University of Illinois Extension

Building Healthier Families Through SNAP-Education

Nearly 1 out of 3 Illinoisan residents live in poverty. Therefore, University of Illinois SNAP-Education is working to improve the lives of low-income families, youth and seniors with interactive nutrition education activities that empower them to make healthier choices. SNAP-Education works to help families maximize resources and increase sustainability.

In FY13, Extension reached:

569,378 Total Education Contacts

126,301 Adults

443,077 Youth

314,146 Contacts through Newsletters and Health Fairs

KELI'S STORY

Keli (photo below: 2nd from left) participated in the SNAP-Ed program at the *Gift of Fitness* in Fox Lake. The program is designed to help low-income women improve their overall well-being by providing them with exercise and nutrition education.

She is one of the members who have been affected by the poor economy. She suffered a heart attack recently and is now working out and participating in the SNAP-Ed program. She has no car and no job, yet manages to find a way to make it to the fitness center to work out several days a week and take our classes because she is concerned about her health.

Keli says she is getting a lot of valuable information, such as understanding how to read nutrition labels and how to decrease her salt, fat and sugar content. With the help of SNAP-Ed and the *Gift of Fitness*, she is starting to lose weight and getting back on the road to recovery.

Youth Impact

384 Teachers were surveyed about the impact SNAP-Ed had on their K-2 grade students:

RESULTS:

88.95% of students are now more aware of importance of eating a healthful diet

66.34% are more willing to try new foods

57.95% have improved their hand washing

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WHY SNAP-ED BENEFITS ILLINOIS RESIDENTS

- Every $1 spent on nutrition education saves up to $10 in long-term health care costs.
- Teaching low-income youth about healthful food choices prepares them to be better equipped to learn in school and have positive growth and development.

The senior *Eat Smart, Live Strong* summer program has had great effects in Warren County. At one location, seniors said they kept track of the fruits and vegetables they ate and charted their exercise after attending only the first session. They found keeping a chart was a great reminder to eat more of these foods and to exercise more. At the end of the program, the staff person received a Thank You note saying, "…(We) are (eating) more fruits and vegetables and trying to get some more exercise. We thank you so much…Thanks for caring!"

One student from Ogle County recognized our SNAP-Ed staff member doing a recipe at an educational display in a food pantry. Running up to her and giving her a hug, the little boy said: "You are the lady who teaches us to eat healthy and play. My mom likes the recipes you give us. She cooks your food."

At the Perry County Counseling Center, one of the participants said that she frequently ran out of money to buy groceries *before* the end of the month, causing an overdrawn balance on her bank account. The participant learned in the *Eat Smart, Be Active* series about planning, shopping and saving. Using what she learned in class about staying within her budget, creating a shopping list, and planning meals, she said she made healthier food choices and had money "left over" to last until the *end* of the month for food shopping!

Our counties in Southern Illinois were among the first to kick-off our *Shopping Matters* event, where participants receive a guided tour through a local grocery store (Wal-Mart). Attention was given to hands-on activities and information about buying fruits & vegetables on a budget, comparing unit prices, reading labels and identifying whole grain foods. Participants were then able to practice their cooking skills, using healthful recipes.