

## **EFNEP Success Stories for FY 2007**

EFNEP makes a difference! Since 1969, EFNEP has helped thousands of families in Iowa stretch their food dollars and improve their family's nutrition. A study of the costs and benefits of Iowa EFNEP was published in December 2000. This study shows that for every \$1 spent to deliver nutrition education in Iowa, \$8.03 is saved in future health care costs. These savings occur because participants

- Learn safe food handling practices, thus having fewer food borne illnesses;
- Eat better during pregnancy, resulting in fewer low birth weight babies;
- Are more likely to breastfeed their babies, resulting in fewer childhood diseases;
- And improve their overall diets, resulting in delay or prevention of chronic diseases.

During the 2007 program year, 1,856 families, including 107 pregnant and/or nursing teens, participated in Iowa EFNEP. Eighty-two percent of Iowa EFNEP families have incomes below 100 percent of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines, and fifty-one percent have incomes below 50 percent poverty. Twenty-three percent of Iowa EFNEP participants reported Hispanic ethnicity. An additional twenty-one percent are from other minority families. In addition, EFNEP reached 10,413 youth through school enrichment, after school and summer day-camp programs.

Here are some successes in Iowa—

### ***Improving Dietary Quality***

- Learning to read labels and activities in the Make a Change lesson helped a pregnant single mom in Black Hawk County make the connection between fast food and health issues. Leah loved stopping for fast food each day on her way to work and recently lost her father because of a heart attack. Concerned about her lifestyle, she was determined to make a change in her life. She found healthier choices to eat before going to work and switched to frozen vegetables. She read labels to limit her sodium intake. During group lessons, she stopped joking about her unhealthy choices and shared the changes she'd made and why it was important to her.
- A mother in Linn County learned the importance of eating breakfast for her and her family. "Not having enough time" was the reason given for skipping this important meal. The mother's initial food recall showed she was low on servings of grains and fruits. This provided a good opportunity to discuss the importance of eating breakfast everyday. Including foods from these groups in the breakfast meal would increase her overall consumption of them and provide more energy for her to get through the day. She developed a list of easy, grab and go choices she and her children liked. With help from her children, food was made the night before and ready to grab and eat the next morning. This busy mother is now getting her servings of grains and fruits and says she feels a lot better all day. She is pleased to be a better role model for her children and feels good knowing the children have something nutritious to eat.

- A request for nutrition information by a pregnant diabetic mother in Polk County resulted in changes for the whole family. The mother started by making healthier meal and snack choices for herself and her unborn baby while at work, and soon she was fixing healthier meals at home. Box dinners and soda pop were replaced with better choices. After completing the lessons, she shared with her WIC worker how the classes had really helped her make better decisions in her eating habits.
- Carbonated beverages were often a meal for one young mother in Black Hawk County. As she learned about MyPyramid and the Dietary Guidelines, she agreed to try reducing the amount of pop she consumed. She could not imagine drinking water, but agreed to add additional ice and water to her drinks as a way to learn to drink something else. Now, she regularly drinks mostly water each day. She commented that with the money she is saving not buying pop, she is able to purchase healthy snacks for her family.
- Initially reluctant to participate in the nutrition lessons, a young mother in Clinton County gradually became more involved with the group discussions and embarrassingly confided to the program assistant she didn't know how to scramble eggs. At the next lesson she learned how to scramble eggs and make French toast. While the lessons provided the opportunity for her to learn basic food preparation skills, she also made other changes. She added more fruits and vegetables to her diet and reduced her consumption of pop, eventually eliminating it and drinking water instead. She went walking every day and commented how she had more energy. She was thrilled and proud to accomplish things she never knew how to do.
- An overall active and healthy lifestyle for himself and his children was the goal of a Linn County participant. Frequently skipping breakfast, his food choices were limited and often not the healthiest. He implemented calisthenics into his daily physical activity routine and used the strength band activities to warm up before more strenuous exercises. He learned the body does not run properly if it is not started properly. He now eats regular meals throughout the day, and the family eats more fruits, vegetables and whole grains. He lost 33 pounds and routinely rides his bike, logging over 100 miles.
- A mother with four children in Scott County struggled to get her children to eat green vegetables. For two years, she purchased a drink at the local health food store that contained green vegetables so her children would consume green vegetables. During the Vary Your Veggies lesson, the mother was encouraged to try the salad in a bag recipe with her family. The children each made their own salad, and with the ownership of having made it, were willing to try it. The mother was pleased her children had found a new way to eat some vegetables.
- A family in Polk County lost weight and feels better after the mother participated in nutrition lessons. Entering the program she commented, "I always try to make healthy foods, but my kids don't like it. They like to eat fast food". The mother paid close attention to each lesson and made it her homework to offer healthy food choices

