A Growing and Costly Issue

- The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that 20 percent of Texas families with related children under age 18 live in poverty, compared to the national average of 18 percent.
- Poor health disproportionately affects low-income and minority populations in the United States.
- Understanding the nutritional needs of family members, planning and preparing nutritious meals and snacks, smart shopping on a limited budget and food-safety skills are all required to combat poor health, poor nutrition habits, and obesity among low-income families.

Extension’s Response

- The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is a nationally recognized program funded by the USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture.
- The program began in 1969 to help low-income families and youth acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for nutritionally sound diets.
- Trained EFNEP educators teach basic nutrition, food safety, shopping, and food-preparation skills to clients using hands-on methods and practical, easy-to-understand materials.
- The program is located in 12 counties, which represent approximately 54 percent of the state’s total population.
- In 2011-12, some 12,989 participants completed and graduated from the seven-week course; overall, EFNEP reached more than 21,000 Texas families and 87,000 limited-resource youth.

Economic Benefit

- Program evaluations found that the percentage of respondents who grocery-shop with a list increased from 42 percent before the program to 68 percent after the program, and the percentage that compare food prices grew from 59 percent to 81 percent. Those who reported “always” or “sometimes” running out of food before the end of the month dropped from 48 percent to 35 percent.
- Based on responses from a random sample of 2,900 participants (93 percent response rate), the average monthly savings on grocery expenditures totaled $8 per month—a decrease of 9 percent (from $92 per month to $84 per month). The total annual savings for graduates of the EFNEP program was estimated at $103,912 monthly, or $1.2 million annually.
- Broader benefits of the program come from participants’ improved dietary intake, increased physical activity and enhanced food-safety practices in the home, thus leading to reduced risk of chronic disease and foodborne illness, reduced indigent health care costs, and improved quality of life.

Contact:
Dean McCorkle
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
ph. 979.845.1861
e-mail: d-mccorkle@tamu.edu
agrilifeextension.tamu.edu/impacts

MKT-3558BB, November 2012