

# Family Nutrition Program in Pasco County

## Program – Food Safety & Nutrition

**Situation:** Prevalence of obesity in children and adolescents has tripled over the past 30 years. Currently, 17% of children 2 to 19 years are classified as obese. In addition, 23% of children in Florida live in poverty (16% in Pasco), with over 1.5 million eligible to receive free or reduced lunch (53% in Pasco schools). For many children, the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs provide most of their food during the week. Offering healthy, local food can ensure that children are eating the nutrient-rich foods they need while simultaneously supporting Florida's agricultural economy. Recently, the **Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS)** has partnered with UF/IFAS to establish a Florida Farm to School Program and also with the **Team Nutrition - Healthier US School Challenge** (Pasco is 1 of 5 counties involved with latter).

Almost 14% of Florida's population lives below the poverty level (12.3% in Pasco) and as poverty levels rise, the nutritional and health risks to people of all ages increase. Hungry children often have learning and behavioral problems, and expectant mothers with inadequate nutrition are more likely to have low birth weight babies. Furthermore, Florida adults with the lowest incomes and the least education have the highest prevalence of obesity which is increasing and linked to chronic disease (heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, and some cancers). These diseases are leading causes of disability/death and contribute to rising health care costs. Risk for these conditions can be reduced through changes in lifestyle behaviors (healthy eating, increased physical activity) and participation in health screenings. Use of mass media can motivate individuals to participate in Extension programs that provide the knowledge, motivation, and skills people need to adopt behavior changes, improve nutritional status, and reduce health risks, which may result in lower health care costs.

**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** has increased in Florida by 111% since 2007 for a total of 2,603,185 monthly recipients as of December 2010. Most of these recipients exhaust these benefits five to ten days before the end of the month. Extension receives federal dollars from USDA to provide nutrition education to SNAP participants and eligibles in Florida (SNAP-Ed Program) to help them understand how to eat a healthy diet on a limited food budget using SNAP benefits and to choose a physically active lifestyle. (Pasco is 1 of 31 counties in FL with FNP) Additionally, twelve Florida counties (but not Pasco) receive funding to provide nutrition education to limited resource families through the **Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP)**. All educational materials are based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010, and USDA's food guidance system - MyPlate.

### Pasco County Health Facts:

(2012 Survey by Pasco County Health Department)

#### Weight:

- 2 out of every 3 adults are obese or overweight
- 26.5 of our middle school students are obese or overweight
- 24.5 of high school students are obese or overweight

#### Eating:

- <25% adults eat recommended amount of fruits & vegetables per day
- 32% of high school students eat fruit every day
- Only 21% of high school students eat vegetables every day

#### Physical Activity:

- Nearly 2/3 of residents do not meet moderate physical activity recommendations
- 20% adults do not participate in any leisure-time physical activity
- 49% of middle school students are physically active 5 days/week
- 46% of high school students are physically active 5 days/week

Although the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010* includes food safety recommendations when preparing and eating foods to reduce the risk, foodborne illnesses continue to be a major health concern (CDC data), especially for persons with compromised immunity such as infants, young children, older adults, and persons with certain medical conditions. A majority of foodborne illnesses in the US are due to microbial causes. Fresh produce is crucial to a healthy diet, but in the last three decades, the numbers of foodborne illness outbreaks associated with fresh produce has increased.

**Target Audience:** The target audience for programming in the food safety and nutrition

priority work group includes children/adolescents (including 4-Hers), families with children, and adults of all ages. Food safety programs will focus on food service managers/operators, professional food workers/food handlers, general consumers and volunteers.

Partnerships: United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Florida Department of Agriculture (FDACS), Pasco County Health Department (PCHD), District School Board of Pasco County, Pasco County Parks & Recreation Department, Pasco County Elderly Nutrition Services, Pasco County Libraries, and Suncoast Branch of Feeding America Tampa Bay.

## Program Objectives

Participants in program will do one or more of the following:

- Increase knowledge: food, nutrition, physical activity, food handling, and resource management.
- Report intent to change behaviors: nutrition, physical activity, food handling, and resource management.
- Adopt/improve behaviors: nutrition, physical activity, food handling, and resource management

## Educational Methods and Activities

The new research-based **USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans** were released in 2010. **MyPlate** was unveiled the following year to replace **MyPyramid**. The transitioning into the new icon and programming in this area targeting all ages became very timely for 2012 and will continue for the next five years in numerous venues (classrooms, community centers, fairs, etc.).

