



# KENTUCKY NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAM

## 2020 ANNUAL REPORT: UNION COUNTY

### OUR FOCUS

The Kentucky Nutrition Education Program, as part of the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service, encompasses two separate USDA programs: The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed). Both programs utilize agents and assistants to provide educational opportunities for limited-resource individuals and families to acquire knowledge, develop skills, and change behaviors for improved health and well-being.

### OUR CHALLENGE

#### Poverty

According to U.S. Census estimates for 2019, the median household income in Kentucky is **\$52,256**, 20% lower than the U.S. median household income of **\$65,712**.<sup>1</sup> Kentucky also has higher percentages of poverty and food insecurity among its population compared to census estimates for the United States overall.

	Kentucky	U.S.
<b>Total Poverty</b> <sup>1</sup>	16.0%	12.3%
<b>Child Poverty</b> <sup>1</sup>	20.9%	16.8%
<b>Food Insecurity</b> <sup>2</sup> <i>(Actual ratings during COVID-19 may be higher)</i>	14.7%	11.7%

In 2018, an estimated **16.3%** of Union County residents lived in poverty, and an estimated **21.9%** were children younger than 18.<sup>1</sup>

#### Obesity

Today, about half of all Americans have one or more chronic diseases, often related to poor diet and physical inactivity.<sup>3</sup> These include high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and stroke.



In 2019, the percentage of obese adults in Kentucky was **36.5%**, ranking it in the top 10 states for highest obesity rates in the country. The percentage of physically inactive Kentuckians was **30.6%**, ranking it among the top five most physically inactive states in the nation. Kentucky was also ranked in the top 10 for high percentages of adults with diabetes (**13.3%**) and adults with hypertension (**40.9%**).<sup>4</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>3</sup>

In 2020, **31%** of Union County's adult population was considered obese, and **37%** was considered physically inactive.<sup>5</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 2020, 5,015 contacts were made with Union County residents who participated in nutrition education programming.

## OUR RESULTS

### IN KENTUCKY

#### Lifestyle improvements

In 2020, 96% of adult participants made a positive change in food group choices and 75% showed improvement in one or more food safety practices. In addition, 92% showed improvement in one or more food resource management practices and 83% made changes to be more physically active.



## OUR SUCCESS

### The Nutrition Education Program helps Kentuckians garden

The University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Nutrition Education Program (NEP) works with clients every year to provide materials, supplies, and information for growing gardens at community sites, schools, recovery centers, and family plots. We reimagined these efforts to address increasing food insecurity related to stay-at-home orders, higher unemployment, and grocery shortages caused by the pandemic. We developed new projects and materials including the Victory Garden campaign and Growing Your Own publications. Cooperative Extension partnered with the Kentucky Department of Agriculture and Kentucky State University to develop the Victory Garden social media campaign, launched during spring 2020 in response to increasing requests for gardening information. Support from state officials increased visibility of the campaign via news and media outlets.

Gardening provides benefits beyond the nutrition provided by fresh produce and physical activity. It can also provide a sense of control and self-sufficiency

needed during the current situation. NEP Assistants, often working side-by-side with Cooperative Extension Agents, provided gardening supplies, tools, seeds, and instructional materials via mail, porch delivery, or Grab-and-Go bags distributed at County Extension offices and community partner sites.

We've distributed an estimated 17,086 gardening supplies and materials since June 2020. NEP Assistants and their clients were surveyed to determine the effect of gardening efforts. According to survey results, 256 family gardens were grown during the summer of 2020; almost half (45%) were grown by first-time gardeners. Estimated produce grown this summer totaled more than 1,050 bushels. More than half (65%) of respondents reported that gardening helped them spend less on food. Some gardeners also increased their food security by preserving more than 3,420 quarts of produce. One participant shared, "It has brought so much joy in terrible times. Hopefully I can teach and pass down gardening to my children and be able to provide healthy food for my family that's affordable."

University of Kentucky  
Nutrition Education Program  
Family and Consumer Sciences Extension

#### SOURCES:

1. U.S. Census Bureau Small Area and Income Poverty Estimates
2. America's Health Rankings 2019
3. World Health Organization Media Centre
4. The State of Obesity Report 2019
5. 2019 County Health Rankings & Roadmaps

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