

FOCUS

ON

Community Nutrition Education Programs

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service • Oklahoma State University
Fall 2012



Dear friends and supporters of Cooperative Extension Family and Consumer Sciences:

When looking at state and national statistics, it is clear that many Oklahoma families are struggling to provide nutritious foods for their family. This situation impacts their overall health. Moreover, trend data indicate food insecurity & hunger are on the rise across Oklahoma, especially in families with children, with 1 in 5 children at risk of being hungry in Oklahoma. According to the US Department of Agriculture, an estimated 14.9 percent of American households were food insecure throughout the entire year in 2011, meaning that household members DID NOT have access at all times to enough food for an active and healthy life. Oklahoma is at 14.7 percent for food insecurity and ranks along with fellow Southern states AR (7.6), AL (7.1), MS (7.1), and OK (7.0) in the prevalence of households having very low food security—meaning that the food intake of one or more household members was reduced during the year because they lacked money or resources for food. 012

Food Banks in Oklahoma serve 354,800 people annually, while serving an additional 72,000 Oklahomans each week through non-emergency food programs. Among households with children served by Oklahoma Food Banks, 78% are food insecure. In September of 2012, the number of Oklahomans receiving benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program has increased to reach an all-time high of 616,958 persons which is roughly 23% of Oklahoma's adult population. The average payment per person is less than \$130.

While these statistics may look devastating, the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service's Hunger Issue Team which includes the Community Nutrition Education Program (CNEP) depicted in this issue of FOCUS is dedicated to working towards reducing the number of Oklahomans experiencing hunger. We do this by educating families and youth on acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors necessary for overcoming hunger and malnutrition. CNEP provides research-based nutrition education to low-income families and youth to help them:

- Plan more nutritious meals
- Teach food shopping skills
- Prepare, eat, and enjoy nutritious and delicious foods
- Teach safe food handling, storage, and preservation practices
- Manage food dollars more efficiently to prevent running out of food
- Increase food resources through growing, producing, hunting or fishing for food
- Increase physical activity for better overall health

Last year, OCES leveraged state monies to bring 3.1 million in federal nutrition education program funds to the state. By providing services to those who need it the most, OCES is striving to make an impact and improve the health and wellness of Oklahoma.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Jorge Atilas'.

Jorge Atilas
Associate Dean
Extension and Engagement, Human Sciences

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Community Nutrition Education Programs help families stretch food resources

Everyday on the news we hear about the state of the economy. Businesses have to lay off workers or close their doors completely. Families are unable to make their mortgage payments. Consumers are losing money on their investments.

With all of this economic uncertainty, many families in Oklahoma and across the country are struggling to make ends meet.

Additionally, USDA forecasts that the Consumer Price Index for all food will increase three to four percent in 2013. Families living in poverty have been hit especially hard by rising food costs. Because lower income families have less money to spend, they spend a higher percentage of their total income on essentials, such as food.

Debra Garrard-Foster, coordinator of the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Services' Community Nutrition Education Programs (CNEP), said there is help available for those limited income families in Oklahoma.

"Some families across the state run out of food before the end of the month. Others simply don't know the best strategies for stretching their food resources in order to both prepare nutritious meals and make their budgeted food dollars last until the next payday," Garrard-Foster said.

Oklahoma families that are looking for information about buying and selecting food, learning more about food safety, improving food preparation skills and increasing their ability to stretch food resources, CNEP has a program for them called Fresh Start, Nutrition and You.

"In addition to all of that information, Fresh Start focuses on meal planning in order to offer a variety of foods, proper food storage to help prevent or reduce food waste, food safety, nutritious recipes and improving skills in food production/gardening," she said. "And the best part is that CNEP offers this program at no cost."

The adult program currently is available in more than 35 counties across the state and is taught by paraprofessionals known as Nutrition Education Assistants. These NEAs work with participants on weekly lessons that involve hands-on learning experiences.

