Pasco FNP Success Stories
January-February-March 2012

Brenda Borjas (covers mostly elementary schools on east side)

Over the past two months (February-March), Brenda taught a variety of topics to several different age groups (ages 4 to 59!): MyPlate (3 classes); Vegetables & Fruits (1 class); Stretching Food Dollars and Healthy Snacks (5 classes); The Fizzics of Soda (3 classes). VPK/Head Start parents really enjoyed learning to make the “Walk Around Trail Mix” recipe that is an inexpensive, healthy snack for their toddlers. One of the parents remarked “that looks like items I already have in my pantry” which made the point that it is easy to create a healthy snack from things currently on hand. The recipe was easy and quick to prepare, could be made in advance, as well as easy for their children to “grab-n-go!” Soda is always an eye-opener for parents when they realize how much sugar each of their family members consume from these beverages (i.e. In just one month, 2 daily x 12-ounce cans of soda quickly add up to 5.6 gallons, 5 pounds of sugar, and 2.4 pounds of fat, if they don’t burn 8,400 calories that month!) It is important to remind parents of young children that they are the “gatekeepers” of every food item that is purchased and brought into their homes and need to set good examples. If their children are drinking that much soda, then they probably are not drinking enough milk which will (1) lead to a diet low in calcium, (2) cause weak/damaged bones/teeth and (3) lead to medical costs. Parents realize that making changes now will impact their children’s future.

Brenda reported meeting a pregnant teenager at one middle school who commonly drinks 8, 20-ounce sodas a day. After attending the Fizzics of Soda class, she was determined to drink less soda, drink more water and milk in its place because of the impact it would have not only on her health but also of her unborn child.

If FNP empowers a person with nutrition education to make even a small change in their life, it will make a huge improvement in their future!

Karen Faverty (covers mostly middle/high schools)

Karen was recently approached by a high school student who attended one of her Family Nutrition Program presentations on calcium last year. She thanked Karen for sharing that information and told Karen how it had impacted her decisions about milk. The student now reported that upon learning whole milk had eight grams of fat (including unhealthy saturated fat), she immediately went home after class and asked her mom to start buying 1% milk instead of the whole milk always purchased in the past. Now, this student consumes the daily amount of milk she needs for building strong bones.

This may sound like a small thing, but for one young person to take the time to share that the knowledge they gained resulted in a change in behavior that will lower their risk for diseases is a great reminder of how important nutrition education can be and what a major impact it can have on health over a lifetime.

Linda Tesar (covers mostly elementary schools on the west side)

Elementary students (620) were given the opportunity to taste sugar snap peas/snow peas, carrots, kumquats or a blend of 100% fruit and vegetable juice. All but a very few children were excited about participating in the taste-test of these food samples. It was very surprising that so many children said they often see carrots offered in the school cafeteria but they never take them - They said that because they had had the chance to taste them in class, they would be sure to eat them in the future. All of the students who sampled the juices-blend were very surprised to learn that the juices contained beet juice, carrots, and/or sweet potatoes!

Some children said that they had seen kumquat trees growing on a tree in a back yard but never tasted one. Almost all of the tasters said that they will be more likely to try something new in the future as a result of the experience. Given the opportunity to participate in a classroom taste-test, most children are very receptive to trying something new, even a green vegetable. The students actually encouraged each other to “try it” and then watched to see each others’ reactions - A case of “positive” peer pressure!

For more information, contact Betsy Crisp, MS, LD at UF/IFAS-Pasco County Extension 813-929-2725