Live Well Alabama

Although FY20 was anything but a typical year for Alabama Extension at Auburn University Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program–Education (SNAP-Ed), an evidence-based, multilevel approach was used to support a healthier population. To accomplish this mission, SNAP-Ed educators provided nutrition education to **31,634 individuals** across a wide variety of settings, including schools, food pantries, grocery stores, virtual platforms, and many more.

SNAP-Ed educators also partnered with local communities to facilitate **182 unique policy changes**, systems changes, environmental improvements, and promotional efforts to make it easier for **51,560 people** with limited resources to choose healthy foods, healthy beverages, and physically active lifestyles.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented opportunities for SNAP-Ed to share nutrition education with its audience through virtual platforms, such as social media and video conferencing software.

SNAP-Ed also reached eligible individuals through Live Well Alabama, a statewide social marketing campaign encouraging Alabamians to Eat Better, Move More, and Make a Change.

- **34** SNAP-Ed Educators
- **57** Counties
- **31k** Impacted by Education
- **51k** Impacted by Policy, Systems & Environmental Changes
Body Quest Makes a Difference

The flagship school-based initiative of Auburn University SNAP-Ed is Body Quest (BQ), a multilevel, comprehensive obesity prevention initiative, which empowers Alabama’s youth and their parents to make healthier choices.

During the 2019–2020 school year, SNAP-Ed educators provided BQ to 7,112 third graders in 57 Alabama counties, 124 schools, and 377 classrooms. All schools were SNAP-Ed eligible with more than 50 percent of students receiving free or reduced-priced meals through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). Classes included educator-led discussion, vegetable tastings, and iPad app reinforcement lessons narrated by the BQ Warriors, who possess superpowers from eating healthy foods.

A statewide impact evaluation of BQ was conducted with schools randomly assigned to a treatment or control group. Both treatment and control groups participated in self-reported pre- and post-assessments. Treatment students and parents received an intervention between assessments. Control students and parents received delayed intervention after all assessments were completed. Data were analyzed using a two-way mixed-model ANOVA. Significant differences (p < 0.05) were observed in treatment groups from pre- to post-assessment and compared to control groups.

Live Well in Schools

Parents Eat Better, Move More, and Make a Change

Body Quest engaged 5,320 parents in educational activities to support healthy home environments. Parents joined the BQ Recipe Tester Club and received inexpensive, simple, and kid-friendly vegetable recipes to prepare and “test” with their children at home. Parents also received educational materials and weekly text messages and were encouraged to interact with Live Well Alabama on social media by following, liking, tagging, and sharing content.

Students’ Positive Results

Vegetable & Fruit Consumption
Eat vegetables and fruits more times per day and eat a greater variety of vegetables and fruit.

Beverage Consumption
Drink fewer sugary beverages and more water.

Physical Activity
Spend less time in front of screens and participate in physical activity more often, including more vigorous types of activity like sports and other activities that increase heart rate.
Text Messaging Engaged Parents to Make a Change

At the beginning of BQ, 4,908 parents provided their cell phone numbers to receive three action-oriented, educational text messages per week. The majority (81%) of parents remained active in the texting program for the entire 15 weeks. At the end of BQ, a texting poll with participating parents (n = 242) measured the effectiveness of the text messages and self-reported behavior change.

Body Quest Schools Make a Change

Making healthy food and physical activity priorities at school is critical. Research shows kids who have healthy eating habits and get regular physical activity are more likely to have better academic performance, attendance, self-esteem, classroom behavior, and lower obesity rates. SNAP-Ed educators leveraged strong partnerships with 85 BQ schools to facilitate 160 positive changes creating healthier school environments for more than 37,400 students.

Body Quest Changes Behaviors

Treatment parents made positive changes important in preventing obesity and improving the home environment. Significant differences (p < 0.05) were observed in treatment parents from pre- to post-assessment and compared to control parents.

Parents’ Positive Results

Vegetable & Fruit Consumption

Eat vegetables and fruits more often and eat a greater variety of vegetables and fruits.

Beverage Consumption

Drink fewer sugary beverages and more water. Also, drink less whole milk and more low-fat milk.

Food Resource Management

Compare prices while shopping, shop with a list, buy low-fat or fat-free dairy, buy food and drinks with less sugar, and buy food with less salt.

