

# EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

## 2015 NC Cooperative Extension Pitt County

### Family in Stress Has Safe Food To Eat Thanks to EFNEP

In Pitt County, Cooperative Extension's Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) works with families in the community to improve nutritional, food resource management, and food safety behaviors.

After a recent lesson, a mother of two young children shared that she was concerned about food spoilage after the electricity in her home had been turned off because she was unable to pay the bill. The mother said she was not certain when she could afford to pay the bill but wanted to make sure that she had safe food to feed her children. To help her, the EFNEP Program Assistant reached out to a local community partner, a church that offers assistance to those in need. The church was able to provide the resources to pay the current and past due bills, and the participant's electricity was restored. The Program Assistant also connected this mother to the local food bank so she could replace the discarded spoiled food.

Through strong community partnerships, EFNEP in Pitt County was able to help this family by connecting them to local resources to assure the family had safe food to eat and had the help they needed to get through a difficult time.

### Teen Gains Confidence in Food Preparation Skills and Makes Positive Changes

In Pitt County, the 4-H Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) partnered with the local school district to teach healthy eating, physical activity, and food preparation skills in an effort to decrease childhood obesity among the students. The program assistant offered lessons from the *Teen Cuisine* curriculum which is designed to help youth become self-sufficient in the kitchen while learning healthy habits that will last a lifetime and influence the people around them.

Recently, one teen shared how the experience transformed her into a confident home chef and skilled 4-H competitor. Prior to the 4-H EFNEP lessons, she said that she often spent time alone at home after school until her grandparents returned from work. Because her grandparents were concerned for her safety, she was not allowed to use kitchen appliances and relied on eating pre-packaged meals and snacks until dinnertime.

After learning cooking skills through EFNEP, the once-timid teen felt confident in her abilities and decided to participate in the Pitt County 4-H Favorite Food Show, an opportunity for youth to learn life skills needed to present and serve foods they prepare which are judged by professionals. With the help of her grandmother, this teen selected a recipe from her EFNEP workbook. She prepared the recipe for the competition and received a Blue Ribbon for her efforts.



Following the competition, the teen excitedly shared that after showcasing her food preparation skills, her grandparents now allow her to fix healthy snacks afterschool. Her grandmother said that because of her cooking skills the teen has changed her eating habits and lost five pounds, moving her to a healthier weight.

### Hesitant Youth Discovers He Likes Vegetables Through EFNEP

Making food fun can make eating foods, especially new ones, a more positive experience. Often children need to see, touch, or taste a new food multiple times before they will accept the food. Recent research suggests many young children must be offered a food 10 times or more before they will take a bite.<sup>1</sup>

Using age appropriate hands-on learning experiences, 4-H EFNEP teaches a six-lesson series of classes that introduces the basic nutrition and physical activity principles found in USDA's *MyPlate*. Specifically, EFNEP teaches youth how to plan and prepare healthy meals and snacks based on the five basic food groups, read the nutrition facts labels found on food products to determine nutrient content, and use safe food handling practices. The lessons also share information about the health benefits of being physically active each day, and youth learn how to make a healthy recipe with each lesson.

In a recent series of lessons, the EFNEP Program Assistant observed one student make a sour face each time the class prepared a recipe. Noticing his hesitation, the program assistant would remind the students, "you don't have to like it, but I want you to try it." Each time, the boy would complain but take a small bite.

During a lesson that explored the importance of vegetables, the boy became visibly upset and stomped his feet when he saw the vegetables—carrots, snap peas, celery, and cucumbers—for the day's recipe, Veggie Animals.

As the rest of the class prepared their veggie bunny faces or snails, the boy watched. In a short amount of time, he asked for a plate and vegetables so he could make a veggie snail, too. He stated that he would try the vegetables once he made his creation. As he arranged vegetables, he took a bite of a snap pea, and then another. Soon he was nibbling on each kind of vegetable. The program assistant watched with excitement as the teacher snapped pictures with her camera to share with the boy's mother.

Later on, the boy's mother shared that he asks to make Veggie Animals several times a week and brings home the other healthy recipes from EFNEP so they can make them together as a family.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/food/nutrition/nutrition/life\\_stages/hgic4104.html](http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/food/nutrition/nutrition/life_stages/hgic4104.html)

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