

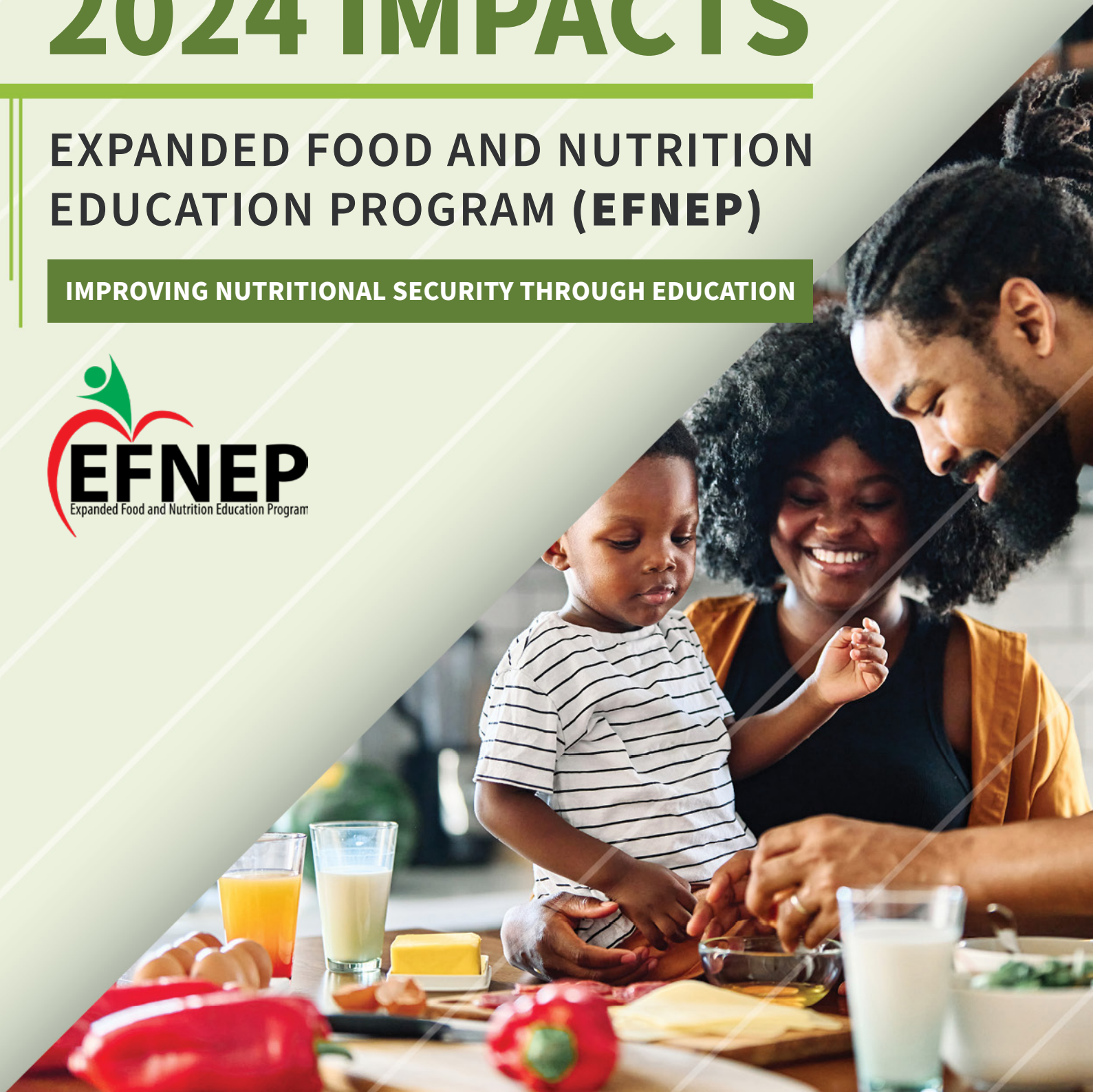


National Institute of Food and Agriculture
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

2024 IMPACTS

EXPANDED FOOD AND NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAM (EFNEP)

IMPROVING NUTRITIONAL SECURITY THROUGH EDUCATION



A MESSAGE FROM EFNEP

For more than a half century, the **United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)** – “the People’s Department” – has funded nutrition education designed to improve safe food handling and preparation, as well as the nutritional health and well-being of the population.

