Smarter Food Choices for Lake Region Students

The Situation
Left to their own devices, what foods do most students grab for lunch? Pizza, chips and soft drinks rank high on “the choices made by students” list. Smarter Lunchrooms is a nationwide movement based on proven strategies for nudging students to select and eat the healthiest foods in the school lunchroom. Smarter Lunchrooms is dedicated to providing schools with the knowledge, motivation, and resources needed to build a lunchroom environment that makes healthy choices the easy choice.

Extension Response
Extension agents, Kim Fox, Sara Laite and Brenda Langerud were trained in the Smarter Lunchroom program and offered an introductory session to area schools. Administrators and food service staff were invited to learn more and begin to assess their schools. Participants were encouraged to send their food service staff to a compete training in the Smarter Lunchrooms program.

The workshop met training standards set by ND Department of Public Instruction for food service workers reducing time out of school to attend workshops in other cities and ensuring that all food service workers received the same information.

Impacts
Food service staff and administrators who attended the four hour workshop reported an increased awareness of the basics involved in creating better lunchroom environments, better understanding of how to manage portion sizes and increase visibility of fruits and vegetables.

When asked what they intended to change, a majority intended to increase visibility of fruits and vegetables, make healthy choices more convenient, add menu boards and positive messages to their lunchrooms. Many plan to send staff to the entire Smarter Lunchroom training.

Feedback
“When can you come score our lunchroom?” “When can we set up a workshop for all my staff?” -- Request by a school principal who was sole attendee from a school.

Public Value Statement
Improving health behaviors can increase quality of life and save millions of dollars in collective health-care costs for North Dakotans throughout their lifetime.

The Smarter Lunchrooms program gives schools simple, actionable, low-cost steps that make sure the healthy food on kids’ plates ends up in their stomachs. Examples include:

- Offering sliced fruit, as opposed to whole fruit, can increase student consumption by over 70%.
- Offering vegetables in two locations can result in students taking up to 40% more veggies.

Display of Smarter Lunchroom scorecard & samples of healthy food choices.

Food Service staff re-designing their lunchrooms.

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