Nourishing Boomers and Beyond in Ward County

The Situation
The 2014 census reported that approximately 11.5% of Ward County’s population is comprised of people 65 years of age or older. According to North Dakota’s Aging Population: Profile and Trends of Seniors Ages 65 and Older, the projected percent change in Ward County will increase 32.3% by 2025. Chronic diseases impact a higher proportion of older adults, often decreasing quality of life and increasing health-care costs. Chronic diseases can affect all body systems, including the eyes, brain, skin and heart. The Centers for Disease control and Prevention stresses that preventive public health strategies can help reduce the burden of chronic diseases in this population.

Extension Response
The Nourishing Boomers and Beyond series includes face-to-face classes, handouts, recipes, tastings, and additional online resources that aim to improve seniors’ knowledge and behaviors concerning chronic disease prevention. In Ward County, the program was offered monthly two audiences: 1) a worksite program for Ward County employees; and, 2) at a senior site in Minot. Attendance varied from month to month, depending on the lesson topic (see Impact section).

Impacts
Muscles (N=37): 73% planned to drink more fluid; 62.2% planned to increase their intake of protein; and, 57% planned to use the exercise DVD.

Heart (N=56): 80% planned to increase their consumption of foods high in soluble fiber; 78% planned to choose products lower in sodium; and, 76% planned to read the Nutrition Facts labels to learn more about saturated fat and sodium.

Eyes (N=39): 95% planned to eat more fruits and vegetables; 87% planned to eat more foods high in eye-healthy lutein; and, 71% planned to include healthy fats with each meal to allow better absorption of lutein and zeaxanthin.

Skin (N=15): 93% planned to do monthly skin checks to identify abnormal skin conditions; 87% planned to stay adequately hydrated each day, for personal health; and, 80% planned to eat more foods high in skin-healthy antioxidants.

Bones & Joints (N=27): 77% planned to eat more leafy greens and eat more foods high in calcium and vitamin D; and 73% plan to drink more water.

Brain (N=34): 88% planned to cook with healthy oils; and, 76% planned to try a new brain-healthy food.

Digestive System (N=29): 86% planned to eat more foods high in fiber; and, 75% plan to eat more fruits and vegetables.

Stress (N=12): 91% planned to develop a personal action plan for coping with stress; 73% plan to increase or maintain their physical activity to 30 minutes or more per day for at least 5 days per week; and, 64% planned to get 7-9 hours of sleep per night.

Feedback
Of those attending the lesson on digestive health, 93% had attended at least one other “Nourish” lesson. The vast majority had shared a previous Nourish lesson’s content with family or friends, usually in a face-to-face discussion.

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