The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) was the nation’s first federal nutrition education program for families and youths with limited financial resources – especially those with young children – and remains at the forefront of providing nutrition education to improve the lives of participants.

Funded through the **USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)**, EFNEP has a critical role in employing peer educators (also known as paraprofessionals) and positively influencing nutrition and physical activity behaviors, reducing hunger and diet-related health disparities, and reducing food loss and waste through nutrition education. EFNEP is grounded in the latest version of the **Dietary Guidelines for Americans** and incorporates **MyPlate** into teaching activities. Since 1969, EFNEP has reached nearly 36 million low-income families and youths.

EFNEP contributes to food and nutrition security as program families and youths gain knowledge and skills for healthier food and physical activity choices, increased food resource management (e.g. shopping and food preparation), food safety, and improved food security practices to keep healthy in challenging times. Consistent with previous years, adult and youth participants in FY 2024 reported improved behaviors following program involvement. Indeed, more than 96 percent of adult EFNEP participants reported improvement in what they ate.

EFNEP is conducted by the **Cooperative Extension System** through Land-grant Universities in all U.S. states and territories and the District of Columbia. EFNEP is content- and relationship-based, learner-centered, and dynamic. Respect for lived experience is a core value of EFNEP. This is demonstrated by the vital role of peer educators and adaptation of content and methods to embrace differences in foods, learning styles, eating practices, and family and community dynamics of those participating. Attention is also given to food costs and to the shopping, preparation,

safety and storage of foods. This model supports program participants’ efforts toward self-sufficiency and nutritional health and well-being and improvements in organizational and community policies, systems and environments through its Cooperative Extension connections.

EFNEP’s ability to remain a precedent-setting program depends on its ability to foresee and adapt to ever-changing societal influences, food sources, health priorities and family dynamics along with advances in technologies and research. To meet this need, in 2024 NIFA prioritized a yearlong initiative of stakeholder engagement and internal program review to identify EFNEP program strengths and areas for innovation. Universities also received training for preparing their five-year plans and were notified of opportunities to leverage EFNEP funding with other health-related initiatives. Modernization of EFNEP’s Web-based Nutrition Education, Evaluation and Reporting System (WebNEERS) is also underway.

Universities experienced increased program participation by adults and for youths and increased reach to youths in grades 6-12 and young adults. They increased their use of technology in program delivery, and more began applying the recently developed direct data app that allows participants to enter some of their own data. Thirty-two universities leveraged EFNEP funding through an EXCITE EFNEP Integrating Immunization Education into Extension Health Programming initiative.

This report reflects how EFNEP continues to make a difference in the lives of low-income families and youths. In conclusion, we would also like to pay tribute to the legacy and commitment of Dr. Helen Chipman, who successfully led EFNEP for the past 17 years and was inducted into NIFA’s Hall of Fame. Her leadership and guidance have positioned EFNEP for continued success in the years ahead.

