The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is a nationally recognized nutrition education program funded by USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture. EFNEP educators have worked in local Texas communities since 1969 to assist low-income families and youth to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for nutritionally sound diets. Doing so contributes to participants’ personal development and the improvement of the total family diet.

**Relevance**
- The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that nearly 14% of Texas families live in poverty, a figure above the national average of 12%.
- Poor health disproportionately affects low-income and minority populations in the U.S.
- Research suggests that people who are most food insecure are at greater risk for poor health and obesity than those who are food secure.

**Response**
Trained EFNEP educators teach basic nutrition, food safety, shopping, and food preparation skills to participants using hands-on methods and practical, easy-to-understand materials. The program is located in 11 Texas counties (Bexar, Cameron, Dallas, El Paso, Harris, Hidalgo, Kleberg, Nueces, Tarrant, Travis, and Willacy), which represent approximately 54% of the total state population.

**Results**
In FY 2013-14, EFNEP reached 21,155 Texas families, with 12,709 adult participants graduating from the program by completing at least six food and nutrition lessons designed to help them gain the knowledge and skills needed to make healthier food choices on a limited budget. However, EFNEP goes beyond information sharing; it focuses on behavior change and is highly successful in achieving sustainable behavior change in a number of areas critical for the health of the population. The following are a few examples of program impacts from FY 2013-14:

- USDA reports that parents with a greater knowledge and interest in nutrition are less likely to have overweight children than those with less knowledge and interest.
- Understanding the nutritional needs of family members, planning and preparing nutritious meals and snacks, smart shopping on a limited budget, and food safety skills are all required to combat poor health, poor nutrition habits, and obesity among low-income families.
Adult Program Impacts

- Of adult program graduates, 85% improved in one or more food resource management practice (i.e., plans meals, compares prices, does not run out of food, or uses grocery lists).
- 67% showed improvement in one or more food safety practice (i.e., thawing and storing food properly).
- 91% of graduates improved in one or more nutrition practice (i.e., makes healthy food choices, prepares food without adding salt, reads nutrition labels, or children eat breakfast). In addition, statewide scores showed adult participants’ intake of fruit, vegetable, and dairy foods increased after participation.

Youth Program Impacts

EFNEP also enrolled 84,284 limited-resource youth during FY 2013-14. They are reached through partnerships with schools, organized youth clubs, and recreation centers. Documented impacts among sampled youth indicated the following:

- 86% of youth improved their ability to choose foods according to Federal Dietary Recommendations or gained knowledge in this area.
- 42% of youth used safe food-handling practices more often or gained knowledge in this area.
- 42% of youth improved their physical activity practices or gained knowledge in this area.
- 47% of youth improved their ability to prepare simple, nutritious, affordable food or gained knowledge in this area.

Over time, these results can translate into reduced incidence of disease and lower health-care costs. Studies have shown that for every $1 spent on EFNEP, $10 were estimated to be saved in health-care costs and $2 saved in food costs by participants. For Texas, this equals over $43 million in estimated health-care cost savings and over $8.7 million in food cost savings for participants.

A Success Story

“I always wanted to improve my health but didn’t have the chance to learn about nutrition until these EFNEP classes. During the 6 weeks, I learned to choose my food and balance portion sizes. Using MyPlate has helped me a lot. I can visualize every food I have to prepare. I learned how to go shopping, read the labels, choose food on sale, and how to plate it safely. I am also exercising more than 30 minutes every day, and I lost 10 pounds. I feel better and very happy! I would recommend this program to any person because EFNEP has helped me, and it can help others, too.” – EFNEP participant, Tarrant County

Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, or veteran status. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.

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