

# EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

## 2015 NC Cooperative Extension Harnett, Lee, Moore and Cumberland Counties

One EFNEP Program Associate provides service to families in Harnett, Lee, and Moore. One EFNEP Program Associate provides service to youth in Harnett, Cumberland, and Lee counties.



### Bringing Back the Family Dinner

Research continues to send a very convincing message to parents—planning, preparing and eating meals at home with the family yields benefits beyond good health. Involving the children in coordinating family mealtimes fosters togetherness, improves vocabulary and communication skills, raises grade point averages and self-esteem, and reduces the rates of substance abuse, teen pregnancy and depression. Furthermore, being a part of the meal planning and preparation provides them an opportunity to apply math and science lessons learned in school to every day life. It also allows them to be a part of a cooperative experience that produces a product they can be proud of and a spirit within them that can carry over into other facets of their lives.

Cooking and eating healthy meals is a challenge to many, as they simply don't know where to make the time or how to do the actual cooking. To break that cycle in her home, a grandmother raising two grandchildren sought help from EFNEP.

The grandmother stated that she has been preparing home cooked meals all of her life. Having experienced the benefits in her family, she wanted her grandchildren to one day reap the same benefits. She had tried to instill an interest, but her grandchildren would not have a part of working with her in the kitchen. She thought taking EFNEP's class might be a way to spark their interest.

EFNEP, along with the local Voices Into Action's Families, Food and Health Project recently partnered to offer a family cooking class at the Lee County Cooperative Extension Center. The class met weekly and was designed to teach nutrition basics as well as meal planning, grocery shopping, and food preparation skills to parents and their children. During class, the parents and children were grouped separately for the nutrition education segment. Afterward, they came together for the cooking segment so they could prepare recipes together. Recipes were demonstrated and then each family was given the opportunity to create the same recipe on their own with both parent and child participating. New foods were introduced and tasted during each lesson. The grandmother, who admitted to previously insisting the children try new foods when she would not herself, willingly tried each new food.

At the end of the lesson series, the grandmother shared that her grandchildren were now helping her in the kitchen at home. They are

Reference:  
The Family Dinner Project.org. Retrieved on October 13, 2015 from: <http://thefamilydinnerproject.org/resources/faq/>  
Cooking Brings Kids & Families Together. Retrieved on October 13, 2015 from: <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs/visions/vis-24-4.pdf>

reading recipes, measuring, and mixing ingredients to help prepare family meals. As a family, they are enjoying the time spent together and have even begun experiencing some of the additional benefits eating as family promised to yield. One of those benefits was realizing that mealtimes could be a social event, a fun and enlightening way to spend time with family and friends. Because of EFNEP, they could now reap all the benefits eating together at home had to offer!

### Making the Connection

According to the 2014 Harnett County State of Health Report overweight/obesity were identified and rated as a major health problem affecting the community. According to the Center of Disease Control overweight and obesity increase the risk of chronic disease, including heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and some forms of cancer.

In an effort to address obesity, Betsy Johnson Hospital (BJH) in Harnett County started a clinic for families that have weight concerns. Betsy Johnson partnered with North Carolina Cooperative Extension and uses the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program as their family nutrition piece, to teach both adults and children how to make healthier meal choices. One client, along with his sibling and other children participated in a series of six 4-H EFNEP classes. The classes focused on the importance of eating healthy, food safety and being involved in physical activity. The Program Assistant also suggested keeping a food journal to track what they eat during the day. During a class the participant shared his parents bought him a puppy, seeing a chance to increase the client's physical activity, the Program Assistant encouraged him to walk and play outside with the puppy every day to keep them both healthy. The Program Assistant stated that playing with the puppy will make exercise fun!

At the end of the 4-H EFNEP classes, the boy reported that he lost 10 pounds! He stated that he learned the importance of eating right by recording what he ate, making healthy recipes, and controlling his serving sizes. He discovered several fun physical activities he could do with his brand new puppy! He stated they play with ropes, hoops, ball games, jumping and Frisbee. He said he also takes his puppy on long walks and they even jog twice a day. The Program Assistant really helped the child make the connection between having fun with his puppy and staying fit! Because of this connection the child was able to reduce his weight and reduce his risk of heart disease and orthopedic problems associated with being overweight.



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