



Program Highlights

- ◆ Nutrition Best website pages had over 37,000 visitors
- ◆ Over 4,500 families and children received nutrition education
- ◆ Kid Food Newsletter has over 800 subscribers
- ◆ Over 60 early childhood educators attended trainings
- ◆ Nutrition BEST attended over 10 community health events to educate families and professionals

NUTRITION BEST

To help ensure the healthy growth and development of children in Placer County, the Nutrition BEST program has provided research-based nutrition education, outreach and resources for families with young children since 2001.

Nutrition BEST (Better Education, Skills and Training) is a program supported by funding through First 5 - Placer County Children and Families Commission, and works in collaboration with other agencies and organizations throughout Placer County.

As families lifestyle habits have changed over time, nutrition and good health have become pressing issues. The need for families, early childhood educators, and professionals to have access to nutrition information, education and resources as they relate to young children, is the driving force behind Nutrition BEST's efforts.

Children are of special concern as they are now beginning to suffer from diseases, formerly only seen in adults, and other increased health risks. To help combat these rising problems, Nutrition BEST focuses on educational messages targeted at families with children 0-5 years old.

Some of the programs highlights and areas where Nutrition BEST has been especially effective and has had significant impacts over the past year, are reflected in the following pages.



A young girl washes pretend produce at the Farmers' Market while practicing the names of different vegetables.



Parent Workshops

Issue

Establishing a good nutrition foundation for children is critical to their development and later success in life. Parents, and other adults, have the strongest influence over their children's food choices. Having the tools and education to provide the best nutrition for young children is key to their health, brain development, and overall physical development. All other efforts to help a child succeed are compromised if a child is malnourished.

What Was Done

Parent workshops are one of the main delivery methods of the Nutrition BEST program. Through interactive activities and skill building workshops, parents are taught new skills on topics that include: understanding MyPyramid, label reading, economical shopping and cooking, physical activity for young children, food safety, how to involve children in food preparation, introducing solid foods to infants, and making baby food. This year, Nutrition BEST worked with a variety of community agencies and delivered nutrition education to various parent groups including teen parent programs at Chana and Adalante High School, WIC, fathers MIC parent group, KidsFirst, Turning a New Leaf Counseling, Home Start, Sutter Parent Outlet Group, and Western Placer preschools.



Chana High School teen parents learn about food labels through an interactive quiz.

Impact

Fifty parent nutrition education workshops were presented to over 450 parents in Placer County. Using the Extension Cares Initiative (ECI) web-based tools, we are able to collect data, assess the effectiveness of our program and report this data into the National Extension system. Results from these show:

- **88% of the participants reported gains in knowledge.**
- **94% found the information was useful.**
- **96% indicated they would use the information to better support their families.**
- **96% would recommend the workshops to others.**

One mother who received nutrition education from Nutrition BEST commented on the workshops, "I didn't understand what and how important nutrition is until you began these classes. Now I can look at a food label and understand what I am eating."



Parent Education at Placer County WIC Sites



Mom and daughter work as a team to create a peanut butter and banana tortilla roll-up.

Issue

Parents and caregivers help shape the lives and future habits of young children. Creating healthy eating habits during these years is essential as crucial parts of brain development occur in the first five years. Mealtimes give parents the opportunity to create positive feeding relationships with their children while modeling positive eating practices. Children who are involved in meal preparation are more likely to eat a wider variety of foods and will establish healthy eating habits.

What Was Done

Over 65 participants in the Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC) received nutrition education at all Placer County sites. Through hands-on activities and discussions regarding children and meal preparation, parents learned how cooking with their children can positively effect their eating habits. Participants created cooking activities using mealtime prop boxes, discussed the benefits that children receive from meal preparation, and defined age-appropriate cooking tasks. At the end of the class parents and children worked together to make a nutritious peanut butter and banana roll-up snack. The cooking activity included all WIC foods, giving families the opportunity to make the recipe at home with their children.

Impact

Fourteen workshops were delivered at Placer County WIC sites in Auburn, Lincoln, Roseville and Kings Beach. Over a period of two months over 50 parents and care providers received nutrition education.

- **92% gained knowledge on the importance of promoting healthy lifestyle habits early to children.**
- **93% found the information useful.**
- **93% will use the information to better support their children/youth/family.**
- **95% would recommend the program to others.**

One parent stated after receiving recipe ideas that included whole wheat tortillas, a WIC eligible food, “I didn’t know a tortilla could be used for many things.”



Growing Healthy, Eating Happy

Issue

Research shows young children who have had gardening and cooking experiences eat a wider variety of fruits and vegetables and develop healthier eating habits. Parental modeling and guidance is key to ensuring that young children develop appropriate social and developmental skills and healthy eating habits.

