



Program Highlights

- ◆ **Nutrition Best website** pages had over **31,000** visitors
- ◆ Over **4,500** families and children received nutrition education
- ◆ **Kid Food Newsletter** has over **227** subscribers
- ◆ Over **40** early childhood educators and health professionals attended trainings
- ◆ Participated in over **10** community events
- ◆ Grant contributions amounted to over **\$95,000**

NUTRITION BEST

To help ensure the healthy growth and development of children in Placer County, the Nutrition BEST program has provided improved 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.



A little girl mixes flour during a kids cooking activity.

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.



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.

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 County website. Nutrition BEST also provides a variety of brochures and *Kid Food*, a monthly newsletter available in English and Spanish for parents with 2-5 year olds. The Nutrition BEST web page provides information on infant and child nutrition and feeding tips, offers answers to frequently asked questions, and promotes upcoming events. 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. Some brochure topics available on the website are:



*Nutrition BEST
webpage.*

- Fast Food: The Healthier Way
- Facts on Fruit Juice
- Family Mealtime: Take a New Look
- Feeding Challenges: Tips for Preventing Hassles
- Opportunities Abound with No TV Around
- Picky Eaters
- Keeping Kids Active
- Making Your Own Baby Food
- Feeding Your Baby: Birth to 8 months
- Feeding Your Baby: 8 to 12 months

Impact

There are over 150-pages on the Nutrition BEST website and it averages 31,724 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. Our program materials are used heavily by Placer County families as a source of ready-to-use information.



Mealtimes: Take a New Look

Issue

Family meals have shown to positively benefit the growth and future habits of young children. The first 5 years of a child's life are vital stages of growth. The way a child is fed will affect them now and for the rest of their lives. Parental modeling and guidance are important to ensuring that young children develop appropriate social and developmental skills along with healthy eating habits. Family mealtimes are a great way for children to establish these skills and habits early.

What Was Done

A multi-prong nutrition education series, *Family Mealtimes*, was delivered to parents via child-care providers. The delivery was three prong:

- **Early Childhood Education Training**—A two-hour training included interactive activities that covered the importance of family meals for young children, parental and provider nutrition education, family meal planning and practices, and staying active as a family.
- **Four Parent Handouts**—The child care providers distributed a parent handout weekly on: Enjoying Family Meals, Nutrition Matters, Making Family Meals, and Making Family Time Active Time.
- **Family Incentives**—Families gave an assessment of the materials and in return, received a canvas tote bag with the Family Meals logo on the side.



Child care providers discuss during an activity at the Mealtimes: Take a New Look training.

Impact

A retrospective survey was given at the end of the provider training to the 35 participants. Results found the following gains:

- 63% how to use mealtimes to enhance children's social and emotional development.
- 43% methods for providing optimal food handling and safety.
- 60% ways to make smarter food choices for children from MyPyramid.
- 50% how to offer a variety of physical activities in their program.

Parents returned surveys reported the following knowledge gains:

- 66% on the importance of family meals for young children's development.
- 64% on the food safety practices to use when preparing family meals.
- 84% on ways to make smarter food choices using MyPyramid.
- 78% how to offer a variety of physical activities for children.



Parent Workshops

Issue

Establishing a good nutritional 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 our Nutrition BEST program. Through interactive activities and skill building workshops, parents are taught new skills on topics that include: food safety, label reading, introducing foods to infants, making baby food, how to involve children in food preparation, physical activity for young children, and understanding MyPyramid. This year, Nutrition BEST worked with a variety of community agencies and delivered nutrition education to various parent groups: teen parent programs, WIC, parents of preschoolers, state preschools, Head Starts, MIC, Western Placer preschools, other preschools, and community outreach programs.



A mom works on measuring the amount of sugar that is in one soda bottle during a parent workshop.

Impact

Thirty-nine parent nutrition education workshops were presented to over 377 parents in Placer County. Using the National 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:

- 95% of the participants reported gains in knowledge.
- 86 found the information was useful.
- 80% indicated they would use the information to better support their families.
- 78% would recommend the workshops to others.

At the end of the workshops, teen mom's were able to identify new practices they will implement. They also reported that they felt more competent in providing healthy meals.



Parent Education at First Street and Sheridan Preschools

Issue

During the preschool years, children continue to develop the skills and tools that prepare them for the future. It is also at this time that they begin to be influenced by their environment around them. Parents and other adults help shape the lives and future habits of young children. Creating healthy eating and physical activity habits during these years is essential as crucial parts of brain development occur in the first five years.

What Was Done

In the past, parents at two preschools in the Western Placer Unified School District received monthly nutrition workshops from Nutrition BEST. This past year however, parents with young children under five years of age at First Street and Sheridan Elementary, participated in *Healthy, Happy Families*. This series was developed by the Families with Young Children Workgroup. The curriculum was designed to assist parents in strengthening their basic parenting skills, thus establishing a healthier nutritional foundation for their families. Additionally, the promotion of healthy feeding relationships was encouraged, as a number of methods were used in various hands-on activities to assist parents about how to apply these skills.



Parents at the Sheridan Parent Participation Preschool in Lincoln work on a mealtime activity.

Impact

Seven workshops were delivered over the school year to both Sheridan and First Street Preschools. A total of 35 parents received nutrition education on a monthly basis.

- 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.



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, are to participate in various community events where the general public is present. Nutrition BEST represented several events that provided various activities and information to parents and children.



Nutrition BEST displayed portion distortion posters along with program brochures for parents at the WIC fair.

Children made Yummy Mummy Treat Cups, filled with a healthy snack at the Mommy and me event.



What Was Done

Participation in community events were spread throughout Placer County, which included areas in Auburn, Lincoln, 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: Mommy and Me, CHDP Health Faire, Kids and Fitness Expo, WIC Health Faire, Farm and Barn Tour, PCOE Health and Safety Faire, and Chapa De Health Faire.

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 publics overall awareness of the importance for nutrition, physical activity, and healthy lifestyles.