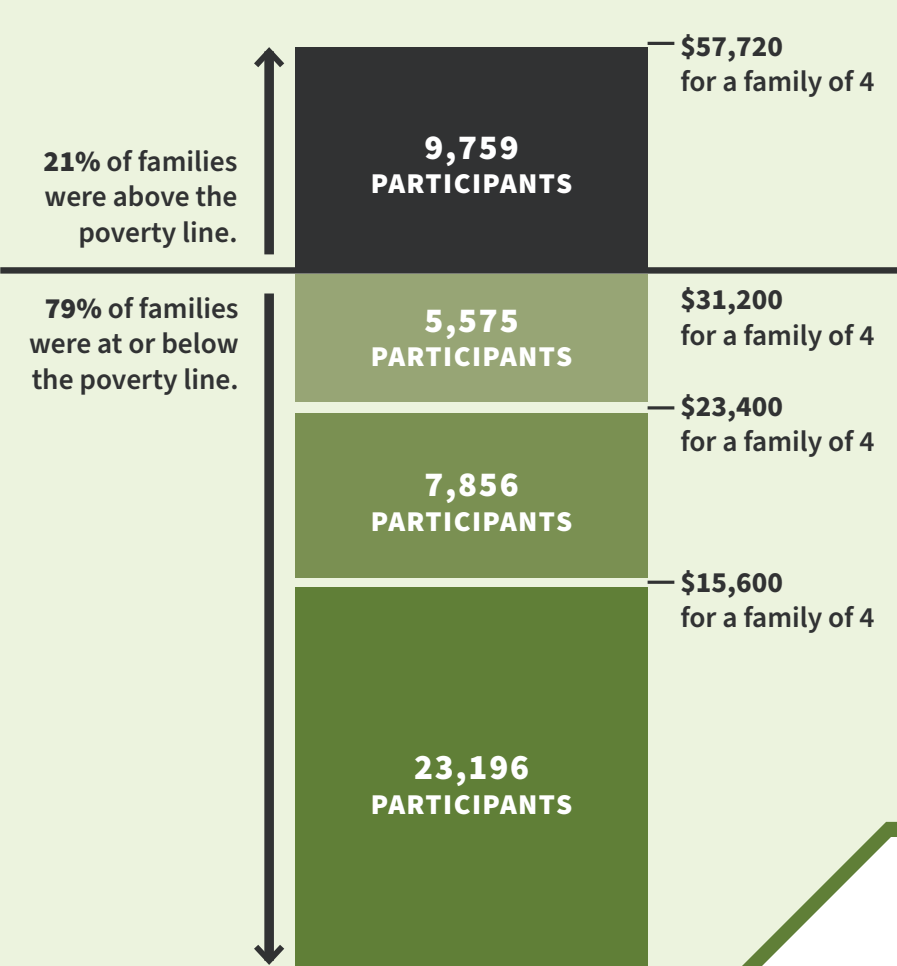
Signed,

Carinthia Cherry, PhD, RDN

National Program Leader, NIFA, USDA

IMPROVING LIVES

REACHING LOW-INCOME FAMILIES



79% OF EFNEP PARTICIPANTS who reported income are at or below 100% of the poverty line, **EARNING \$31,200 A YEAR OR LESS FOR A FAMILY OF FOUR.**



EFNEP SUPPORTED 1,329 EDUCATORS

In 2024, NIFA received **\$70 million** for Land-grant University Cooperative Extension partners to conduct EFNEP in all 50 states, six U.S. territories and the District of Columbia. EFNEP funds supported 1,329 educators at Land-grant Universities who are members of the communities they serve. In turn, EFNEP educators worked directly with 54,665 adults and 220,181 youths. These educators tailored lessons on diet quality and physical activity, food resource management, food safety, and food security to meet the specific needs of their respective program participants. Total participation increased as universities and communities continued to adapt to a changing environment in recent years.