**FNP:** Agent, in addition to FCS responsibilities, coordinates the **Family Nutrition Program (FNP)** in Pasco with three program assistants. There are currently 53 FNP-eligible schools (grades PreK-12th) and FNP was active in 34 this year (2011-2012). Nutrition education campaigns (7 lessons) for schools were developed based on the new **Youth Understanding MyPlate (YUM)** curriculum for K-2nd developed by UF and other materials for the higher grades. During the summer months, program assistants teach at six Pasco County Parks & Recreation low-income sites using the **OrganWise Guys** materials as well as teach at four low-income Pasco County Elderly Nutrition sites using UF **Elder Nutrition and Food Safety (ENFS)** curriculum.

### Outcomes:

FCS agent taught 82 classes (6 in cooperation with another), reaching 9,005 individuals.

FNP Program assistants taught 424 lessons. Pasco FNP end-of year report (2011-2012) showed that 8,633 unduplicated/584,082 duplicated contacts were made. Teachers (34) representing 617 students who participated in at least 6 lessons (minimum 30-minutes each) responded to survey.

### Impacts:

**Objective 1:** Participants/students will increase knowledge of *MyPlate*/food groups by pre/post surveys.

- 96% (n=23) adults surveyed showed knowledge gain/understanding of *MyPlate*
- Summer day camp participants scored well on pre/post-tests after 6 OrganWise Guys classes:
- K-2nd showed an 17% increase in knowledge
- 3rd-5th age group increased knowledge by 9%

**Objective 2:** Participants will adopt/improve behaviors:

Adults (n=23) attending FCS classes on *MyPlate* reported:

- 87% adults surveyed showed behavior change using *MyPlate*

FNP teacher surveys (34) showed (617 students) – compared to 475 teachers/9,521 students/18 Counties:

- 76% eating more fruits (compared to 71% state-wide)
- 66% eating more vegetables (compared to 63% state-wide)
- 61% eating more whole grains (compared to 57% state-wide)
- 65% eating fruits/vegetables as snacks (compared to 64% state-wide)
- 58% drinking more low-fat/fat-free milk (compared to 51% state-wide)
- 84% are more physically active (compared to 81% state-wide)
- 87% are properly washing their hands (compared to 86% state-wide)

### Impacts:

- Participants are learning proper nutrition that helps them make healthier choices.
- Teachers and parents are reporting making changes and seeing changes in their students: more aware of nutrition and food safety/discussing nutrition in the lunchroom; reading labels and making healthy requests at the grocery store; reducing consumption of soda and other sugary drinks. It has been said that this is the first generation of children who many may not outlive their parents – we don't want that to happen!

## **“Summer Camp - Surfin’ Through Summer—MyPlate, Organ Wise Guys Style”**

Pasco County Parks & Recreation summer program was used to make sure Pasco students didn't forget the healthy eating lessons they learned from the Family Nutrition Program (FNP) during the prior school year. FNP program assistants (3) visited low-income sites (6) reaching a maximum of 580 youth (5 to 13 years).

Campers were introduced to the Organ Wise Guys club members, one by one, as Sir Rebrum (the brain) called the club to order with roll call to share the research he had done on MyPlate.gov. Through a series of three interactive slideshows, and nutrition-themed physical activities, campers learned what foods go where on *MyPlate*. Nutrition-themed activities followed the lesson using “Spin That Wheel of Health” and chanting the OWG mantra “low-fat, high fiber, lots of water, exercise!” while moving to the tune of the Macarena - Fun was had by all!

All campers scored well on pre-post assessments (K-2nd showed an 17% increase in knowledge while the 3rd-5th age group increased by 9%), highlighting how well FNP makes learning about good nutrition so much fun!

One of the camp counselors reported that he taught the four rules, along with the dance moves (campers had learned as a memory aid), to his five-year-old nephews. He said they had it down so perfectly that their mom videotaped them and shared it with EVERYONE they meet! These lessons are having an impact on the children attending summer day camps but also other family members and friends!