Smarter Lunchrooms in Benson and Ramsey Counties

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 Situation
According to the CDC (2013), adolescents in North Dakota report eating one fruit and one vegetable per day, whereas the dietary guidelines recommend eating 5-9 per day for general good health and obesity prevention.

The 2016 data reveals that childhood obesity rates are increasing in North Dakota and the state ranks second in the nation. Currently, 37.1% of all 10-17 year-olds are obese (Trust for America’s Health and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation).

Extension Response
In 2017-2018, Kim Fox and Sara Laite, held three Smarter Lunchroom Trainings and completed the Smarter Lunchroom Scorecard at four schools in Benson and Ramsey Counties. This training reached 64 administrators, teachers, and food and nutrition staff.

The trainings met standards set by the ND Department of Public Instruction for food service workers. Bringing this information locally reduced time out of school to attend workshops nearby and ensured that all food service workers received the same information.

Impacts
As a result of the trainings and scorecards, participants have made the following changes in their lunchrooms:

- Offering more choices for vegetables and fruits
- Using decorative fruit bowls
- Using more cut up fruit
- Displaying more educational posters
- Using descriptive names for fruits and vegetables
- White milk displayed first and in larger quantities in all coolers
- New salad bar implemented with salad bar etiquette training to students

Feedback
“I really think that your training made a difference. I have seen teachers giving healthier options for second portions and encouraging family style eating.” —Prenatal Head Start Educator

“I learned that portion sizes should be limited and sugars should be monitored more closely.” —Head Start Teacher

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