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Robeson County Center

WHAT IS THE MORE IN MY BASKET OUTREACH PROGRAM?

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By: Janice Fields
Extension Family and Consumer Sciences Agent

Did you know nearly 49 million Americans don’t get enough nutritious food? We often think hunger is happening somewhere else in the world. According to www.feedingamerica.org, North Carolina is among nine other states with food insecurity rates higher than the national average. Food insecure means an individual may lack access, at times, to enough food for an active, healthy life. Our state has 1,649,070 food insecure people and 29,910 of those are living right here in Robeson County. Families and individuals sometimes make trade-offs purchasing enough nutritious food because of medical bills, housing, or other unexpected costs. You don’t have to look very far in Robeson County to know that hunger is an issue for many of our citizens, including children.

So, what’s the problem with being a little hungry? Children are affected in many ways. Hunger can cause them to experience irritability and fatigue, making it more difficult for them to concentrate and perform at their best in school. According to USDA, there are over 17 million children in the United States who live in food insecure families. For those children, the food they receive at school may be their only food for that day. You may have also heard that Communities in Schools of Robeson County are providing weekend single-serving meals through a program called Bak Pak Pals. Around 90 children in the Lumberton area and around 24 in the Red Springs area are receiving bags of food each weekend.

Entire families are also affected. Eating healthier is key for older adults ability to live independently and remain active in the community. Another way to help food insecure families is through Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, formerly known as food stamps. Many adults, who would qualify for Food and Nutrition Services, don’t apply because they don’t have the needed information, and others misunderstand FNS benefits because they have incorrect or outdated information. North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Robeson County is now presenting a More in My Basket program to educate interested adults about the benefits of FNS/SNAP. The purpose of the More in My Basket session is to ensure that participants have correct, current information about these benefits.
More in My Basket is presented by North Carolina Cooperative Extension and supported by N.C. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. The More in My Basket presentation shows how extra grocery dollars, at any dollar amount, can help individuals purchase more and healthier foods, freeing up budgeted grocery dollars for other expenses. The presentation shows how FNS/SNAP benefits can make a positive difference to a household’s grocery budget and diet. Participants see how a few extra food dollars, as little as $4 a week; can have a huge impact on their food purchases. The presentation also covers changes to qualifications, use of the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card, and what can be purchased using these benefits. Participants learn that even though they may not have qualified in the past, recent changes may now help them qualify. They also learn how to apply for these benefits. If they do not qualify, they learn to find out why. Knowing why can help an individual know when to apply in the future if their situation changes. The typical presentation is 30 to 45 minutes.

Do you know of a group that would benefit from a More in My Basket presentation? Or, a community event where a More in My Basket booth might make a difference? For more information, please contact Janice Fields or Christy Strickland, Extension Family and Consumer Sciences agents with North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Robeson County Center, at 671-3276, by E-mail at Janice_Fields@ncsu.edu or Christy_Strickland@ncsu.edu or visit our website at http://robeson.ces.ncsu.edu.