



# KENTUCKY NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAM

## 2021 ANNUAL REPORT: ROWAN COUNTY

### OUR FOCUS

The Kentucky Nutrition Education Program (KYNEP or NEP) encompasses two separate USDA programs: The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed). Both programs 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 2020, 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 overall and child poverty<sup>1</sup> and food insecurity<sup>2</sup> among its population compared to 2020 Census and Department of Agriculture estimates for the United States overall.

	Kentucky	U.S.
<b>Total Poverty<sup>1</sup></b>	16.0%	12.3%
<b>Child Poverty<sup>1</sup></b>	20.9%	16.8%
<b>Food Insecurity<sup>2</sup></b>	13.8%	10.5%

In 2020, an estimated 27.9% of Rowan County residents overall lived in poverty, and an estimated 26 were residents under age 18.<sup>1</sup>

#### Obesity and physical inactivity

Today, 60% of all Americans live with at least one chronic disease. These include heart disease and stroke, cancer, and diabetes.<sup>3</sup> These diseases are all associated with obesity and physical inactivity. In 2020, Kentucky ranked



in the top five states in the country for obesity with a rate of 36.6% for adults.<sup>4</sup> The percentage of physically inactive Kentuckians is 32%, ranking it in the top seven most physically inactive states in the nation.<sup>5</sup> A large amount of data show 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>

The County Health Rankings and Roadmaps Kentucky report shows that 36% of Rowan County’s adult population have obesity and 30% were 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 2021, 9,154 contacts were made with Rowan County residents who participated in nutrition education programming.

## OUR RESULTS

### IN KENTUCKY

#### Lifestyle improvements

In 2021, 98% of adult participants made a positive change in food group choices and 89% showed improvement in one or more food safety practices. In addition, 96% showed improvement in one or more food resource management practices and 80% made changes to be more physically active.



## OUR SUCCESS

### “Grow Your Vitamins” Sweet Potato Project

In Rowan County, 18% of seniors (age 55 and above) live in poverty and have limited access to fresh produce. The Rowan County Cooperative Extension Service Family and Consumer Sciences agent initiated a program called “Grow Your Vitamins” with a goal of increasing the consumption of vegetables. The FCS agent and Future Farmers of America members grow, free of charge, sweet potatoes for senior citizens in Eastern Kentucky. The project began serving only Rowan County and has expanded to seven more Eastern Kentucky counties including Bath, Bracken, Carter, Elliot, Fleming, Mason, and Morgan with more than 275 residents benefitting from the program. Recruited to the program were the Rowan County FFA advisor and his students and the Morehead State University Farm. Five rows of sweet potatoes were planted and harvested totaling 18 bushels during the 2021 season. During the program,

everyone learned to give back to their community, to reduce hunger, plant science, nutrition, working as a team, and identifying one of the healthiest vegetables. During distribution day, the high school Ag instructor, FFA students, and the Rowan County FCS agent distributed the potatoes. When speaking to the group of students that helped make this possible, 100% of the RCSHS-FFA members learned an important lesson about giving back to our seniors who have given so much to them; 100% developed pride of working for others free; 100% learned about growing sweet potatoes in quantity; and 100% of the senior citizens voted that this was a worthwhile project and that it should continue. Over the past 5 years, the product has more than tripled in the production yield of sweet potatoes. Sweet potato and seasonal vegetable culinary classes will be offered in the community as the virus allows.



#### University of Kentucky Nutrition Education Program Family and Consumer Sciences Extension

##### SOURCES:

1. U.S. Census Bureau Small Area and Income Poverty Estimates 2020
2. United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service
3. CDC National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion 2019
4. The State of Obesity Report 2020
5. CDC Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

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