What Was Done

A nutrition education series, *Growing Healthy, Eating Happy*, was delivered to parents via three child-care provider trainings. The delivery was three prong:

- **Early Childhood Education Training**—The training included interactive activities that covered the benefits of children’s gardening experiences, active gardening with young children, the importance of fruits and vegetables, and garden and kitchen safety.
- **Four Parent Handouts**—Child care providers distributed parent handouts on gardening, food safety, and cooking.
- **Family Incentives**—Families who returned assessments received a home gardening kit.



Childcare providers use gardening props to create developmentally appropriate activities.

Impact

A retrospective survey was given at the end of the provider training to the 62 participants. Results found the following knowledge gains:

- 71% learned how nutrition and gardening benefits young children’s eating habits.
- 75% learned how to include children in indoor/outdoor gardening activities to improve their nutrition and physical activity.
- 72% learned methods for ensuring optimal food handling and safety with fresh produce.
- 67% learned how to involve children in cooking activities that promote healthy eating habits.

Over 220 parents were reached. Results found the following knowledge gains:

- 86% learned how cooking with children can help them learn healthy eating habits.
- 89% learned how to involve your children in gardening activities to increase their variety of fruit and vegetable consumption.
- 91% learned ways to provide physical activity opportunities for your children in the garden.
- 71% learned food safety practices to use when preparing fresh produce for meals.



Education through Newsletters, Brochures, and Website

Issue

Parents, childcare providers, and health professionals all want reliable nutrition information. With so much information related to nutrition available, parents are often faced with assessing accurate versus inaccurate nutrition information. Since the information found on the Internet is not regulated by any agency, sites featuring sound science-based content coexist with sites containing questionable and inaccurate information. This is especially true in the areas of nutrition and physical activity.



*Nutrition BEST
Webpage.*

What Was Done

To provide accurate, research-based information on nutrition and physical activity for young children, Nutrition BEST hosts its own web pages within the University of California Cooperative Extension's Placer-Nevada Counties website. Nutrition BEST also provides a variety of brochures and *KidFood*, a monthly newsletter available in English and Spanish for parents with 2-5 year olds.

The Nutrition BEST web page provides information on prenatal, infant and child nutrition and feeding tips, offers answers to frequently asked questions, promotes upcoming events and provides program and nutrition information through social networking sites including Facebook and Twitter.

The pages also provide access to parent and professional newsletters, all Nutrition BEST publications, and access to UCCE professional nutrition staff. The web pages are continually monitored and updated to ensure quality and accuracy. Nutrition brochures available on the website include a wide variety of nutrition topics for parents including: serving sizes, fruit juice facts, family mealtimes, feeding challenges, fast food, cooking with kids, prenatal nutrition, infant feeding and making baby food.

Impact

There are over 150-pages on the Nutrition BEST website and it averages 46,000 visits a year. Because of the web pages, brochures, and newsletters, families and professionals have access to reliable nutrition information. Several brochures are also available in Spanish widening the access to a diverse population. Over 1,300 nutrition brochures have been distributed to child care providers and families in the past year. Our program materials are used heavily by Placer County families as a source of ready-to-use information.



Community Events and Nutrition Outreach

Issue

A strong focus of the Nutrition BEST program is to provide parents, caregivers, and children with the tools and resources to create a foundation for healthy lifestyles. One effective approach to ensuring reputable nutrition information is accessible to these groups, is to participate in various community events where the general public is present. Nutrition BEST participated in several events that provided various activities and information to parents and children.



A young boy rings up his mom for her pretend produce purchases after he weighs them at the Farmers' Market.

Children scrub and dry pretend fruits and vegetables at the Health & Safety Faire.



What Was Done

Participation in community events was spread throughout Placer County, which included areas in Auburn, Rocklin, and Roseville allowing for diverse groups to be reached.

Participants at the events ranged from parents, family members and siblings, child care providers, health professionals, and children. A few of the community events that Nutrition BEST attended included: several Mommy and Me's, PCOE, Health and Safety Faire, Farmers' Markets, Sutter Hospital's Children's Faire, Frayed Knots and Norcal KidsFest.

Impact

Over 2,400 parents, children, and professionals attended these events and were given direct access to sound, nutrition information, resources, and activities. **Additionally, professional connections made at events allowed for the program to further its' community growth and outreach, including professional trainings and workshops.** Large volumes of brochures and handouts were also distributed at the events, increasing the public's overall awareness of the importance for nutrition, physical activity, and healthy lifestyles. A mother commented about the Nutrition BEST booth, "thanks for being here. The kids need this."