



# NC Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program

October 1, 2004 – September 30, 2005

EFNEP reaches out to limited-resource families with young children. They attend a series of lessons, often over several months, taught by trained program assistants (paraprofessionals), many of whom are indigenous to the population. Using "hands-on" experiences, clients participate in six or more lessons on food selection, stretching food dollars, improving eating habits, and practicing food safety principles.

- Number of program families enrolled: **7,411**
- Number of youth: **11,306**
- Number of persons in program families: **29,932**
- Families enrolled in one or more food assistance programs: **6,999 (94%)**
- Additional families receiving assistance as a result of EFNEP: **774 (10%)**

## Adult Program Impacts

Key food-related practices were measured at entry into EFNEP and upon graduation. These behavioral changes translate into significant improvements in recommended food and dietary practices. Results based on data from graduates show that:

- **93%** improved in one or more nutrition practices (i.e., makes healthy food choices, prepares foods without adding salt, plans meals, reads nutrition labels, or has children eating breakfast).
- **91%** improved in one or more food resource management practices (i.e., plans meals, compares prices, does not run out of food, or uses grocery lists).
- **76%** more often read food labels to select foods with less fat.
- **64%** more often used a list for grocery shopping.
- **63%** more often now use low fat milk.
- **34%** improved in one or more of the food safety practices (i.e., thawing and storing foods properly).

## Dietary Changes

The dietary intake of six key nutrients that are often limited in the diets of low-income audiences—protein, iron, calcium, Vitamin A, Vitamin C, and Vitamin B—also are measured. Intake levels for each nutrient increased as a result of participation in EFNEP.

There were also substantial improvements in the intake of food to meet the recommendations of the Food Guide Pyramid. Servings increased as follows: **67%** in the Fruit group, **57%** in the Vegetable group and, **60%** in the Calcium/Dairy group.

## Obesity Prevention

EFNEP also works with participants on overweight/obesity prevention. Some behavior indicators of that are:

- **95%** of participants showed positive change in their intake of at least one food group (grain, vegetable, fruit, dairy, meat and beans).
- **65%** more drink at least 6 cups of water a day.
- **57%** more engage in moderate physical activity at least 30 minutes a day.
- **32%** increased in fiber consumption at the recommended level.

## Selected Adult Program Success Stories

A participant complained that her family frequently got sick after eating. A North Carolina Cooperative Extension EFNEP program assistant conducted a class on food safety. The homemaker learned proper handwashing techniques, the importance of cooking food well, how to properly thaw food and how to prevent food borne illnesses. The participant began putting this newly acquired knowledge to work and stated her family no longer gets sick after eating. Previous to EFNEP, the family spent about \$100 per month on doctor visits and medications. The homemaker stated they were no longer having to make frequent visits to the doctor because of illness and they were saving this money for other family needs.

EFNEP partnered with the local county Health Department to augment the nutrition education provided to WIC clients. Since that time, the EFNEP Nutrition Program Assistant has taught over 465 young mothers how to use their WIC vouchers more proficiently and their WIC foods more creatively. The EFNEP lessons offered have taught WIC recipients better resource management skills, improved nutrition practices and the most up-to-date food safety measures.

Recently, a young mother told the EFNEP Nutrition Program Assistant that she had used the program's Magic Mix recipe numerous times. It had been the basis for many dishes, particularly soups and puddings, and using that recipe instead of purchased products had already saved her several dollars at the grocery store. This young mother has become an EFNEP advocate. She credited EFNEP for giving her the skills she needed to use her WIC vouchers more resourcefully and her WIC foods more innovatively.

Young parenting teens have many nutritional issues. Many lack basic nutrition knowledge for both themselves and their young child. Additionally, teen parents are often faced with significant challenges in food resource management and in preparing food safely. EFNEP in partnership with a local learning center provided a series of nutrition education lessons to 22 teen parents. As a result of the program, 99% showed a positive change in at least one food group and 83% improved their food resource management skills..

Young women with busy schedules who are pregnant often find it difficult to eat healthy diets and select more nutritious meals/snacks when eating on the go. EFNEP teamed with the Elizabeth City State University (ECSU) Student Health Services to provide a series of EFNEP classes for pregnant students. Many of the participants shared concerns about the amount of iron rich foods they are consuming, need for healthy snacks and selecting healthier low fat foods from fast food restaurants. Using the Eating Right is Basic 3 Curriculum; the Nutrition Program Assistant was able to provide the women with information on foods to include in their diet for a healthy baby and nutritious snack choices. The group recently had their iron levels checked and due to their changes in their eating habits their iron levels have increased. The women are also putting into practice the other information that they have learned and are making healthier choices in selecting snacks and fast foods. They are even

shopping together to purchase their food to save money and preparing the recipes that they have tried in the EFNEP classes.

