

SCIENCE & EDUCATION Impact

Benefits from USDA/Land-Grant Partnership

Healthy Kids, Healthy Nation

Enhancing the well-being of families, individuals and communities.

It's been said that we are what we eat, but that's not the whole picture. Land-Grant University and USDA programs target key aspects of children's lives: the air they breathe, the nurturing skills of their caretakers, the quality of their early education. Such things are fundamental to their well-being, just as healthy children are fundamental to the nation's future.

Payoff

- **Healthy eating begins at home.** National data indicate that each dollar invested in the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program, or EFNEP, a national Cooperative Extension program that targets low-income homemakers with young children, leads to \$10.64 savings in future health-care costs. **Delaware** EFNEP doubled the number of people consuming more dairy, fruit, vegetable, bread and cereal and getting all of their nutritional recommended daily allowances. A **Purdue** EFNEP program is tailored to Spanish-speaking residents, with almost all of the 334 participants making the recommended changes in nutrition for their households. In **Arizona**, 11,640 youths began eating better and improved overall nutrition.
- **Kids are cookin'.** Children enjoy helping in the kitchen and often are more willing to eat foods they help prepare. A **Kansas State** bilingual weekly television program teaches school-age children to prepare nutritious, delicious, affordable and fun recipes. In **Maryland**, a gardening and nutrition project taught 270 children about growing and caring for a garden, and about half of them continue to care for and harvest their plants at home. A **Wisconsin** EFNEP campaign targeted nutrition education to thousands of children in households receiving food stamps, with 85 percent of participants indicating they would use the information to improve eating habits.
- **Fat kids, skinny kids.** The percentage of American children who are obese has increased by 50 percent in the last 30 years. **Kentucky State** researchers and extension are targeting adolescents and their food choices through Web-based programs pitting vegetables and fruits against sweet snacks and salt. **Purdue's** Professor Popcorn taught 2,000 elementary students the benefits of good nutrition so well that they're encouraging family members to try new foods with less salt and

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fat. **Idaho** Extension turned children away from cookies and french fries and toward fruit and salads through research-based food tasting, nutrition games and relays, and sandwich-making exercises. **Georgia's** Fit Families ... Fit for the Future program linked nutrition and physical activity and increased the nutrition knowledge for more than 300 underprivileged children, increasing their knowledge more than 10 percent. "My daughter has shared much of the information she learned...she now tries to help plan our meals," one mother said. Connecticut's Hispanic and low-income children have improved nutrition and food safety knowledge and are making better food choices following **Connecticut** Extension's puppet show approach to nutrition education.

- **Saving infant lives.** A **Nevada** Extension sudden infant death syndrome awareness program taught nearly 1,000 parents how to reduce the risk of SIDS. In one Nevada county, SIDS deaths dropped from 20 to eight in two years.
- **Brighter beginnings.** Lifetime medical costs for low birth-weight babies are projected at \$500,000 per case, but most preterm births and low birth-weight cases could be prevented through improved nutrition and other health-promoting behavior changes. **Purdue** Extension developed the Have a Healthy Baby program for pregnant adolescents and adults. Information on 469 births revealed 68 percent of pregnant smokers reported reduced tobacco use, 43 percent achieved appropriate weight gain and 49 percent were breastfeeding at one month. In one county, the program potentially saved up to \$90,000 by working with 10 adolescent mothers who all had normal-weight babies. In the past six years, the incidence of low-weight babies born to teen-age mothers enrolled in a **Kentucky** Extension program is 1 percent lower than the state-wide rate. A **West Virginia** Extension program recorded a 5.65 percent rate of low-weight births among participating teens, compared with 9.3 percent for all West Virginia teens.

- **Kids breathe easier.** **Montana State** is leading a national consumer education effort called Healthy Indoor Air for America's Homes. A nationwide study of participants revealed that 11,471 people installed carbon monoxide detectors, 11,095 people tested their homes for radon and 8,426 people reported they had stopped exposing children to tobacco smoke.
- **Better parenting.** **New Mexico State** Extension is reaching more than 600 parents and children with classes on handling stress and anger, developing healthy relationships and setting family rules and positive discipline techniques. Participating parents scored higher on a nurturing quiz and showed significantly decreased belief in corporal punishment, less reversal of parent-child roles and fewer inappropriate expectations of children. A **Colorado State** Extension program is targeting anger and violence in the home to reduce the number of children who need foster care. There are about 6,000 children in foster care, and officials estimate that reducing that number by 10 percent would save \$4 million. A **Rutgers** Extension's Family Camp program has an 85 percent success rate in helping at-risk families improve their interpersonal communication and helping parents in those families become more understanding, nurturing and enthusiastic with their children. **Iowa State** and **Penn State** are collaborating to work with nearly 10,000 middle-school-age children and their families in 28 communities to prevent substance abuse. **Arizona, Connecticut, Delaware, Idaho, Missouri, North Carolina A&T, Tennessee State, West Virginia** and **Wisconsin** are among the Land-Grant universities offering similar programs.



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