthritis. Through her experience with EFNEP and through relatives sharing their doctors’ advice, she learned that low impact activities such as walking and swimming help alleviate the symptoms of arthritis.

As part of the EFNEP lessons, participants are encouraged to share a personal goal for change and the EFNEP Program Assistant and other participants offer support and encouragement to meet their goal. During one such conversation, this participant shared that she had begun noticing that her body joints were stiff in the morning. She shared she felt that her sedentary lifestyle was contributing to this after learning that she was not engaging in the recommended 30 minutes of physical activity each day. She shared with the group her personal goal to begin a more active lifestyle by incorporating the strategies she learned in EFNEP.

She began walking outside and slowly increasing her distance each time. During the course of the EFNEP lessons, she has continued and reported that she has recently been able to walk one mile without the discomfort she felt before. This participant states that she is “very proud” of her accomplishment and “feels a lot better and has no plans of stopping.” EFNEP helped her make a small change to improve her overall health and quality of life.

*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.*



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