Childhood obesity has reached epidemic proportions in North Carolina. A young, single mother of two boys recently participated in EFNEP and stated she is very concerned about her oldest child, who has been identified as not only being obese, but also in extreme danger of becoming diabetic at the age of 8. She expressed a need to learn how she can prepare foods which will help her son reduce his weight and become healthier. During the Eating Right and Light lesson, reducing and removing excess fat from our diets was taught. One technique the participants learned was to drain and rinse ground meat to remove additional fat. This mother stated she was so glad to learn this simple technique and has begun using this and other suggestions from the class to help her son. This mother has begun to make healthy changes to improve the health of her family.

## **Youth Component**

4-H EFNEP, the youth component of the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program, provides youth ages 5 - 19 with a practical, hands-on approach to nutrition education and food preparation. This idea of "Learning by Doing" encourages positive dietary changes, increased physical activity and improved food safety habits resulting in enhanced self-esteem. While meeting these needs, the long-range goal is to encourage participants to pursue other 4-H opportunities designed to develop responsible youth. It is the intent of EFNEP to reach limited resource families in an effort to improve dietary habits through nutrition education and to become more efficient and effective users of available resources.

4-H EFNEP's "Professor Popcorn" curriculum is delivered as a series of lessons, over a period of weeks by trained paraprofessionals. They work closely with the local 4-H agent to recruit groups for program participation. Program delivery takes on various forms. Nutrition education is provided via group instruction through 4-H clubs, in after school settings, at school as an enrichment to the curriculum, at community centers, in neighborhood groups and through day camps and workshops. In addition to lessons on nutrition, food preparation, and food safety, youth topics may also include fitness, avoidance of

substance abuse, and other health-related topics.

**11,306** youth participated in the 4-H EFNEP program. Of those **2,898** participated in other 4-H activities. This demonstrates not only does the program affect youth positively nutritionally, but works to develop the youth in other areas as well.

## Youth Program Impacts

### Some key impacts are:

**69%** of the youth now eat a variety of nutritious foods.

**76%** of the youth increased their knowledge of the essentials of human nutrition.

**70%** of the youth increased their ability to select low-cost, nutritious foods

**75%** of the youth improved practices in food preparation and safety.

## Selected Youth Program Success Stories

A kindergarten teacher knew that hand washing is the single most effective way to prevent the spread of germs and infection. This year she had two special reasons for preventing the spread of germs in her classroom; she was a cancer patient taking treatments and wanted to protect herself from illness, and she wanted to bring down the absentee rate in her classroom. So, she contacted the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service for help. The 4-H EFNEP program assistant presented the Professor Popcorn hand washing lesson to the kindergarteners. During the lesson, the children participated in an activity that used Glo Germ and a black light to show where germs remained on their hands and the surfaces they touched even after washing them. Surprised at the amount of germs not washed away, the children washed their hands again, this time practicing the correct mechanical actions and using plenty of water and soapy lather.

At the end of the term, the children's parents reported that the children had been washing their hands more often at home and the teacher reported that 85% of the children were washing their hands during the school day without being told. The teacher had been ill and the rate of absenteeism had dropped compared to the previous year. Less illness and better attendance resulted in better academic scores and fewer medical expenses

Approximately 30% of youth between the ages of 6-19 are overweight, with 15% considered obese. These youth are at risk for heart attacks, strokes and diabetes. Scotland County Cooperative Extension's 4- H EFNEP collaborated with the Scotland Scholars After-School Program, Parks and Recreation, local churches and several daycares to offer a nutrition and fitness activity program for youth. Over 800 youth received 6 lessons or more of instruction in selecting better, healthier food choices, for both meals and snacks. Lessons were taught on the five food groups, appropriate serving sizes, hand washing and the importance of fitness and the role that food plays in it. After completing a pretest and post-test, the results showed 95% of youth surveyed improved their diets through healthier food choices and increased physical activity.

Research shows that nine of the ten leading causes of death in the United States are directly linked to nutrition. Providing nutrition education early can give youth a jump-start to developing healthy eating habits, which can reduce the incident of childhood overweight. During this past year, 4-H EFNEP partnered with Fred A. Anderson Elementary to provide the program to third, fourth and fifth grade students. Hands-on nutrition and food safety activities, take-home activity sheets, recipes and physical activity were all a part of the program. As a result, not only did the students share they were making healthier choices, but they stated they shared the information they had learned with their parents as well.

## Program Volunteers

Volunteers are a key component of our successful EFNEP Program. Volunteers support the program in a variety of ways including: serving on advisory committees, program recruitment, instructional assistance and resource and facility procurement.

A total of **2,042** volunteers contributed **37,740 hours** in support of the adult and youth components of the program. "These volunteers are the Champions of EFNEP!"