Lake Agassiz “Go Wild with Gardening”

The Situation
Research suggests that garden-based intervention programs can effectively increase fruit and vegetable intake and increase willingness to taste fruits and vegetables (Ratcliffe et al., 2011; Graham, et al., 2005; & Pothukuchi, 2004). Youth gardens increase access to and consumption of fruits and vegetables in young children and may be an important public health goal to combat youth obesity (Meinen et al., 2012). 

“Go Wild with Fruits and Veggies” has been a successful collaborative program delivered to the third grade classes at Lake Agassiz Elementary School. This school serves a lower income population whereby 50% or more of the children receive a free or reduced-lunch.

Extension Response
Third graders at Lake Agassiz have been participating in the Go Wild program since 2009. A school garden was started in 2013 using Junior Master Gardener funds to provide additional hands-on learning opportunities with plants. The connection between knowledge and positive behavior change is a success that grows with continued intervention. NDSU agent Knutson and Assistant Kuster provided five lessons to students in the fall of 2015 to 57 children.

The garden is maintained through volunteers and is a partnership between Grand Forks Public Schools, Grand Forks Park District, Grand Forks Child Nutrition Program and NDSU Extension-Grand Forks County.

Impacts
After participating in the program:
- 86% of the students are more physically active
- 79% eat more fruit
- 63% eat more fruits of different colors
- 58% eat more vegetables
- 60% eat more vegetables of different colors
- 88% are more willing to try new fruits and vegetables

Six Months Later
- 83% are more physically active and eat more fruit
- 76% eat more fruit of different colors
- 63% eat more vegetables
- 61% eat more vegetables of different colors
- 94% want to try new fruits and vegetables

Feedback
Third Grade Teachers:
“Go Wild is a great way for kids to educate their parents and families about the benefits of eating more fruits and vegetables.”
“Children are more likely to try new foods when they pick them or see their peers eat vegetables fresh from the garden.”
“The program creates a real-life experience for students to witness the whole life-cycle of plants.”

Cook Manager, Maureen:
“We have enjoyed having the produce from Century’s garden this fall to offer the students at lunch. We have made coleslaw from the cabbage and mixed the red cabbage in with our salad lettuce. The zucchini we cut in strips and coins and offered on our salad bar. Same with the cucumbers, beans, and cauliflower. The tomatoes and peppers we diced to make a salsa for tacos.”

Public Value Statement
Eating a healthy diet and increasing physical activity are life-long habits that can prevent childhood obesity and decrease the risk of chronic diseases as an adult.

Primary Contact
Linda Kuster - Nutrition Education Assistant and Carrie Knutson - Extension Agent, Grand Forks County
151 South 4th St. S302, Grand Forks, ND 58201
701-780-8229
Linda.Kuster@ndsu.edu, Carrie.Knutson@ndsu.edu