On the Move to Better Health: Kids Cooking 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 Situation
According to North Dakota statistics, only 3 percent of children meet the daily recommendation for fruits and vegetables. Adequate fruit and vegetable consumption is linked with preventing chronic diseases, including heart disease, cancer and diabetes. Research has shown that hands-on culinary nutrition education and gardening activities can improve skills and increase the intake of fruits and vegetables.

Extension Response
The On the Move Cooking School curriculum consists of eight hands-on lessons that can be delivered in camp settings, after-school programs or as weekly lessons. Each lesson has specific objectives, key concepts, physical activity, worksheets, associated recipes, a parent newsletter and evaluation tools. The lesson topics included measuring, reading recipes, identifying and using equipment, safe food handling, reading nutrition labels, meal planning, and hands-on cooking and baking. Each child received a cooking kit and cookbook at the conclusion of the program.

Impacts
Approximately 974 children from 18 counties have participated in the multisession 10-plus-hour programs in the past two years. As a result, children improved their knowledge of nutrition, food safety and health concepts through hands-on learning delivered in a variety of settings.

Cavalier County Impact
NDSU Extension Agent Lukach offered the On the Move Cooking School in partnership with the Langdon Area High School Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS) teacher. Thirteen students in grades 4-6 participated in the program.

Upon completion, reports from students indicated:

- 100 percent know how to follow the directions in a recipe and are confident using kitchen equipment at home.
- 92 percent are confident when offering help with cooking at home; using measuring equipment; and following the basics of food safety.

Parent Feedback
“A great program to introduce kids to the kitchen and give them a chance to practice life-long skills.”

“My daughter loved the cooking school and it gave her more confidence with cooking.”

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