

EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

2015 NC Cooperative Extension Edgecombe County



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.¹

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.

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

2 <http://www.childhealthdata.org/browse/survey/results?q=2415&r=35>

Children Make Healthy Changes and Encourage Parents and Teachers to Make Healthy Changes of Their Own

According to the Data Resource Center for Child & Adolescent Health, 31.4% of youth 10-17 years old in North Carolina are overweight or obese.² To combat this, the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) has partnered with Coker-Wimberly Elementary School to help improve the students' knowledge in basic nutrition, healthy snacks, and the importance of daily physical activity. According to the school's principal, "the EFNEP classes have exposed our students to healthier snack choices and helped to expand the students' options by exposing them to "new foods" such as whole grains, vegetables, and fruit salad (made) with low-fat yogurt. Many of our parents have referenced to staff how much their children have enjoyed trying "new foods" that they had never tried before such as papaya and kiwi as well as how their children are requesting "less sugary cereals" and more water during their grocery shopping trips. The impact of providing EFNEP to the children at this school has also transcended to the staff/teachers. They use snack times as an opportunity to reinforce the lessons to bring awareness to parents and students of the benefits of providing healthier snack options to improve their choices.

The skills taught in EFNEP impact not only the school environment, but also have the potential to impact the home environment. According to one kindergarten parent, "My daughter was coming home talking about eating healthy and how we must eat from the five foods every day! She has even started asking for more veggies such as carrots and celery with low-fat ranch dressing! I was very surprised but pleased to know she is learning information that will benefit the entire family!"

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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