98% found BQ to be helpful
97% used tips provided in text messages
98% noticed their child ate more fruits and vegetables, tried new foods, or both
87% said their 3rd grader asked them to buy or serve more vegetables
84% kept fewer sugary beverages in their homes
89% found more ways to be active with their 3rd grader
SNAP-Ed Response to COVID-19

Auburn University SNAP-Ed staff’s desire to provide research-based nutrition education and work toward better food access never ceased during the COVID-19 pandemic. Starting with the most critical need of ensuring individuals and families had enough food, SNAP-Ed educators worked closely with schools to see where school lunches would be offered in communities, and where food pantries would be set up to assist those in need.

Keeping a Presence

While this important initial work was critical, SNAP-Ed educators maintained a presence in every site partnered with prior to COVID-19. That presence looked different since face-to-face contact was limited, but educators continued to work with schools, farmers markets, and grocery stores. Educators also worked with food pantries to secure additional donations, worked with community gardens to grow additional produce, and helped these sites determine how to put those resources to best use.

Putting Plans into Action

With the pandemic and limited face-to-face education came the opportunity to continue to serve Alabama youth through virtual education. Since March 2020, educators partnered with a range of programs offered across Alabama, such as the Boys & Girls Clubs, summer camps, before and after-school programs, and libraries, to enable almost 800 Alabama youth to have continued access to health and nutrition information.

One such successful remote delivery program was Eat Better, Move More (EBMM), a 6-week intervention designed to increase healthy eating and physical activity of Alabama youth and their caregivers. In the summer of 2020, EBMM was implemented using remote delivery for the first time to empower youth and their parents to improve their health behaviors. Almost 420 youth and their parents participated in the new online program.

Technology Paves the Way

To reach people during the pandemic, SNAP-Ed educators created social media videos about food budgeting, nutrition information, and COVID-related food and nutrition resources and partnerships. SNAP-Ed educators created, posted, or shared content on social media more than 500 times, reaching an estimated 29,345 people.

In addition to educational content shared through social media, SNAP-Ed educators used Facebook groups, Google Classroom, and Zoom to connect with people during the pandemic. Facebook groups were created as credible sources of coronavirus-related information and were used as official local information sources for city administrators and local law enforcement. Membership in one of these rural county groups reached 3,000 people in its first few hours.
SNAP-Ed Superheroes

Educators worked with community partners to meet needs locally.

► Harvested more than 400 pounds of strawberries from a community garden and donated them to local families in need.
—Dominguez Hurry, Bullock and Macon Counties

► Through early August, secured $2,800 in grants to provide additional food for a local food pantry.
—Meagan Taylor, Lauderdale County

► Implemented The Blessing Box, a freestanding structure to accept food and nonperishable donations.
—Chasity Little, DeKalb County

► Provided project kits through a local library for youth to do garden-themed activities in their homes.
—Tammy Hall, Calhoun County

► Ensured that information on healthy shelf-stable foods was available to local organizations for food drives.
—Statewide

► Provided low-cost, easy-to-prepare recipes to families in quarantine. —Statewide

For more success stories, visit the Live Well Success tab at LiveWellAlabama.com.

Keeping an Eye on the Future

An area of need quickly exposed by the pandemic was the lack of comprehensive information about food access in each Alabama county. SNAP-Ed partnered with End Child Hunger in Alabama to create the County Food Guides (aub.ie/foodguides), an online interactive map detailing available food resources by county, such as school meals, food pantries, retailers accepting SNAP, and farmers markets available to Alabama residents. Educators maintained and updated this crucial information for 50 counties, benefiting 421,276 SNAP participants in the state. This resource will ensure that Alabama is ready to quickly share information about local food resources in emergency and nonemergency times.

To learn about the County Food Guides Ambassadors, visit https://fb.watch/1zVXm5lUJa/.

Regardless of what the future holds, Auburn University SNAP-Ed will continue to ensure that Alabama residents have what they need to access healthy food and maintain healthy lives. That is the commitment of every SNAP-Ed educator.

For more information, visit ECHA’s interactive resource map, aub.ie/foodguides.
Live Well in Communities

9K
Food Pantries
SNAP-Ed educators helped food pantries offer more healthy options to their clients by connecting pantries with school and community gardens and other donation sources. To help ensure healthy items were accepted by clients, SNAP-Ed educators promoted new or unfamiliar foods through recipe demonstrations, sample tastings, and nutrition education helping 9,809 food pantry clients per month enjoy nutritious meals during times of need.

2K
Shoppers Per Day
SNAP-Ed educators partnered with 10 local food stores to encourage shoppers to make healthier purchases through in-store recipe demonstrations, sample tastings, and educational activities. SNAP-Ed educators also worked with store owners to suggest enhancements to product offerings and store layouts and to display promotional signs. Together, these efforts directed more than 2,140 shoppers per day toward healthier food and beverages.

