Nourishing Boomers and Beyond in Ward and Renville Counties

The Situation
Based on the 2014 census, 12 percent of Ward County’s population and 19 percent in Renville County is 65 or older. ND Compass estimates the number of North Dakota adults 65 and older will grow by 52 percent by 2025. Older adults are more susceptible to chronic diseases that affect physical health and cognitive function. As people age, chronic diseases may affect all parts of their body. The 2015 County Health Rankings and Roadmaps says 27 percent of the population in Ward County and 29 percent in Renville is physically inactive. The obesity rate is 31 percent in Ward and 29 percent in Renville. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention stresses that preventive public health strategies can help reduce illness.

Extension Response
An Extension team created the Nourishing Boomers and Beyond program in 2013. In 2014 and 2015, Extension staff offered a series of classes once per month for 10 months at two Ward County public housing sites: Milton Young Towers, which averaged 22 participants, and Henry Towers, 15. Extension staff also offered Boomers at two Renville County senior centers: Mohall had 11 regular attendees and Glenburn, 7. The topics included strategies to nourish and exercise muscles, the brain, bones/joints, skin, heart, digestive system and eyes. Lessons also included strategies for managing stress and finding reliable health and wellness information. A nutritious recipe was demonstrated and tasted at each class.

Participants also received resources through an electronic monthly newsletter and daily social media posts. In 2015, 12,311 people viewed the posts on the Ward County Extension Facebook page. Of these, 703 were engaged users who commented on, liked or shared the educational posts.

Impacts
Participants were surveyed following each lesson. All attended multiple lessons and reported learning new information. Here is what they said:

- Brain lesson - 85 percent of the 46 surveyed plan to increase consumption of antioxidants.
- Heart health lesson - 74 percent plan to increase physical activity to at least 30 minutes per day, 87 percent plan to read the Nutrition Facts label on foods to learn about fat and sodium, and 80 percent plan to try a new heart-healthy food.
- Eye health lesson - Of the 45 surveyed, 80 percent plan to increase lutein intake and 83 percent plan to increase fruit and vegetable consumption.
- Healthy bones and joints lesson - 86 percent plan to eat more foods rich in calcium and vitamin D, and 86 percent are increasing water intake.
- Digestive health lesson - of the 41 surveyed, 78 percent plan to eat more fiber and 92 percent intend to eat more produce.
- Muscles lesson - 69 percent plan to increase consumption of foods high in protein.

Feedback
“After attending the Nourish Your Eyes lesson, I decided I’d better have an eye appointment. It had been seven years. I found out I have cataracts and a degenerative cornea. I’ve already had one of four needed surgeries.” ~ Minot resident

“I shared the Nourish Your Muscles information and exercise DVD with my neighbor. She requested her own DVD and plans to attend the upcoming lessons.” ~ Mohall resident

“We really like you coming. I learn something new every time!” ~ Glenburn resident

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