Worksite wellness program encourages employees to make healthy food choices

Employees for Gallatin County’s largest employer have learned how to build a healthy plate on their lunch break. UK Cooperative Extension has partnered with the employer to provide nutrition education classes as a worksite wellness Lunch and Learn program.

70% of participants had a positive change in food group choices.

67% of participants improved in one or more food resource management practices.

One program participant was motivated to become more physically active, eat more fruits and vegetables, and replace soda with water and low-fat milk. As a result of these lifestyle changes, the participant lost 27 pounds, lowered blood pressure and reduced bad cholesterol levels. The employee commented on the benefits of receiving nutrition education at work.

"To have the worksite wellness program on location is a definite perk. It’s a great convenience and has influenced greater lifestyle choices." – Program participant

97% of adult participants had a positive change in food group choices

94% showed improvement in one or more food resource management practices (i.e. plans meals, compares prices, does not run out of food)

95% showed improvement in one or more nutrition practices (i.e. makes healthy food choices, prepares food without salt, reads nutrition labels)

81% showed improvement in one or more food safety practices (i.e. thawing and storing food correctly)

Sources:
2. stateofobesity.org, accessed November 2015
3. Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap, 2013

University of Kentucky
Nutrition Education Program
Family and Consumer Sciences Extension

Educational programs of Kentucky Cooperative Extension serve all people regardless of race, color, age, sex, religion, disability or national origin.

KYNEP.ca.uky.edu  Facebook.com/KYNEP
Parents and children scout out ways to cook and eat healthy meals together

A Cub Scout pack in Lawrence County recently partnered with UK Cooperative Extension to provide nutrition education to children and their parents. Through a series of classes and food tastings, youth and adult participants learned how to build a healthy plate, plan menus, practice food safety and increase consumption of fruits, vegetables and low-fat dairy products.

100% of youth participants tried a new food.
71% of youth were better able to identify dairy products.
100% of adults had a positive change in food group choices.
92% of children showed more interest in helping in the kitchen at home.

Both of my children tried new vegetables, fruits and other foods. One son discovered he loved green onions and both sons love 1% milk, which we now buy. We have gone directly to the store after class on several occasions to buy items to make that night’s recipe. Fruit parfaits are now a weekly snack in our house and our grocery list has changed quite a bit.” – Adult program participant

THE CHALLENGE

Provided hands-on, nutrition education to limited-resource audiences, focusing on:
• Buying and preparing healthy foods
• Developing new skills
• Adopting new behaviors
• Managing financial resources
• Living an active lifestyle

THE SOLUTION

3,893 families enrolled in nutrition education series
11,670 youth enrolled in nutrition education series
14,653 total family participants

ADDITIONAL STATS:
• 21.7% of Kentucky children and 16.4% of all Kentuckians experience food insecurity
• 17.5% of counties have food insecurity rates between 20-24% and 65% of counties have rates between 15-19%
• 21.92% of Kentuckians are living below poverty

Students learn about growing, harvesting and tasting a variety of produce

Farm to School program in Wayne County provides fresh produce for school lunches and an opportunity for students to learn how to garden. Elementary-school children, in kindergarten through second grade, have learned about eating healthy through nutrition education in their classrooms and growing fruits and vegetables during outdoor garden activities. Through the University of Kentucky’s Literacy, Eating, and Activity for Primary (LEAP) program, students discussed and participated in book readings about growing, harvesting, cooking and trying different types of produce.

40% of participants became more likely to ask parents for fruits and vegetables at home.
74% of participants became better at identifying healthy snack choices.

One parent delightfully commented: “I can’t believe my child tried vegetable soup.”

“The lessons included hands-on cooking demonstrations with kid-friendly recipes from Chop Chop magazine. Both youth and adults commented on what they learned and how the program has positively impacted their eating habits.”

“I learned that you don’t judge the taste of food by the way it looks.” – Youth program participant

“I both of my children tried new vegetables, fruits and other foods. One son discovered he loved green onions and both sons love 1% milk, which we now buy. We have gone directly to the store after class on several occasions to buy items to make that night’s recipe. Fruit parfaits are now a weekly snack in our house and our grocery list has changed quite a bit.” – Adult program participant

THE CHALLENGE

KENTUCKY’S RANK AMONG STATES

18.0% High school obesity
31.6% Adult obesity
39.1% Hypertension
19.7% Obesity among 10 to 17-year-olds
40.2% Physical Inactivity
12.5% Diabetes
15.5% Obesity among 2 to 4-year-olds from low-income families
16.4% Obesity among 2 to 4-year-olds from low-income families
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