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% 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. In recent years, substance abuse among North Dakotans of all ages also has become an issue.

Meals eaten as a family tend to be more healthful. These meals 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 at 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, 3,673 users of the program’s website have made 47,636 page views, with an average viewing session of more than seven minutes. Of those, 69% were new to our page. On the Facebook page, the total reach has been 176,261 users; of those, 8,486 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:

- 85% reported eating together as a family the recommended three or more times per week
- About 82% reported reading the newsletters, with about 33% creating a weekly goal
- About 29% reported an increase in vegetable consumption, 17% reported an increase in calcium-rich food consumption and 13% reported an increase in whole-grain consumption

Resource Link
www.ag.ndsu.edu/familytable

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