Ideally, participants enroll for five months to a year. This time frame helps them master



the skill of meeting their family's nutritional needs.

"All participants take a pre- and post-test to help us determine the level of behavioral change they make while they're enrolled in the program," Garrard-Foster said. "Before starting the program, 46% of them reported they ran out of food before the end of the month. In addition, they said they simply didn't know how to plan, shop for, and prepare healthy foods."

During the last year, the program reached more than 3,400 families. Nineteen percent of them received the lessons via home visits by

the NEA. The other 81 percent were taught in group settings.

Pre/postsurveys of CNEP participants indicate that families develop skills that make them better prepared to cope with rising food costs.

- 48 percent of CNEP graduates more often planned meals in advance.
- 38 percent of CNEP graduates more often compared prices when shopping.
- 41 percent of CNEP graduates less often ran out of food before the end of the month.
- 38 percent of CNEP graduates more often used a list when grocery shopping.

More information about CNEP can be found online at www.fcs.okstate.edu/cnep or by contacting your county Cooperative Extension Service office.

CNEP in the Classroom

Research shows that healthy eating habits developed in children can last a lifetime. To guide these habits, CNEP provides nutrition education to youth in third and fourth grades of qualifying schools. Last year, more than 18,000 Oklahoma youth participated in interactive learning experiences designed to teach concepts of MyPyramid food guidance system, the importance of hand washing and eating breakfast every day, as well as appropriate and healthy snacking.

2012: The year in numbers...

Number of families participating in CNEP - **3,432**

Average number of lessons CNEP graduates receives - **12**

CNEP graduates who make a positive change towards a healthier diet - **96%**

CNEP graduates reporting their children ate breakfast more often - **30%**

Number of school children participating in CNEP who have been taught skills in selecting low-cost healthy foods - **18,188**

SNAP Helps Struggling Families Put Food on the Table

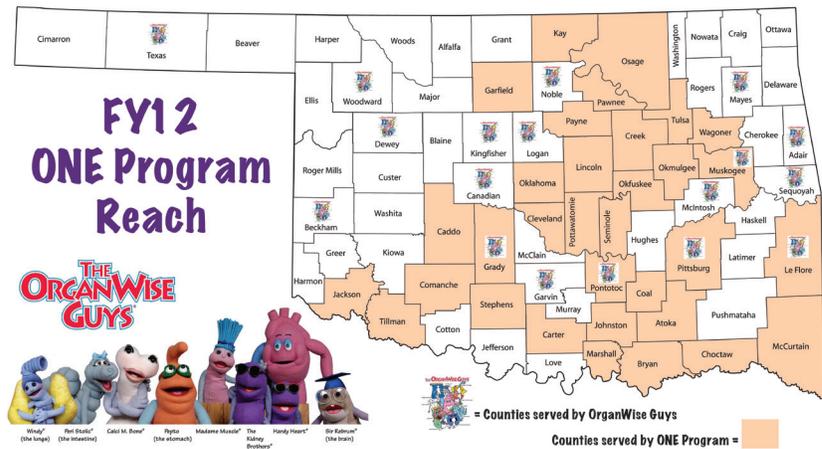
The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly the Food Stamp Program is the nation's first line of defense against hunger and helps low-income families improve access to nutritious food. Altogether, 389,000 Oklahoma families participated in the program in 2012—almost 14,000 more than the previous year. The average benefit is \$4.25 per person per day or \$1.42 per meal.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program was designed and continues to:

- Strengthen the agricultural economy.
- Support local commerce by using normal channels of trade.
- Improve levels of nutrition among low-income families.

During FY12, more than 953 million* worth of food items were purchased at 3,200 Oklahoma retail outlets including farmer's markets which is double the amount distributed six years ago. For every dollar spent on SNAP, \$1.73 is generated through the economy. Based on this projection, the SNAP program created 1.6 billion in economic activity for OK in 2012.

