

## 2010 ANNUAL REPORT

### Hidalgo County

#### Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program



#### ***Supporting Texas Families with Greatest Need Since 1969***

The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) helps young families and youth with limited resources—those most at risk to suffer from hunger, food insecurity and the inability to connect with available support systems. EFNEP offers practical lessons in basic nutrition, food preparation, food budget management and food safety in settings convenient for the participants. EFNEP also includes a walking program for adult participants. Program graduates reflect significant, lasting improvement in eating behaviors and healthy food habits.

Texas has a need for EFNEP—2009 data show that 19.8% of Texas families with children under the age of 18 were living below poverty level, compared to 16.6% of U.S. families.

#### ***EFNEP Reaches Diverse Audiences in Hidalgo County***

In Hidalgo County, ethnically diverse EFNEP nutrition assistants reach youth and adult groups whose principal language may be English or Spanish

In 2010,

- 1,378 families with 2,983 children enrolled in EFNEP.
- 24,186 youth contacts were made through the EFNEP youth program.
- 70 EFNEP participants were pregnant and/or nursing.
- 84% of families were at or below 100% of federal poverty level.
- 80% of families enrolled in one or more food assistance programs at entry
- 100% of EFNEP adult participants were Hispanic/Latino.

#### ***Volunteers Strengthen EFNEP***

In 2010, 364 adult volunteers donated 2,704 hours of work to EFNEP in Hidalgo County. At the Texas rate of \$20.85/hr, this volunteerism has a minimum dollar value of \$56,378. Many of these volunteers (100%) are past or present EFNEP participants. Volunteers make a difference in their own communities, and contribute to EFNEP's continued success.

*In 2010, 47.4% of Hidalgo County youth lived in poverty.*



*EFNEP, the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program, provides food and nutrition education for limited resource families with young children through the Texas AgriLife Extension Service, with funding from USDA. In 2010, EFNEP programs assisted Texans in Bexar, Cameron, Dallas, El Paso, Harris, Hidalgo, Nueces, Tarrant, Travis, Webb, and Willacy Counties.*

*EFNEP nutrition assistants help low-income families and youth acquire the knowledge, skills, and changed behaviors necessary for nutritionally sound diets and to contribute to their personal development and the improvement of total family diet and nutritional welfare. Hidalgo County EFNEP nutrition education assistants teach in homes, schools, churches and community agencies.*

## Participant Testimonials:

- Learned to thaw meats correctly. One client said 'No wonder we often got stomach problems-I would leave chicken in the sink all day!'
- Learned about eating correct portion sizes. To their surprise they had enough to eat.
- Fifty percent had problems with constipation, but when they learned about fiber and started including high fiber foods in their meals and drinking plenty of water, the problem went away.



*"...to assist families and youth with limited resources in making simple changes in eating behaviors so that over time, healthy choices become healthy habits."*

## EFNEP Makes a Real Difference

### Adult Program:

Using "hands-on" experiences, EFNEP adult participants complete at least a six-lesson series on stretching food dollars, improving eating habits, and practicing food safety principles. As a result of participation in EFNEP the following food and nutrition behaviors were achieved:

- **96%** with positive change in any food group at program exit.
- **84%** improved in one or more food resource management practices such as using a list to go grocery shopping.
- **93%** improved in one or more nutrition practices such as using the "Nutrition Facts" on food labels to make food choices.
- **66%** improved in one or more food safety practices such as thawing food safely.
- **29%** of program participants reported a positive change in physical activity. In fact, participants reported walking 7,328 miles during the 2009-10 reporting year. As a result of this physical activity, an estimated 22% of program participants could prevent the onset of diabetes over their lifetime through increased physical activity. Including the cost of lost wages and annual health care costs, the total potential economic impact for these participants is approximately \$2.7 million.

### Youth Program:

The EFNEP-Youth program is directed toward low-income youth ages 6-12. These students participate in a series of fun and educational lessons on good nutrition and food safety as part of after school activities and summer programs. The following results show how youth participants' food behaviors improved after attending EFNEP classes.

- **80%** now eat a variety of foods.
- **92%** increased their knowledge of the essentials of human nutrition.
- **80%** increased their ability to select low-cost, nutritious foods.
- **88%** improved practices in food preparation and safety.
- **94%** improved physical activity behavior or attitude.

## Cost-Benefit of EFNEP

Studies have shown that for every \$1 spent on EFNEP, \$10 were estimated to be saved in health care costs and \$2 saved in food costs by participants. For Hidalgo County, this is \$3.9 million in estimated health care cost savings and almost \$781,424 in food costs.

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