

# NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAM 2016 ANNUAL REPORT

## OUR FOCUS

The Kentucky Nutrition Education Program works in all 120 counties to improve the lives of limited-resource Kentuckians through education and changes in behavior and in community. Through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service has agents and nutrition assistants across the state who are dedicated to improving lives in their communities.



## OUR CHALLENGE

### Poverty

In Kentucky, household median income is **\$45,215**, which is much lower than the U.S. median of **\$55,775**.<sup>1</sup> Kentucky has high rates of poverty and food insecurity when compared to the United States as a whole.<sup>1</sup>

	Kentucky	U.S.
<b>Total Poverty</b>	18.5%	14.7%
<b>Child Poverty</b>	25.9%	20.7%
<b>Food Insecurity</b>	17.6%	13.7%
<b>Very Low Food Secure</b>	7.3%	5.4%

In 2014, an estimated **3,720** Mercer County residents lived in poverty, and **1,138** of them were children. This is a **33.4%** increase in total poverty and **13.7%** increase in child poverty since 2007.<sup>2</sup>

### SNAP benefits

Participation in the SNAP program among those who are eligible for its benefits is higher in Kentucky than in the U.S. as a whole.<sup>1</sup>

In 2015, **2,887** Mercer County residents received SNAP benefits, a **28.0%** increase since 2007.<sup>3</sup>

	Kentucky	U.S.
<b>SNAP Participation</b>	91%	83%



### Obesity

Nearly half of all American adults experience one or more preventable, diet-related chronic conditions, such as high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and obesity.<sup>4</sup> Kentucky has a high prevalence of hypertension, diabetes, and obesity, ranking in the top 10 when compared to other states.<sup>5</sup> A large body of evidence shows that healthy eating habits and regular physical activity can help people achieve and maintain good health and reduce the risk of chronic disease throughout life.<sup>4</sup>

In 2013, **5,718** Mercer County residents were considered obese, representing **35.8% (42.2%-29.3%)** of the county's population.<sup>6</sup>

## OUR SOLUTION

Provide hands-on, nutrition education to limited-resource audiences, focusing on:

- Buying and preparing healthy foods
- Developing new meal planning and cooking skills
- Adopting new healthy lifestyle behaviors
- Managing SNAP resources

In 2016, **9,883** Mercer County residents with limited resources participated in nutrition education lessons.

## OUR RESULTS

### IN MERCER COUNTY

#### Lifestyle improvements

In 2016, **88%** of adult participants made a positive change in food group choices and **69%** showed improvement in one or more food safety practices. In addition, **69%** began to plan meals in advance more often and **88%** used the “Nutrition Facts” on food labels to make food choices more often. Youth participants also experienced behavior changes, with **88%** improving their ability to choose healthy foods.

## OUR SUCCESS

### Children learn to grow and cook vegetables

Children living in Mercer County public housing learned that you do not have to live on a farm to grow your own food. The Mercer County Extension Horticulture agent teamed up with the Nutrition Education Program SNAP-Ed assistant to teach limited-resource youth how to create their own container garden by growing vegetables in recyclable containers. The lesson covered the different types of vegetables that grow well in container gardens, the types of containers that can be used, and steps for growing vegetables successfully. The children turned empty milk jugs into garden planters and planted a tomato plant. They selected additional vegetable seeds to take home to build their container gardens with their families.

The gardening lesson was part of a

Kids Can Cook summer day camp for sixth- to eighth-grade students, which also focused on nutrition, cooking, food safety, and physical activity. The summer day camp led to monthly programs to reinforce and build on previous lessons. Through the program, youth became more comfortable preparing food, following recipes, and adding fruits and vegetables to their diet. They looked forward to cooking lessons and trying new produce and recipes, such as kale chips, spaghetti squash and baked zucchini. The majority of participants made healthy behavior changes as a result of the program.

- 89% increased vegetables in their diet.
- 65% increased fruits in their diet.
- 71% followed directions in recipes.



#### SOURCES:

1. [Frac.org/reports-and-resources/national-and-state-program-data-2](http://Frac.org/reports-and-resources/national-and-state-program-data-2), accessed December 2016
2. U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates
3. Kentucky Department for Public Health, Cabinet for Health and Family Services, Statewide Summaries, December 2007, 2013, 2015
4. 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans
5. [Stateofobesity.org](http://Stateofobesity.org), accessed September 2016
6. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), County Data Indicators, Obesity Prevalence

This material was funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

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