

The Family Table: Eat, Connect, Savor

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. Meals eaten as a family tend to be more healthful. In recent years, substance abuse among North Dakotans of all ages also has become an issue.

Meals eaten with family members include less fat, less pop and more fruits and vegetables, and they tend to be higher in calcium, fiber and other essential nutrients. Eating meals as a family at home also can save money. Teens who eat with their family regularly are less likely to get involved in risky behaviors such as smoking, drinking and taking drugs. Children who eat regular meals with family members are better able to pay attention in school and learn. By the time they are teens, children who eat regularly with their families do better academically than their peers who do not.

Extension Response

Years of published research by nutrition and youth development faculty in several universities inspired The Family Table project. The purpose of this interdisciplinary effort is to introduce new, younger audiences to Extension and to increase family mealtimes among participating families to at least three times per week using a variety of traditional and technology-based approaches, including Facebook, e-newsletters and classroom lessons.

Impacts

Since the launch of the program in January 2017, 3,111 users of the program's website have made 41,159 page views, with an average viewing session of nearly 7.5 minutes. Of those, 64 percent were new to our page. On the Facebook page, the total reach has been 129,016 users; of those, 5,711 are considered "engaged users" because they have "liked" or "commented" on the Facebook post.

According to post-surveys with parents or caregivers participating in the newsletter/family meals goal-setting activities:



84 percent reported eating together as a family the recommended three or more times per week.



About 80 percent reported reading the newsletters, with about 33 percent creating a weekly goal.



About 28 percent reported an increase in vegetable consumption, 19 percent reported an increase in calcium-rich food consumption, and 17 percent reported an increase in whole-grain consumption.

Resource Link

www.aq.ndsu.edu/familytable

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