SAVING MONEY



EFNEP graduates reported a collective food cost savings of

\$764,071.53

IMPROVING DIETS



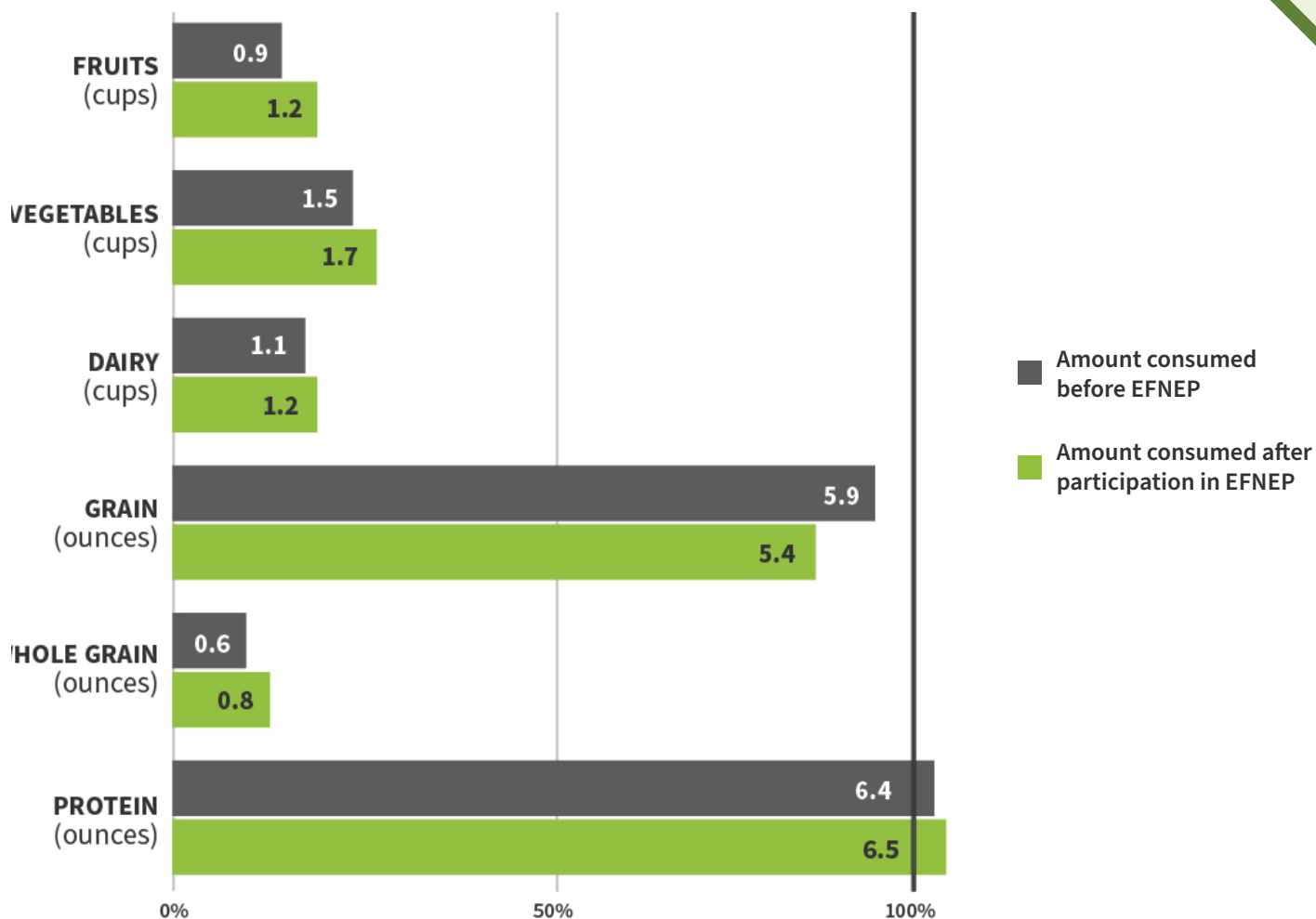
96% OF ADULTS

improved their diet, including consuming additional fruits and vegetables.

DEMONSTRATING RESULTS

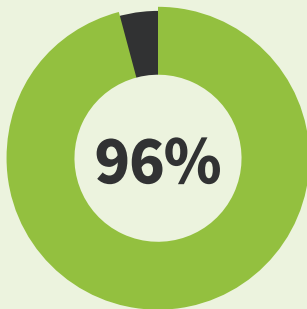
Data reported through diet recalls shows that EFNEP graduates eat more closely to [MyPlate.gov](https://www.myplate.gov) recommendations. The data also shows there is still a need for nutrition education.

USDA MyPlate recommendations

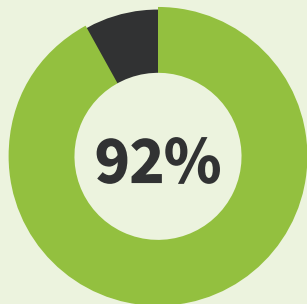


*This graphic shows recommendations for females ages 19-30 who get less than 30 minutes per day of moderate physical activity, beyond their normal activities. Recommendations for males, other age groups and other activity levels vary (see [MyPlate.gov](https://www.myplate.gov)).

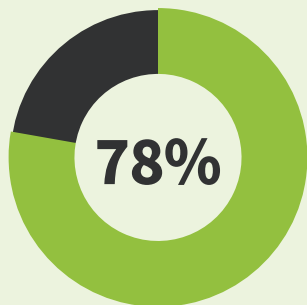
CHANGING ADULT BEHAVIOR



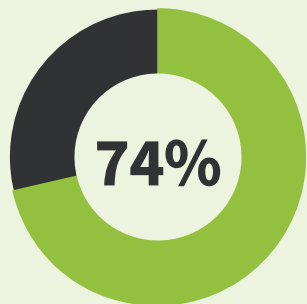
Percentage of adults improving diet quality practices