and prepare some of the new healthy recipes for her family. At each class she would report back what she had done with her family. “My husband drinks more low-fat milk; before he didn’t drink any milk.” “This week my kids saw me cooking broccoli and they were curious to try it and they liked it.” “We walked on the track all last week.” “They didn’t eat any fast food these days.” As she received her graduation certificate, she thanked the program assistant and commented she wanted to continue this forever because her family feels so much better.

- Healthy meal and snack ideas were what a participant in Scott County wanted when she enrolled in EFNEP. Concerned about her weight, she began preparing some of the healthy recipes and paid closer attention to what she ate. She also followed some of the other tips shared during the nutrition lessons. As a result, she lost eight pounds and is excited about her healthier lifestyle.
- Loss of weight for herself and a lowered blood pressure for her husband were gains for a Woodbury County participant. She learned ways to be physically active during the lessons and also began doing exercises with a cable TV exercise program. She switched to eating more whole grain cereals and breads, and cut back on the amount of pop and juice she was drinking. She started eating breakfast everyday and eating more appropriate sized servings. She was amazed at the weight she was losing. Her husband willingly participated in the eating and activity changes and reduced his high blood pressure. Both are happy they are spending less money, but still have enough to eat.
- With three active children of her own, and baby-sitting several other small children, Debbie, a Scott County participant, wondered about the proper portions of food children should eat. She learned to re-think the idea of making them eat certain foods. She is more conscious of planning healthy meals and making a shopping list. She is satisfied with the amount of healthy food choices to offer the children and uses low-salt foods and sugar-free jams. She walks every day to get some physical activity. While she is still challenged to use more whole grains in her family’s meals, she is working on it.
- A Woodbury County mother with four children under the age of six was overwhelmed with her children’s eating habits. There was always a mess in the house because the children ate all the time and throughout the home. The children were always fighting over food. A scheduled time and place for the children to eat was the first goal. The mother worked on meal planning and prepared food choices she would offer to the children. Everyone would sit at the table, eat together, and the children would help clean up after eating. Getting the children involved in the process helped this mother take control of their eating habits. The children soon understood they were going to get something to eat at a scheduled time and were more cooperative about where and when they ate.

### ***Improving Dietary Quality/Food Safety***

- Daycare children in Polk County were involved with some aspects of the lessons as the in-home provider learned more about healthy food choices, being physically active and keeping food safe. The children enjoyed making apple roll-ups, stretching, and tossing balls in the air and trying to catch them. The provider was surprised to learn how quickly bacteria grew. She always left meat on the counter to thaw, sometimes even overnight, so it would be ready to use. Now, she plans meals ahead of time, shops with a grocery list, and thaws meat in the refrigerator or in the microwave just before using it.

### ***Improving Dietary Quality/Food Resource Management***

- Learning how to stretch her food budget was of special interest to a single mother in Dubuque County. Her daughter just turned five, eliminating the WIC benefits she previously received. Through the nutrition lessons, this mother learned how to read labels to find the nutritional value of the foods she was purchasing. The juice label reading activity helped her distinguish a 100% juice product from an artificially flavored fruit punch. Starting a daily walking program and becoming more conscious of her daily activity level helped her lose ten pounds during the course of the lessons. Mom and daughter started doing more family walks to a nearby park, providing both of them with additional physical activity. With the nutrition information and encouragement this mother was able to make healthy low-cost choices for her family. The healthier, more active lifestyle created a greater sense of self-esteem and gave her the tools to provide for her family.
- After completing a hands-on activity in which they were asked to check the number of fat grams in their favorite fast food meal, a couple in Dubuque County were amazed that just one meal could contain more grams of fat than they should eat in a whole day. The parents of three children decided their goal for the next week was to eat all of their meals at home using the EFNEP recipes they had collected during the nutrition lessons, plus some family favorites, like spaghetti. At the next lesson they proudly announced “We did it!” The couple planned meals using the grocery ads to take advantage of sales and found it easier than expected. Even with whole wheat bread, whole wheat pasta, extra fresh fruit, and fresh and frozen vegetables added to their shopping list, eating healthy meals at home didn’t cost as much as they spent eating at several fast food restaurants the week before.
- Liz, a Scott County EFNEP graduate reports, “We eat a lot better now since I’ve learned so much from you. My daughter eats more food since you told me not to give her so much juice. Now she loves vegetables!” When Liz enrolled in EFNEP, she rarely ate breakfast and often ate foods from nearby convenience stores and fast food restaurants. Despite assistance from WIC, food stamps, and weekly trips to a local food pantry, they still sometimes ran out of food. The four-year-old daughter was a picky eater who often ate almost nothing at mealtime. During the nutrition lessons, Liz learned about the importance of regular mealtimes, shopping for better prices and more about nutrition. The program assistant helped her problem-solve about issues with her daughter’s appetite. Many of the daughter’s calories were consumed in the

