On the Move to Better Health: Kids Cooking Schools

Public Value Statement
Eating nutritiously and knowing how to prepare food can increase quality of life and save millions of dollars in collective health-care costs for North Dakotans throughout the lifetime.

The Situation
According to North Dakota statistics, only three 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 intake of fruits and vegetables.

Extension Response
The “On the Move to Better Health: Kids 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 include measuring, reading recipes, identifying and using equipment, safe food handling, reading nutrition labels, meal planning, and hands-on cooking and baking. Children each receive a cooking kit and cookbook at the conclusion of the program.

Impacts
Forty-one youth from Manvel and Emerado Public Schools participated in the multisession programs taught by Extension educators MaKayla Heinz, Carrie Knutson, Linda Kuster, and Molly Soeby. As a result of the Cooking School, children increased their knowledge of nutrition, food safety and health concepts through hands-on learning.

Feedback
“I like idea of having hands-on experience for kids. They learn more by doing.” – Parent

“Going to this cooking school has made my kids more interested in different foods, recipes, and learning about kitchen tools.” – Parent

“My son learned how to cook, and said he wants to be a chef.” – Parent

“They were able to learn a variety of life skills in the kitchen as well as social skills as they worked together in teams to create a variety of dishes. I believe this is definitely an experience that they will take with them and remember for a very long time.” – Teacher

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86 percent know how to follow the directions of a recipe.
89 percent know how to use kitchen tools.
83 percent feel confident following the basics of food safety.
64 percent often or very often prepare a meal or snack by themselves that involves cutting or heating.