Percentage of adults improving food resource management practices

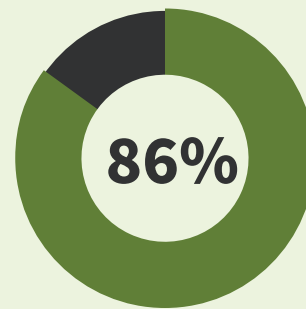


Percentage of adults improving food safety practices

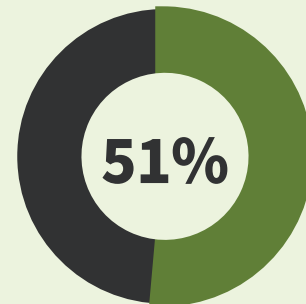


Percentage of adults improving physical activity practices

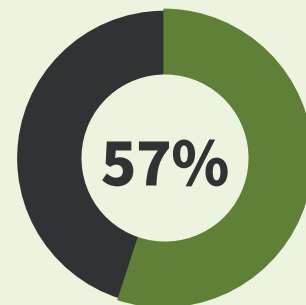
INFLUENCING YOUTH



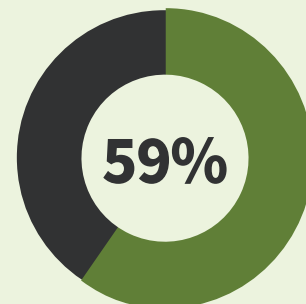
Percentage of youths increasing knowledge or ability to choose healthy foods



Percentage of youths increasing knowledge or ability to prepare low-cost, nutritious foods



Percentage of youths improving food safety and preparation knowledge or practices



Percentage of youths improving physical activity knowledge or practices

STRONG HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

EFNEP HAS MADE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF AMERICAN FAMILIES AND CHILDREN SINCE 1969.

It began as a pilot project in Alabama. President Lyndon B. Johnson authorized \$10 million for the EFNEP program in 1968, and in 1969 Congress authorized \$30 million under the Smith-Lever Act. Originally, EFNEP was delivered by 1862 Land-grant Universities. In 2006, EFNEP expanded to include 1890 Land-grant Universities. Today, 76 institutions work with community partners nationwide.



EFNEP PROGRAMMING HAS IMPACTED GENERATIONS,

like this North Carolina 4-H and EFNEP collaboration from the 1970s.

Image courtesy of NC State Extension.

MAINTAINING EXCELLENCE

SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS REQUIRE CONSTANT ATTENTION. Changing demographics of nutrition-insecure families, an increasing number of Americans at or below the poverty line, and burgeoning educational technologies present new challenges and opportunities for nutrition education programs. Ongoing EFNEP initiatives are underway to:



- Receive periodic feedback to ensure program quality, integrity and fidelity, and to meet the changing needs of participants.
- Confirm that adult and youth program indicators are scientifically valid and reliable.
- Strengthen science-based learning methods and enhance teaching techniques with appropriate new technologies, social media and social-ecological approaches.

SHARED STORIES

In bilingual classes for Latina expectant and new mothers at a local pregnancy resource center, the women shared that they had not been taught about handling raw meat safely, using a thermometer, reading Nutrition Facts Labels and being able to translate them into Spanish, or the sugar content in drinks like juices. After participating in EFNEP, the women shared that they had learned about shopping for groceries at local markets and reducing their sugar and fat intake. They expressed confidence in their ability to identify healthier foods by using their smart devices to read and translate food labels.

AUBURN UNIVERSITY

More than 140 third-grade students who participated in EFNEP's Choose Health: Food, Fun and Fitness classes learned to choose healthy snacks, read nutrition labels, develop healthy eating habits, increase physical activity, practice safe food handling, and prepare healthy dishes. Some children felt they were not given the option to choose their own foods. They learned how to make healthier choices even when eating out at fast food restaurants. As the students encouraged their parents to make more healthy meals at home, parents began posting on the school's social media page pictures of the meals that their families had prepared together using the recipes the students were given in class. These children were positively impacting the health of their entire family.

CLEMSON UNIVERSITY

Improving food resource management was identified as a high priority for EFNEP at Florida A&M University. Demonstrations were conducted in food preparation and storage, budgeting, how to shop and stretch the food dollar, and reading food labels to choose best buys. Adult participants learned to use beneficial shopping techniques, try alternative low-cost foods/recipes, and reduce food waste through proper food preparation, storage, and preservation techniques. Of 149 adults that participated, 97% reported improvement in one or more food resource management practices.

