Grand Challenge: Health

Title: Healthy Kids: Nutrition Education for EFNEP Youth

Why is this issue important?
Poor nutrition, limited physical activity, unsafe food practices, and food insecurity are significant health concerns. Poor health disproportionately affects minority and low-income populations. In Shawnee County, 20.75 percent of children live in poverty, 55.67 percent of children receive free or reduced price school lunch, and 11,281 children receive SNAP or food stamps.

How did Extension address this issue?
Shawnee County’s Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) provides opportunities for low-income youth to improve their nutritional health and well being through evidence-based, hands-on, interactive learning. Shawnee County EFNEP offers a series of six nutrition education lessons to youth that focus on healthy food choices, food safety and physical activity.

What was the impact?
Over 200 third to fifth graders completed EFNEP nutrition education lessons. Survey data indicated that:

- 34% (71 of 210) were eating more vegetables
- 24% (51 of 210) were eating more fruit
- 38% (79 of 208) were choosing healthier snacks
- 19% (37 of 196) were eating breakfast more often
- 21% (40 of 190) were more physically active

Success Story:
Youth in the afterschool program at the Topeka Rescue Mission participated in a 4-H Foods Club to learn basic nutrition and cooking skills. They made cookbooks featuring their recipes and one group of siblings was excited to take their cookbooks to Grandma’s when they visited so they could help her in the kitchen.

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