

FNP Success Stories for FY07

The Iowa State University Extension Family Nutrition Program (FNP) partners with local agencies, the Iowa Department of Human Services-Food Stamp Program and the USDA Food and Nutrition Services to strengthen Iowa families. The FNP program helps parents stretch their food dollars and make healthy food choices for their families. During FY 2007, 394 adults and pregnant teens enrolled in a series of one-to-one and group nutrition education sessions. Sixty-six percent of the participants were at or below 100% of the federal poverty level. Sixty percent of the children in these families were age 5 and under. Nutrition education helps parents provide nutritious food for their families, leading to healthy children and thriving families. In addition, FNP reached 9,069 youth through school enrichment, after school and summer day-camp programs.

Some of the successes reported during FY 2007 include:

Improving Dietary Quality

- A teenage Mom in Story County improved her diet taking the goals she set at the end of each lesson very seriously. Often drinking at least five cans of pop a day, she stopped drinking pop and increased the amount of milk she consumed. She learned to read labels and is choosing whole wheat bread and trying new foods. She likes doing the physical activity that is a part of each lesson and really likes using the strength band. Using the menu planner and making a shopping list resulted in saving money. She cooks more foods from scratch and relies less on frozen and easy to fix dinners from a box. She collects coupons to use for baby items. Excited about what she learned, she shared the information with her boyfriend and now they are both involved in creating a better home for their family.
- A young Mom in Warren County wondered what to eat and how to feed her children healthy meals that she could afford. During the series of nutrition lessons, she added more fruits and vegetables to meals and snacks. She found she could eat more often throughout the day, eat nutritionally, and plan her meals and shopping to stay within her budget.

Improving Dietary Quality/Food Resource Management/Shopping Behaviors

- Eating healthier and shopping for healthy food has become a family affair for a Marshall County family. With a limited budget, the family shopped together, each adding his or her favorites to the grocery cart. The cart was filled with sugar-coated cereals, cookies, and fruit drinks. Lessons were scheduled when the children were home, though the mother commented “it won’t matter because the children get what they want anyways”. Mom was surprised when the children started asking questions about which foods would be better to replace some of their previous choices. Along with their mother, they learned how to read labels, compare prices, and the teenagers learned how to cook and help their mother fix meals. They are using a list to track what needs to be purchased on their weekly trip to the store. Each week, one of the four children is allowed to choose something that is not on the list, a treat they look forward to. The teens have learned how to shop wisely and take on this responsibility periodically. The family is spending more time together.

Improving Food Resource Management/Shopping Behaviors

- A participant in Lee County now shops once a week, chooses fruits and vegetables of different colors, and provides her family with a variety of quality meals. Joanna reads labels, chooses good healthy foods and plans meals ahead of time. She explained how she could buy chicken and plan three meals around the purchase. During the Plan, Shop and Save lesson, she learned about planning meals and making a list of what would be needed to prepare them. The shopping list incentive helped her separate the food groups so she could get a variety of food as well as shop efficiently.
- A participant in Louisa County questioned whether she could really save money buying store brands. Maria purchased the ingredients for a casserole using name brand products while the nutrition program assistant purchased the same ingredients with store brands. Both prepared products tasted good, but the cost of the dish with store brand ingredients was 37% less. Maria learned to read labels and compare ingredients to make the best choices for her family instead of relying on what was advertised on TV. As Maria completed the lessons she said, “I can say that I’m proud of myself because I have learned to save money, time and make good choices for my family. I’m able to pick up what is the best product for me to take home because I know how to read labels. I feel more confident about myself and about the meals and snacks I feed to my family.”
- A single pregnant mother in Des Moines County found her life crashing around her as her four-year-old was put in foster care. With the motivation to get her son back, she enrolled in the Family Nutrition Program. She learned about the different food groups and how important they are for our diet. Skills she developed as she planned meals and made out a grocery list helped her shop smarter for food and save money as a result. “It didn’t take long to figure out that the longer period of time I planned out my menu, the more food stamps I was saving.” She developed self-confidence and changed behaviors as a result of doing something good for herself. DHS noticed and her son was returned. She credits FNP for teaching her the importance of good nutrition, planning, and good shopping habits for her and her sons. “I want my boys to have a better life than mine. I’m breaking the chains to help that happen.”
- Planning ahead and shopping at a local food discount store helped a Webster County mother stretch her food dollars and have plenty of food to feed her husband and three children. During the shopping lesson, Patty revealed she was always running out of food. Using an inventory of the food she had available, she and the nutrition program assistant planned meals around some basic recipes that would work for her family. With a shopping list of the needed items and the grocery ads, the two met at the food discount store and compared prices of products and what they contained. Patty was excited as she filled her shopping cart with food to make meals for her family, and almost in tears when the clerk tallied up the amount for her groceries, far less than what she expected to spend. Eager to see what other skills she could learn, she commented to the program assistant, “You are coming again next week to my house, right”.

Improving Food Safety

- A single mother in Tama County was amazed when she found how bacteria grow on meat when she thaws it on the countertop. Now she never thaws meat on the counter, only in the refrigerator. She also uses a meat thermometer to check the doneness when cooking meat.
- A demonstration using a quick read thermometer and sponge caused a Madison County participant's face to light up. Although she had a quick read thermometer, she had quit using it because her meat was always overcooked. Lack of knowledge about how to use the thermometer created an inaccurate reading when she just touched the tip of the thermometer to the meat. Now she was ready to go home and try using her quick read thermometer again.

Improving Dietary Quality--Youth

- Youth in Dubuque County were excited to compare the amount of sugar in drinks and the difference between natural sugars in 100% fruit juice and the added sugars of some fruit drinks. Discussion about the consequences of consuming so much sugar helped them choose better alternatives.
- Youth in several counties had the opportunity to taste new foods during their nutrition classes—
 - In Monona County, the prospect of trying spinach leaves was greeted with “oh no, ick”. Encouraged to try just a taste, several of the youths' faces lit up as they said, “hey, that wasn't bad at all” and proceeded to eat the whole leaf.
 - Fruit tastings were offered in Taylor County. Many youth had never tried kiwi, fresh pineapple or mangoes. They were surprised to learn fruits made a good snack choice. Many stated they were going to ask their parents to purchase more fruits so they could have it for snack.
 - Parent provided positive feedback in Clarke County after children tried new and different fruits and vegetables during nutrition classes and then requested the fruit or vegetable at home.

Improving Dietary Quality/Food Safety—Youth

- Comments from teachers in Fremont County indicate the students aren't the only ones learning during nutrition classes. Several teachers reported the lessons had them looking at nutrition facts labels. They were surprised at the actual serving size, and how many calories or fat grams they were consuming, especially when they considered the actual amount they were eating. Teachers also reported rinsing their fruits and vegetables before preparing or eating them. Many didn't realize the need for this when they peeled the food before eating it.

Improving Food Safety—Youth

- Hand washing was an eye-opening experience for the youth and teachers in Jackson County. Using both the glo-germ and glo-light, and four hand washing stations, everyone was amazed at the amount of scrubbing and the length of time it took to thoroughly wash your hands.