



## Program Highlights

- ◆ Over 2,695 low income Placer and Nevada Counties school children received nutrition education
- ◆ Over 125 teachers implemented the Let's Eat Healthy program
- ◆ Program representatives brought Let's Eat Healthy! to 25 preschool classrooms and 104 elementary school classrooms
- ◆ \$195,750 grant to provide FSNEP programs to low income Placer and Nevada Counties children and youth

# FOOD STAMP NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAM

**T**he vision of the Let's Eat Healthy! program (Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program in Placer and Nevada Counties) is to educate food stamp eligible children and parents throughout Placer and Nevada Counties to lead healthier lives through wise food choices and physical activity.

The purpose of Let's Eat Healthy! is to promote healthy lifestyles as outlined in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. This program targets schools and community programs with large numbers of children from food stamp households. This is done by teaching students about the importance of physical activity, healthy food choices and what these foods do for our bodies. Eligible schools receive University of California Cooperative Extension nutrition curricula, resources and teacher trainings.

This is extremely important in light of the fact that childhood obesity has tripled in the past three decades. One in three Americans younger than 18 is overweight. The likelihood of developing type 2 diabetes, high blood cholesterol, and high blood pressure at rates that raise their heart disease risk are greatly increased in the overweight child. The rapid rise in childhood obesity, if left unchecked, could shorten life span by as much as five years.

Physical activity, good nutrition, and good education go hand-in-hand. Well-nourished children have higher test scores, better school attendance, and fewer classroom behavior problems. Research shows that knowledge and skills children learn today help them choose healthier foods tomorrow and into adulthood.



Students have fun figuring out where foods fit on MyPyramid.



# *Hands-On Activities Have a Powerful Impact*

## Issue

Over the past three decades, childhood obesity rates in America have tripled, and today, nearly one in three children in America are overweight or obese. Over nineteen percent of youth ages 5-19 in Placer and Nevada Counties are overweight. There are many factors that contribute to the epidemic; portion size and food choices are just two.

## What Was Done

Lecturing children on the need to eat healthier foods has little effect on their food choices. Instead, fourth grade students participated in a fun hands-on activity involving reading food labels.

Students were shown three groups of “breakfast foods” - cereals, bars and pastries. As a class they categorized each group from least to most sugar. After a brief lesson on label reading and converting grams to teaspoons, the children worked in groups to measure out the amount of sugar in one serving of each food. Students came back together and shared their finding.

## Impact

Children were surprised at the amount of sugar in most of the foods. They learned that even if a label says “all natural” it is not necessarily the best choice. They also learned that the amount of food they eat at one time might be more than what is considered a serving size. Teachers shared behavior changes resulting from this lesson.

- **One student switched from a high sugar cereal to a low sugar cereal.**
- **Students in Nevada County receive snacks from the local Food Bank and the Lion’s Club. They now read the food label and determine if it is a “healthy snack” before eating. Many choose a different snack if it doesn’t pass the test.**
- **One student drank a 32 ounce bottle of Gatorade daily. When she looked at the nutrition facts label she realized she was getting twice as much sugar as she should be consuming daily from that one bottle. She now brings a 16 oz bottle and often fills it with water the next day.**



*Wow! There are 50 grams of sugar in this banana nut muffin!!!! That's 12 ½ teaspoons.*



# *Let's Eat Healthy!*

## *Creating Healthy Habits In Elementary Schools*



*Students play MyPyramid Bingo.*

### Issue

Childhood obesity threatens the future of one third of the children in America. For the first time in our history, children may live shorter lives than their parents.

### What Was Done

Since Fall 2001, a UC-FSNEP program representative has taught nutrition lessons as well as provided research-based hands-on curriculum.

This year 104 classrooms in eight schools received an introductory lesson at the beginning of the school year and a review lesson in the spring. Many fifth grade students have received lessons since they started preschool!

### Impact

Over half of the teachers had a nutrition story to tell about how the program has resulted in the healthy nutrition habits of their students. These habits are also influencing parents. Below are a few examples:

- The student does not have strong home support, so snacks were left up to him. He frequently brought “junk food” to school. After a lesson in what he should bring, he now is proud to show me every day the healthy snack he brought.
- Kindergarteners have become aware of their snacks and talk about healthy snacks and lunches frequently.
- The best part is hearing students stories that use nutrition language. **“I had whole grains for breakfast.” “My mom gives me too many sometime snacks—potato chips! I need more anytime snacks.”**
- Parents brought in healthy snacks for parties **on children’s request.**
- One student went shopping with her mother and asked her to buy more vegetables.
- A section from the newsletter prompted a conversation about healthy foods to eat at home. Most of the students would bring hot cheetos for snack in the morning. Now they bring fruit or cheese and crackers.
- One student brought cookies for snack recess. I noticed about half way through the year he started bringing a few fruits and vegetables. It is now the end of the year and we are cookie free. **I asked about his snack and he replied, “these things just make me feel better!”**

By working together with the schools, *Let's Eat Healthy!* is making a difference in the eating habits of students and their families.





# *Let's Eat Healthy!*

## *Hennessy School Garden*

---

### Issue

The majority of U.S. children do not eat enough fruits and vegetables. An analysis of data from a recent survey shows that children eat only 2.4 servings of fruits and vegetables a day. The *Dietary Guidelines 2005* and MyPyramid recommend children eat 2 cups of fruit and 2½ cups of vegetables; the equivalent of 9 servings per day.

### What Was Done

Research shows that when children grow their own food they are more likely to eat it.

UC Cooperative Extension in collaboration with Live Healthy Nevada County Food and Nutrition Action Committee helped revitalize the Hennessy School Garden. Students from kindergarten through fifth grade had an opportunity to work in the garden and enjoy the fruits of their labor.

Many classrooms supplemented the gardening with nutrition/gardening curricula—Farm to Fork.....Promoting School Wellness and Nutrition to Grow On.

Hennessy teachers have been participating in the *Let's Eat Healthy!* Program since the 2001-2002 school year. Of the nineteen K-5th grade teachers at Hennessy, fifteen are active in the program.



*Hennessy students show their kale harvest.*

### Impact

- Students were more willing to try a variety of vegetables because they came from their garden. **Mrs. Kerksieck's first grade class harvested kale. They then made kale chips. These chips were a big hit with all of the students.**
- One teachers quote says it all: **"The connections between Hennessy Garden, Farm to Fork and Harvest of the Month have been grand. Rosemary's (Let's Eat Healthy! Program Representative) steady presence has been an encouraging incentive to create a more nutritious and healthy school culture. I have made small positive changes each year over the past 9 years to promote good health in the midst of all our other teaching".**