

# Making a difference

NDSU EXTENSION SERVICE

NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

## At-Risk Youth Learn about Healthy Choices and How to Grow Healthy Food.

### The Situation

Eating more fruits and vegetables that are locally grown is a topic that the general public is concerned about.

In North Dakota: 78% are not physically active (North Dakota: State Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Profile, 2012).

According to the CDC, (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) in North Dakota, 92% of children do not eat enough vegetables to maintain a healthy diet.

Chronic conditions and obesity increases are impacted by a healthy diet. "Perceptions about intake of fruits and vegetables intake are influenced by individual (intrinsic) and community (extrinsic) environmental factors. We suggest approaches for influencing behavior and changing perceptions using available resources."

Perceptions of Individual and Community Environmental Influences on Fruit and Vegetable Intake, North Carolina, 2004. Preventing Chronic Disease: Public Health Research, Practice, and Policy. Volume 6: No. 1, January 2009.

As identified by the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program and Family Nutrition Program standards, 911 at-risk youth desired to learn how to succeed at growing their own healthy food.

### Extension Response

These children had the opportunity to grow their own cherry tomatoes in the spring of 2014 in Cass County, North Dakota. Children from 52 classrooms and nine different schools participated in a two-part gardening lesson taught by dietitian Nicole Johnson and Todd Weinmann, NDSU Extension Agent.

Weinmann taught them the importance of: photosynthesis, fertilizer, watering correctly, potential insect and disease issues, timing of

planting seeds, sunlight and placement of their plant, and following the label on a seed packet.

### Impacts

**Based on a follow-up survey of attendees:**

94% transported the plant home.  
54% transplanted their tomato.  
54% harvested from their tomato.  
54% consumed fruit from their tomato.

### Feedback

"I learned I don't need a large garden to grow my tomato plant" Student

"I can do container gardening on my balcony."  
"Not difficult." Teacher

"I want to grow a giant garden next year." Student

I would like to do this type of a training again next year with a small raised bed. Teacher

"I hope we can do this again next year." Teacher

"Hands-on learning works well with my students."  
Teacher

"A lesson that they can use for the rest of their lives"  
Teacher

"A parent told me it was the first time their child ate a tomato without a lot of encouragement." Teacher

"Some of my students never had the opportunity to grow a plant that they benefitted from. Teacher

### Contact

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