*2012 OKDHS ANNUAL REPORT



Children learn to be “OrganWise” through School Wellness Program

More than 9,000 Oklahoma elementary school students are expected to benefit this academic year from *OrganWise Guys*, a highly interactive nutrition education program offered through the Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension Service (OCES).

Extension is offering the popular, award-winning children's program for a fourth straight year thanks to a generous grant from BlueCross BlueShield of Oklahoma (BCBSOK) and its Healthy Kids, Healthy Families initiative. 4-H also is a key partner in the *OrganWise Guys* effort in the state.

OrganWise Guys promotes healthy eating and physical activity habits to pre-kin-

dergarten through fifth-grade students. The program uses a cast of characters based on organs from the body such as Hardy Heart and Sir Rebrum, the brain, to encourage children to eat low fat, high fiber foods, drink water and exercise.

Lessons vary by grade level and correlate to Oklahoma state educational standards.

The partnership between Extension, 4-H, BCBSOK and *OrganWise Guys* is expected to extend through at least the 2013-14 school year. Schools interested in participating in the spring should contact their local county Extension office for grant application details.

Farm to You

Exhibit to Teach Oklahoma's Children

CNEP has joined OCES, university, community and commodity partners to fund the Farm to You exhibit to specifically address the nutrition, health and agricultural education needs of Oklahoma youth.

When it comes to nutrition, Oklahoma's children may not be making the grade.

Increasing rates of overweight and obese children, a high prevalence of dental decay, limited physical activity and a low consumption of fruits and vegetables are just some of the major health concerns related to children across the state.

And that's where the Farm to You experience comes in.

The Farm to You is an interactive adventure designed to help students from first to sixth grade learn how food is taken from the farm and used by their bodies for good health.

The Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, 4-H and Oklahoma State University have collaborated with other groups, including Oklahoma State Department of Health WIC Service, OKDHS and Southwest Dairy Farmers, to bring the Farm to You adventure to Oklahoma.

Farm to You measures 40 feet by 40 feet

and allows children to walk through the adventure from one station to another. Altogether, nine stations make up the exhibit, including Cheeseburger Farm, To the Market, Healthy Cool Café, Mouth, Stomach, Small Intestine, Muscle, Bone and Skin.

“Our objectives are pretty clear,” said Deana Hildebrand, Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist in the Nutritional Sciences Department at Oklahoma State University. “We hope children will come to understand the link between farms and how choices impact our own good health.”

The Farm to You exhibit is being offered

FOCUS is a publication designed to direct attention to innovative Cooperative Extension Family and Consumer Sciences programs and to share program philosophy and updates of new and changing program directions. Your comments and suggestions for topics for future issues are welcomed and appreciated. Please send all correspondence to FOCUS, Family and Consumer Sciences Cooperative Extension, 135 Human Sciences, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078. FOCUS is published three times yearly by the Family and Consumer Sciences Cooperative Extension program.

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For more information about this and other Family and Consumer Sciences programs, visit our website at: <http://fcs.okstate.edu>

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to schools at no cost, though community volunteers are needed to help set up and take down the exhibit and to work at the different stations.

Impact:

- Since September 2008, the *Farm to You* exhibit was experienced by approximately 56,944 youth and 2,230 community volunteers in 56 counties. The average number of students reached per site visit over the 3 year period was 312 students and 12 community volunteers. In a case/controlled evaluation, the exhibit was found to enhance behavior change in students who were exposed to both classroom nutrition education lessons

and the exhibit compared to those exposed solely to the classroom lessons.

Significance:

- The project received national attention by being featured in *Weighing the Options: How Can We Encourage Healthy Weights among America's Youth*, a publication of the National Issues Forum Network, West Virginia Center for Civic Life. In 2010, it received the Dr. Rodney Huey Memorial Champion of Oklahoma Health Award.

For more information about Farm to You, visit www.farmtoyou.okstate.edu.