



## 2018 NC Cooperative Extension Gaston County Report

### North Carolina's Challenges

- In North Carolina, **1 in 5** children live in poverty.
- North Carolina's adult obesity rate is currently **32%**.
- **15.2%** of 2- to 4-year-olds from low-income families are obese. This makes us the **16th** most obese state.
- North Carolina has the **15th** highest rate of diabetes and the **11th** highest rate of hypertension.

### Supporting North Carolina's Families with Greatest Needs Since 1969

EFNEP helps address the challenges limited resource families face when introducing healthy changes through nutrition education, cooking classes, physical activity strategies, and shopping on a limited budget. EFNEP provides:

- Peer-to-peer, hands on education in the community
- Healthy, low-cost recipes
- Simple strategies to help families move more together



### EFNEP Reaches Diverse Audiences in Gaston County

In 2018: **21** families enrolled in EFNEP  
**550** participated in 4-H EFNEP  
**48%** of EFNEP participants enrolled in one or more food assistance programs.

### WHAT IS EFNEP?

EFNEP serves limited-resource families with young children, school-age youth, and pregnant teens through a series of lessons offered by paraprofessionals and volunteers, many of whom are indigenous to the population. In 2018, EFNEP served 45 counties in North Carolina. Participants learned how to:

- Make wise food choices
- Increase daily physical activity
- Manage food resources
- Practice food safety

### EFNEP Makes a Real Difference in Gaston County

- 82%** of EFNEP participants improved dietary intake.
- 34%** now practice daily physical activity.
- 57%** practice better food resource management.
- 66%** have improved their food safety habits.

### Volunteers Strengthen EFNEP

In 2018, **45** adults and youth donated time to EFNEP, making a difference in their own communities and contributing to EFNEP's ongoing success.



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Gaston County EFNEP programs obtained **\$15,965** in funding and support from local efforts.

## EFNEP SUCCESS

### EFNEP Changes Family's Outlook on Life

The Gaston County EFNEP Educator participated in a health fair hosted by the Highland Health Center to recruit families interested in participating in EFNEP.

The women from the Highland neighborhood who attended the EFNEP lessons were all very interested in the topics being taught. Most of the women in the class were single women who were working over full time to support their children and/or grandchildren. There was almost perfect attendance throughout the seven-week EFNEP series. One woman, a mother of two, did not miss a single class and showed a heightened interest in the program topics. She came to every program right from work. Her teenage daughter frequently came with her to the classes and was involved in her family's lifestyle change.

Before her participation in EFNEP, this woman stated that her family frequently ate fast food and she **"seldom cooked."** Her family would overeat and their portion control was lacking. Her initial interest in changing the way her family eats started when she was diagnosed with diabetes. She realized that if she does not change the way her children eat now, those bad habits will stick with them and they will have a high probability of getting diabetes in their adult lives.

After participating in EFNEP, she has started to change the way her family eats. She says of the program, **"It has given my family a new outlook on food, shown us ways to eat healthier, and taught us ways to save money when shopping for groceries."** Her family has started making meals at home and she is really enjoying preparing the healthy recipes she gets from EFNEP with her daughter. She says, **"Being in EFNEP has really changed my outlook on life with real life changes that are possible for me to do, to achieve my goal of raising a healthier family."**

### EFNEP Healthy Eating Classes Change Family

In Gaston County the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) recently partnered with Gaston Community College. EFNEP classes were offered to the Adult High School participants at the college, who are all working to advance their education. Most of the participants were mothers who were not only trying to work a job and care for their children, but also get their high school diploma. These women appreciated the EFNEP classes because the

lessons gave them the strategies they needed to feed their family healthy, safe, affordable meals in the midst of their busy schedules.

One woman was particularly grateful for EFNEP. This woman is the mother of a child who suffers from overeating and another who is a picky eater. She came into the first class overwhelmed and stressed about her children's eating behavior. Through her participation in EFNEP, she learned different strategies to help feed both of her children

in a way that is healthy for each of them. One of her biggest takeaways was that she and her husband have to both be on board with an eating plan for their children. In the past she would get frustrated with her husband for eating poorly in front of her children. Since her EFNEP experience, she has been successfully encouraging her husband to follow the food rules she has set for their children, and has seen improvement in their children's eating behavior. She has said about her participation in EFNEP, **"I came into the EFNEP program frustrated with my kids and my husband, but I have now realized that my family is on this journey towards healthy eating habits together."**



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