Creating Nutritious Meals on a Limited Budget in Ward County

The Situation
The rise in obesity and chronic disease means nutrition education is more vital today than ever. Thirty-one percent of Ward County residents are categorized as obese. Ten percent are low income, receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. Many struggle to eat healthfully on a limited budget.

Extension Response
NDSU Extension agent Trisha Jessen partnered with the staff at Milton Young Towers, a public housing site in Ward County, to help seniors and other adults eat more nutritious foods based on MyPlate. The program included education on food purchasing, meal preparation basics, and food safety. Each class offered food demonstrations and samples. The public housing site provided the participants with food, allowing them to replicate the recipes at home.

Impacts
Twenty-six SNAP-eligible individuals have participated in the 12-month program. On retrospective evaluations since Sept. 2015:

- 86 percent of participants chose whole foods based on MyPlate recommendations.
- 100 percent of participants made quick meals at home at least three times per week and reported saving money.
- 88 percent of participants planned meals ahead of time.

Feedback
What participants found most helpful: “Learning how to cook healthy and spending wisely.” “How to break the recipes down to better accommodate living alone.” “How to create a dish from what I have on hand.”

Public Value Statement
Nutrition education improves diets, increases food security, and reduces the risk for chronic disease.

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