more than four cups of juice she consumed every day. After replacing much of the juice with water, the child began eating more food at meals and snacks.

- The impact of EFNEP lasts many years. As Marilyn, an EFNEP program assistant in Woodbury County, shopped for a retirement trip, she met Susan, a participant she worked with over twenty years ago. At that time, the family was struggling to make ends meet and have enough food to feed the family. Through nutrition lessons, Susan learned cooking skills and more about shopping and saving money. As Marilyn shopped for a dress in an upscale shop, an attractive, well-groomed sales person came up to her saying, "I've been thinking of you." Asked how she knew her, the woman said she participated in EFNEP years ago and had recently found her EFNEP folder as she was going through drawers. "My sons are 25 and 26 now, but were just toddlers when you came to see us. They are now married and cook for their own families." Susan shared that how over the years she had told many people how EFNEP impacted her life. She added, "I tell them what you told me. 'A Mother can't take care of her children if she doesn't take care of herself'."

### ***Improving Dietary Quality/Food Shopping Behaviors***

- A teen-age mother in Johnson County learned that reading the current grocery store ad to plan meals and create a grocery list helped her make better food choices, stretch her food budget dollars, and make her food supply last for a longer period of time. She was very excited as she saw her one-year old eat and enjoy the healthy meals and snacks she learned to make during nutrition classes. Although this young mother still has particular food preferences, her final nutrient summary showed she doubled her intake of calories (still below 2000) and made good improvement in calcium, vitamin A, vitamin B6, and fiber intake.
- A young mother and her daughter in West Pottawattamie County had just moved out on their own. She had no idea how to shop for food and limited cooking skills. The plan, shop and save lesson quickly got her attention. The grocery-shopping list helped make shopping easier. Reading the nutrition facts information, especially the areas about fat and sodium, provided her with skills to make changes in what she purchased and consumed. She became more physically active, either walking everyday or exercising in front of the TV. She lost weight, toned up and felt better about herself.
- Ana, a pregnant mother with gestational diabetes, was referred to EFNEP by the high risk clinic at the local hospital in Black Hawk County. Overweight and with a family history of health issues, Ana needed to change habits for herself and her family. Ana learned the appropriate serving sizes for herself and her family. She looks at the nutrition facts label to make better food choices. Based on her knowledge of whole grains and fiber, she is able to provide healthy cereal options for her pre-schoolers. Ana learned she is a role model for her children, has started doing exercises, and involves her children with dancing, daily walks and trips to the park to play. She learned to plan meals and snacks around what is already available and weekly store

specials, the importance of making a shopping list, and how to compare store and national brand food items to save time and money.

### ***Improving Food Safety/Dietary Quality***

- The use of pompoms, a lesson visual representing bacteria growth over time, caused a young mother in Black Hawk County to re-think how she provided food to her two-year old daughter. Lindsey often put pieces of hot dogs and cheese sticks on the table and would let her daughter eat them throughout the morning, a time period of three or more hours. Now she offers her daughter fruit in small amounts, keeping additional fruit in the refrigerator. The bacteria growth visual and other information she learned during the lessons changed how she feeds her child.