FLORIDA A&M UNIVERSITY

One novel approach used by two EFNEP paraprofessionals was to co-teach a large class of single moms and their children. A primary focus of the class was making meal time a family time. The class ended up being a very fun learning experience for the families. The kids, ranging from third to eighth grade, helped prepare the meals. They particularly enjoyed chopping vegetables and fruits and mixing spice blends. The excitement of the kids was fun for the moms to see. They were encouraged to continue preparing their own meals together as a family at home.

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

A mother enrolled in EFNEP's Eating Smart, Being Active series when she saw that her 9-year-old son was struggling with the same weight challenges that she experienced. Through virtual, Spanish-taught lessons, she learned how to apply MyPlate to select and prepare healthier meals. She and her son are now incorporating more fruits and vegetables into their meals. She pays close attention to the serving sizes, calories and ingredient lists on the nutrition facts label of foods when shopping, and she is saving money at the grocery store.

UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA

A mother with heart disease, diabetes, and obesity had been advised many times by her doctors that she needed to make lifestyle changes that included healthy eating habits and physical activity. Despite her doctors' advice, the changes she needed to make "never really clicked" until she participated in the hands-on demonstration and activities facilitated by EFNEP's peer educator. Seeing the correct portion sizes and the actual teaspoons of salt and sugar in the food and drinks she was consuming opened her eyes to her eating habits, and she began to make changes. In addition to improving her own lifestyle habits, she also influenced her mother and daughter by preparing easy, healthy recipes and sharing about healthier eating habits and physical activity that she learned in EFNEP.

NORTHERN MARIANAS COLLEGE

SHARED STORIES

A mom with five children, and another on the way, shared the challenges of dealing with the crazy schedules of a split household and finding something that everyone liked. She felt that she was “making it” as far as feeding her family but struggled with meal planning. As the EFNEP class learned about meal planning and do-overs, she immediately announced, “I need to do that!” She asked her two oldest children to help with meal planning. Her 11-year-old son stated that he loves being in the kitchen and trying new things. He even started helping with the grocery plan and compiling the grocery list.

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

A chance encounter at a grocery store while buying groceries for an EFNEP class led to the invitation to speak at a church health symposium, which ultimately resulted in a collaboration to provide EFNEP at the Santa Maria Hostel, one of Texas’ largest multi-site residential and outpatient substance use disorder treatment centers for women, and one of few to offer a full continuum service for women who are pregnant. The director of Santa Maria stated that the “recommendation to continue the program throughout the year underscores the effectiveness and importance of nutrition education in supporting women who are pregnant or parenting while receiving treatment for substance use disorder. It’s a testament to the power of community engagement and the potential for transformative change through education and outreach.”

PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY

In an EFNEP class held at a local elementary school, adults were taught how to plan, shop, and save on food costs. They had hands-on experience with unit pricing and managing their food budgets. Following the class, one father happily reported that after careful label reading and comparing products while food shopping, he was able to come in under budget for his grocery costs that week.

UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

EFNEP partnered with a charter middle school in a low-income, inner-city area. Each week, the students learned about healthy eating, food safety, and physical activity. They set goals and tracked their progress. School teachers loved the enthusiasm and took it one step forward. The students created drawings, wrote essays and presented their experiences in EFNEP classes and in other classes. Many motivated students went home and shared this activity with their parents and/or caretakers. Together with their caretakers, students went grocery shopping and chose new fruits and vegetables to try. Some families reported adopting “Try It Thursdays,” where they would try a new fruit or vegetable on Thursdays.

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

A grandmother, who is raising her three-year-old granddaughter, learned about EFNEP and asked her doctor about the program because of her cardiac condition. He said yes. Through EFNEP, she learned how to change her way of eating and add physical activity to her routine. She was also able to introduce new ways of eating to her granddaughter. She was excited to return to her doctor to let him know of her weight loss and, hopefully, improved blood values.”

FORT VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

For more information, visit [NIFA.USDA.GOV/EFNEP](https://nifa.usda.gov/efnep) or contact carinthia.cherry@usda.gov.

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