3K
Market Customers Per Day
SNAP-Ed educators helped farmers increase sales of fresh produce by conducting recipe demonstrations, sample tastings, and nutrition education encouraging 3,399 customers per market day to purchase and eat more locally grown fruits and vegetables. SNAP-Ed educators partnered with local farmers and community organizations to make farmers market produce more accessible to people with limited resources through the promotion of SNAP EBT payment, coupon programs, and improvements in days and hours of operation.
28 gardens
7K pounds of food
$12K worth of produce
35K servings of vegetables
14K adults could meet USDA daily standard for vegetable consumption

Gardens
SNAP-Ed educators supported establishment, reinvigoration, or sustainability of 28 school and community gardens making fresh vegetables available to almost 6,830 Alabama residents. SNAP-Ed educators played a vital role in connecting community organizations so that garden harvests were distributed to places such as food pantries, soup kitchens, school cafeterias, or summer feeding sites serving those who need it most. SNAP-Ed educators and community garden volunteers weighed produce and determined a total harvest weight from gardens and gleaned excess produce from farmers. In FY20, gardens supported by SNAP-Ed produced more than 7,820 pounds of produce valued at $12,707. This equated to 35,929 servings of vegetables — enough vegetables for 14,371 adults to meet the USDA daily recommendations.

Parks and Recreation Centers
SNAP-Ed educators promoted physical activity in many ways. These included incorporating active games and movement breaks into nutrition education, supporting walk- and bike-to-school efforts, initiating community walking groups, providing education at community recreation events, and displaying promotional signs and mile markers at parks, trails, and recreation centers serving more than 3,400 Alabamians every day.

Calhoun County SNAP-Ed educator Tammy Hall worked with the City of Oxford to install Live Well Alabama motivational trail signs throughout the city’s parks and walking trails.
Social Marketing

Using a variety of original and engaging campaign materials developed with input from the SNAP-Ed target audience, the Live Well Alabama messages to Eat Better, Move More, and Make a Change for better health reached Alabama residents in multiple ways every day. Billboards made more than 146 million impressions. Digital advertisements made more than 8 million impressions and drove viewers to visit the Live Well Alabama Facebook page more than 13,000 times. Social media following grew by 25 percent. Facebook alone reached more than 240,000 people. More than 6,500 people participated in text messaging campaigns. Promotional signs in schools, grocery stores, and parks and trails reminded Alabamians to Eat Better, Move More, and Choose Water wherever they went. SNAP-Ed educators continuously spread Live Well Alabama messages and reinforced concepts through recipe demonstrations, nutrition education sessions, and food and physical activity access projects.

SNAP-Ed partnered with Altarum Institute to evaluate with a phone survey the reach and effectiveness of the billboard campaign. The survey included 515 respondents from various Alabama counties. Survey respondents were asked questions about health views and behaviors. Responses were compared between those who were exposed and those who were not exposed to the billboard campaign. Survey respondents who were exposed to campaign messages were more likely to take action toward better health and reported higher intakes of fruits, vegetables, and water compared to those who were not exposed to the campaign.
Meet the SNAP-Ed Superheroes

Anna Cox, Lamar and Fayette
Annette Casteel, Winston and Franklin
Antoinette Hamilton, Mobile
Bernadine McCaskill-Ransom, Mobile
Brandalyn Clark, Jackson
Carolyn Rothschild, Monroe and Wilcox
Chasity Little, DeKalb
Cheri Huff, Tuscaloosa
Cindy Harper, St. Clair
Debbie Beverly, Conecuh and Covington
Desiree Hutcherson-Bates, Jefferson
Dominguez Hurry, Bullock and Macon
Gianna Edmunds, Coosa and Tallapoosa
Ginger Eatman, Marion and Walker
Gladys Blythe, Dallas and Perry
Jennifer Palmer, Lawrence and Colbert
Karen Howle Hurst, Etowah
Kayla Shealy, Calhoun
Le'Anne Almond, Houston and Dale
Lisa Wood, Pike and Crenshaw
Meagan Taylor, Lauderdale
Meaghan Robertson, Clay and Talladega
Meaghanne Thompson, Cherokee and Cleburne
Michelle Puckett, Barbour and Henry
Paola Lopez, Lee and Russell
Robert McClellan, Cullman and Marshall
Sara Watson, Chilton and Bibb
Shalong Hamilton, Hale and Greene
Sherita Hale, Pickens and Sumter
Sicily Stacy, Geneva and Coffee
Tammy Glass, Marengo and Choctaw
Tammy Hall, Calhoun
Valerie McLain, Butler and Lowndes

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