### ***Improving Food Safety***

- Fruit and vegetable snacks are safer for a four-year old in Polk County after her mother participated in nutrition lessons. During the lesson on fruits and vegetables, the mother commented how her daughter loved fresh fruits and vegetables and would help herself to them from the refrigerator. Concerned about food safety, the mother washed them prior to storage, but wasn't comfortable this was enough. The veggie brush provided as a lesson incentive helped solve this problem. The mother showed her daughter how to use the veggie brush to wash fruits and vegetables as she took them from the refrigerator and before eating them. At the next lesson, she reported her daughter was using the veggie brush when she helped herself to a snack and how much she enjoyed doing this.
- In West Pottawattamie County, a participant learned how to keep food safe for her and her family. She was surprised at how quickly bacteria grow and the temperature danger zone for foods. She reported she always thawed frozen foods on the counter and had never used a meat thermometer. After learning about the Fight Bac guidelines—clean, separate, cook, and chill—she made some changes. She made a decision not to thaw frozen food at room temperature. She learned how to properly use a meat thermometer and purchased one to use every time she cooked meat. She appreciated receiving a refrigerator thermometer, the lesson incentive, and immediately put it in her refrigerator so she could monitor the temperature.

### ***Improving Food Resource Management/Food Safety***

- A participant in West Pottawattamie County struggled to make ends meet and have food until the end of the month. He lacked food safety skills, thawing food on the counter and letting prepared food sit at room temperature for a length of time. Planning meals ahead of time and preparing a shopping list before going to the store helped him save money and have food left to eat at the end of the month. He learned how to read the nutrition facts label so he could make healthier choices for his family. Information shared about food safety provided him with the knowledge to change his previous habits. He washed his hands more often and discontinued thawing on the counter. Food was promptly refrigerated after a meal.

### ***Improving Food Resource Management***

- On her own for the first time, a Linn County teenage mother was unaware of how to plan and shop for their meals. During the nutrition lessons, she learned how to plan a menu and compare prices by looking at the store ads. She started to plan meals for the week and kept a file of her favorite recipes to refer to for ideas. She found if she shopped on weekends, she had more time to compare prices and look at the labels to be sure she was making the best choices for her and her baby. She shops once a week for perishables and twice a month for other items. She purchased fruits and vegetables at the farmer's market and prepared baby food for her child. She is more aware of the importance of eating three meals a day and having a healthy snack so she has more energy to keep up with her active baby. She is pleased she is able to manage her food stamps and WIC checks and make her food last the entire month.
- The expense of making healthy meals was a concern for a participant in Woodbury County. She lacked transportation and shopped daily, many times to the nearby convenience store. As part of group lessons, she didn't say much during the plan, shop and save lesson, but at the next meeting was excited to share how the information had helped her. She planned an entire month's worth of meals and used the sale ads to look for lower price choices. She made arrangements with a friend who had a car to take her to a larger grocery store once a week. She shared the shopping skills information with her mother and daughter and increased the impact of what she learned.

### ***Improving Food Security/Dietary Quality***

- In Black Hawk County, Alpha reports her food assistance now stretches to the end of the month. She shops at the local discount store and uses unit pricing to help make her selections. Alpha acknowledged spending too much money on juice, and giving it to her children whenever they asked. While they often consumed far more fruits than needed, they were missing foods from the other groups. Learning about each of the food groups and the amount recommended, helped Alpha feed her family more nutritionally. She reported learning about nutrition was fun and that her children are learning things too. The oldest daughter got involved by selecting one of the recipes shared during the lessons and preparing it for the family.

### ***Improving Dietary Quality—Youth***

- French fries were the overwhelming snack choice over carrots prior to nutrition lessons with a Linn County afterschool group. The afterschool setting provided facilities and time for the youth to taste and prepare healthy snacks at every class. The opportunity to work with the students in the classroom as they started vegetable seeds to later transplant at a garden site near the school building was also available. The project reached its goal several months later as the youth harvested the vegetables they had grown, and worked with the youth nutrition program assistant to prepare cowboy caviar, a vegetable salsa containing corn, green beans, tomatoes, and green onions grown in the garden along with kidney and black beans. Served with heated corn tortilla chips and mozzarella cheese, the youth were able to understand the process of growing foods and preparing them for a healthy snack.

