

EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

2015 NC Cooperative Extension Buncombe County



EFNEP Helps Young Mom Reduce Food Waste

Each year, MANNA distributes millions of pounds of food to needy families through local distribution sites in Western North Carolina. Since much of the food being distributed is fresh produce, distribution is a time sensitive task. Sites like churches, daycares and food pantries, hoping to ensure peak freshness and avoid loss, try to distribute the food as quickly as possible. Many times, however, their efforts are in vain because, not knowing how to prepare it, recipients will let it spoil once they get it home.

In Buncombe County, the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) partners with several of MANNA's distribution sites to ensure recipients can wisely plan and prepare nutritious meals using the produce provided. Recently, a young mother received from her child's daycare distribution site a variety of fresh vegetables she didn't know how to prepare. As a waitress who worked with food everyday, she was embarrassed to admit her ignorance. But, her cupboards were nearly empty and her budget didn't allow for the purchase of foods at the grocery store. Knowing she needed to use, not waste, the produce she had received, she asked for help.

Working with EFNEP, this young mother learned how to follow MyPlate's recommendations when planning her family's meals. One of this mother's favorite recipes was EFNEP's stir-fry because it was quick, versatile and cost effective to prepare. Almost any combination of vegetable received from MANNA could be used and meat, an expensive food item, was not a required ingredient. Serving beans and whole grain rice received from WIC made the meal complete. Best of all, by learning to pair the produce she received from MANNA with the foods she received through WIC, she could make meals her child would actually enjoy eating, not play with and then throw away. Less waste meant she could stretch her food dollars and use the money saved to pay other bills.

Upon graduating from EFNEP, this young mother stated she and her child were eating more nutritious meals than ever before. No longer did she worry about the health risks associated with consuming a poor diet. Instead, she was confident the meals she was planning and preparing would provide the basic nutrients needed to ensure her family's overall good health. EFNEP had changed their lives.

Resource:

About MANNA Food Bank. Retrieved from: http://www.mannafoodbank.org/who-we-are/about-manna-foodbank/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_term=%2Bfoodbank&utm_campaign=sitelinks on March 5, 2015.

High School Students Rank First in State Exam Following EFNEP

As a way to help at-risk youth stay in school and overcome the challenges they face daily, Buncombe County provides educational opportunities through its Community High School. Here the youth learn how to remove the barriers that can lead to dropout situations by developing a strong academic foundation and work/life skills that ensure a promising future.

The school believes the ability to choose, prepare and eat healthy foods are a set of life skills imperative to achieving that promising future. For this reason, through a partnership with the federally funded Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), the Community High School's nutrition education class offers students an opportunity to learn basic nutrition, food resource management, and food safety concepts. Each of these concepts plays a major role in healthy eating. By participating in open dialogue sessions and hands-on activities, the students learn meal planning and preparation skills; smart shopping tips; the nutritional importance of including fruits, vegetables and whole grains in their diets; and how to safely store food at home. By incorporating behaviors based on these concepts into their daily lives, the students will remain healthy while in school now and when gainfully employed in the future. Healthy and productive, they will become self-sufficient, responsible citizens.

This year, the Community High School's nutrition education teacher proudly shared that her class had ranked #1 on their North Carolina Career and Technical Exam (NC CTE) post assessment, an exam required by the Board of Education that tests subject matter mastery. She credited the students' experiences in EFNEP for contributing to this achievement.

This achievement clearly indicates the students now know the nutritional value of making wise food choices. Some will use their new behavioral skills to make healthy food choices for themselves and their families; some will be able to incorporate them into their professional careers. In both cases, the life skills learned in EFNEP will ensure the students with a healthy and promising future.

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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