Impacts of the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) in Cass County

The Situation
When compared to the general population, individuals with limited resources for food and other basic needs have higher rates of obesity, heart disease, diabetes, and many other health-related issues. This occurs, in part, because they face unique challenges in adopting healthful behaviors, including lack of access to healthy, affordable foods, fewer opportunities for physical activity, higher levels of stress, and greater exposure to unhealthy food marketing.

Extension Response
The primary goal of the Cass County Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) is to help remove some of these challenges by providing adults with the necessary knowledge and skills to make healthful choices for themselves and their families. More specifically, the program led by Michelle Strang, teaches low-income audiences how to improve their dietary and physical activity practices while becoming more effective managers of their available resources.

Impacts

During the 2016 programming year, 179 family members benefited from the program through the direct education of 56 adult participants. Of those participants who reported income, 94% were at or below 100% of poverty, earning $24,250 a year or less for a family of four and at least 68% were minorities. Overall, 95% of EFNEP graduates reported positive changes in their dietary intake from pre- to post survey. Participants also showed significant improvements in nutrition, food safety, and food resource management behaviors.

Feedback
“The participants look forward to class each week and I often hear that the cooking component is the highlight of their week! After the fact, the participants talk about what they have learned and how they use the information to teach their kids healthy eating. They appreciate learning in a fun and informal way so that no one feels like they are being preached to.”
- Job Service (JOBS) Coordinator

Public Value Statement
Low-income parents who participate in EFNEP gain valuable skills to feed their families healthfully and economically, which not only benefits them, but all of North Dakota by decreasing the need for public assistance and the collective healthcare costs caused by poor nutrition.

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