- During a fruit exploration in Polk County, one boy who never wanted to try new things became curious enough to taste the papaya. He reported that he got his mother to buy one so his family could try the “yummy to the tummy” new fruit.
- Exposure to new foods, new preparations for some favorites, and a gentle reminder how important it is to eat healthy on a daily basis helped youth in a Black Hawk County summer program improved both their willingness to try new foods and their diet. As the youth discussed the need to eat food from all of the food groups every day, one six-year old was concerned about what was being offered to him at home and where he could count these foods on MyPyramid. “I get graham crackers and chocolate milk for breakfast, is that good?” “Can I count my pop tart as fruit? That’s the only fruit I get.” Concerned about what he could do to eat healthy, the youth program assistant visited with him about what was available at school, and if he ate all the foods offered at breakfast and lunch, that would help him get something from each of the food groups and come close to reaching his recommended amounts for the day. The boy expressed concern that he hadn’t tried any of these foods before and he wasn’t sure he would like them. Deb learned the youth wasn’t eating any meals at school. He brought his lunch daily and breakfast was a stop at the Holiday Station on the way to school. The first day of nutrition classes, the group made MyPyramid Snacks. The youth questioned the different ingredients—he had tried ham before, but had never tasted a whole grain cracker, green pepper, pineapple or Swiss cheese. He agreed to try one and was amazed he really did like it. As the summer progressed, he willingly tried each new snack prepared in class. While he didn’t like every food, he was willing to try. He explained his Mom was now buying some new things at home like he asked. He was thrilled with the cookbook the class put together of all the recipes they made and couldn’t wait to share it with his mother.
- The rejection of whole wheat dinner rolls in a Linn County school led to a pilot nutrition activity for three schools in the county. While the youth had received the knowledge information about the nutrient value of whole grains, they had failed to adapt behavior changes. The pilot involved an emphasis on the importance of whole grains in the diet and included a greater tie to the growth and harvest of the grain. Grain seeds from wheat, rice, barley, and oats as well as a wheat and oat plant were brought to the classroom. Youth discussed how grains are planted, grown, and harvested. The children built their own grain kernel using a brown lunch bag, batting, and a felt germ as they discussed the nutritional importance of each part of the grain kernel. They used a coffee grinder to grind wheat kernels into flour and compared the product to white flour. Finally the class worked together to prepare a whole wheat recipe that school lunch personnel baked for them and which they later enjoyed as a healthy snack. From the experience, youth understood the difference between whole wheat and white flour and learned it was just as easy to use whole wheat flour. They remembered the nutrients in the whole wheat product and were eager to taste a product made from whole wheat flour they had made themselves. The students loved the snack, and for many it was the first time they had eaten a whole grain food.

- A fifth grade teacher in Scott County shared: “Your teaching is working! I noticed many students checking the labels on the snacks they received for eating during ITBS testing. You are making a difference in their choices.”
- A second grade class in West Pottawattamie County eagerly awaited their last nutrition lesson where a healthy snack—Clementine oranges—was part of the lesson. At previous lessons they learned to identify whether a food came from a plant or animal, where it belonged on MyPyramid, and if it was high in nutrients. After hands and the fruit were washed, the students were instructed to peel the fruit and separate the sections, but wait to eat until all students were ready. Before eating, the students were asked to smell the room. Everyone was surprised how fragrant the oranges were and how the smell filled the classroom. The students also responded that the oranges belonged to the red band or fruit group on MyPyramid and were high in vitamin C. Later student thank you notes shared how one boy thought the oranges would be “nasty”, but he was surprised to find they were good. Another girl shared she got her Mom to buy some Clementine oranges for home and they were all eaten. The classroom teacher was pleased the students were eating healthy snacks at home and getting their parents involved in purchasing healthy snacks.
- Youth in Woodbury County are exposed to food preparation and tasting, an activity that makes a lasting impression on them and their families. Youth often are not exposed to a variety of foods at home, especially fruits and vegetables, and then are hesitant to taste them. Food preparation is high on the minds of the students as Esther, the youth nutrition program assistant, begins a new class. “What are we going to make this year?” “Can we make the wraps again?” and “I like to fix the wraps and pinwheels for my family. And you know what, we all found out we like spinach!” are some of the comments heard.
- Nutrition programming at a new site in Polk County was an overwhelming success. The youth talked to their friends about the healthy snacks they prepared, the food safety activities, and the new physical activity games. Both parents and youth called to see if there was space in the classes and soon there was a waiting list.