

— COOPERATIVE — EXTENSION

Through Extension programs across the nation, Family and Consumer Science Extension Educators provide a multitude of educational opportunities to meet the needs of diverse audiences

Childhood Obesity

Growing Healthy Foods

In **Maine** and **Mississippi**, preschoolers were the target audience for garden-based nutrition and physical activity education programs. Lessons taught included how food is grown, what plants need to grow, healthy snacks that include food from the garden, and physical activity that makes hearts and lungs grow stronger. Evaluation of these programs indicates that the youth were able to make healthier choices and increase their physical activity through gardening.

Nutrition Education

Tennessee is among the states reporting that children are more apt to eat new fruits and vegetables as a result of targeted nutrition education programs that focus on food demonstrations and taste tests. In addition, teachers reported using new physical activities provided to them as a part of the curriculum at least three times a week. In **North Carolina**, similar results were achieved. Parents of children involved in Extension nutrition education programs in North Carolina also reported an increase in their own physical activity.

Many states participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – Education or **SNAP-Ed**. One in seven people in America is eligible for **SNAP** benefits, and many are facing food insecurity for the first time in their life. Through **SNAP-Ed**, information is provided on food groups, portion sizes, and “eating right when money is tight”! In **Arizona**, over 985,000 participants were taught nutrition basics, healthy living habits and exercise. Thousands of supplemental education pieces including food safety publications were provided to over 178,000 people.

Across the nation, the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (**EFNEP**) reached 130,485 adults and 479,398 youth directly and nearly 400,000 family members indirectly. Through **EFNEP**, individuals are engaged in a series of nutrition and physical activity education classes. 95% of adults, through an analysis of diet recalls, reported improving their diet including consuming an extra cup of fruits and vegetables; 85% of adults, through pre-post surveys, reported improvement in their food resource management practices.

USDA Standards—School Child Nutrition Programs

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension was contracted with the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) Child Nutrition Services to provide technical training to Extension Educators and OSDE Child Nutrition Administrators. Twenty-eight regional workshops training 1,001 school nutrition personnel were conducted. This resulted in 1) increase knowledge of the standards, 2) increased confidence in ability to revise menus to meet standards, and 3) increased confidence in ability to increase students’ access to healthy affordable foods.

Increasing Physical Activity

Across the nation, when Extension educators teach about good nutrition they couple that message with information about ways to increase physical activity. **North Carolina’s** “Steps to Health”, **New Jersey’s** “Small Steps to Health and Wealth”, **Tennessee’s** “Health Steps Program”, and the “Strong Women, Healthy Hearts” program offered in many states including **Pennsylvania** and **Arizona**. These are examples of programs that engage participants in making small changes which, over time, help increase physical activity and lower a variety of health risks including high blood pressure and diabetes.

Childhood Obesity

Train the Trainer

Mississippi, Arizona, and South Dakota are among the states that use Train-the-Trainer as one approach to extend their reach with nutrition and physical activity education. In the case of **South Dakota**, teachers were trained to use “Tatanka’s Healthy Tales” in the Lakota language to deliver healthy eating and physical activity information to 2nd and 3rd graders. In **Mississippi**, Head Start teachers were trained to present a series of 2 books per month that introduced the food group of the month and foods that belong to the food group in a fun short story. In **Arizona**, more than 3,500 classroom teachers and other volunteers helped to extend nutrition education throughout the state.

Extension family and consumer sciences educators are helping families be active together to be healthier and feel better



eXtension.org continues to be a well utilized resource for all Extension educators on Nutrition, Health, and Fitness. Extension educators have contributed fact sheets, programs, and resources to this site covering child care; drinking water and human health; families, food and fitness; family care giving; food safety; parenting and personal finance. New research-based resources are added continually for consumers and professionals.

NEAFCS is the National Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences.

NEAFCS provides professional development for Extension professionals who improve the quality of life for individuals, families, and communities and provide education in:

- Food preparation, food safety, and nutrition
- Financial management
- Healthy lifestyles
- Home and work environment and safety
- Relationships and parenting skills

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