Florence Hall Award
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Program Description: Kids Cook at the Market/Diabetes Initiative

Hopkins County has become an innovative, progressive community, with fresh ideas on involving its citizens and visitors in a variety of events. With the revitalization of Main Street in 2009, the brick streets, decorative lamp posts, inviting benches, mosaic brick side walks, colorful planters, and updated store fronts transformed Main Street into the perfect background for a Farmers’ Market. As a county representative on the Sulphur Springs Downtown Business Alliance, I became involved, not only in the planning of the Farmers’ Market, but also as an active participant. Held every Saturday from April to mid-October, the Sulphur Springs Main Street Farmers’ Market has drawn visitors from several counties in northeast Texas, as well as other states.

In 2010, a grant was awarded to Hopkins County Extension by the Texas Diabetes Council for the purpose of diabetes education and promoting the consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables. Because of effective diabetes programs (Do Well, Be Well with Diabetes and Cooking Well with Diabetes) and the first successful farmers’ market season in 2009, Hopkins County was the perfect fit for the grant.

Kids Cook at the Market was developed as a way to involve youth ages 7 to 12 in the selection, preparation, and consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables. One Saturday each month was set aside for this event. Each one-hour session included welcome/sign-in, tour of farmers’ market, hand-washing, knife and kitchen safety, nutrition lesson pertaining to the day’s recipe, reading a recipe, measuring techniques, cooking/baking
terms, snack preparation, and of course, eating! In addition, each child was given a goody bag containing handouts, fruit/veggie stickers, bookmarks, and activity sheets. A monthly coloring contest, featuring fruits, vegetables and healthy snacks was provided for all youth who visited the Farmers’ Market.

The following topics/recipes were addressed in the one-hour Kids Cook sessions:

- May – “Tree of Life” Children’s Activity (see supplementary information for description) – this was a day-long event
- June – Veggie Quesadillas
- July – Fruit Smoothies
- August – Salsa and Mr. Potato Head (using potatoes & other veggies for features)
- September – Fruit Kabobs
- October – Kids Bake at the Market – Cinnamon Apple Muffins and Pumpkin Muffins

**New Concerns and Emerging Issues:** With the possibility of one in three adults being diagnosed with diabetes by 2050 if current trends continue (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2010), diabetes education in Hopkins County continues to be of great importance. According to CDCP, 10.1% of the population of Hopkins County has been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes. A startling finding is that youth under the age of 18 are being diagnosed with type 2 diabetes in increasing numbers due, in large part to poor food choices and lack of physical activity, which can lead to weight gain and increased risk of diabetes.

The main purpose of the Farmers’ Market was to provide local producers an opportunity to sell their produce and goods while encouraging visitors to support the downtown businesses. The main purpose of our Extension exhibit and Kids Cook at the Market was to promote the consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables and to provide valuable information to get them started on their journey to a healthy lifestyle.
Visitors to the Main Street Farmers’ Market are diverse in ethnicity and economic backgrounds, and our desire was to reach as many as possible with information that was pertinent to them. Our Hispanic population is growing, and our bi-lingual Ag Agent is instrumental in reaching that particular audience. In addition, many of our publications are available in Spanish. All Extension exhibits at the market included the following:

1) Do Well, Be Well with Diabetes exhibit
2) Extension publications on selecting, storing, and preparing fresh fruits and vegetables
3) Information on dehydrating produce
4) Extension publications on garden insects, planting guides, and pest control of fruit-bearing trees
5) Business cards
6) Fliers with upcoming Extension events
7) Extension bags for visitors to carry information
8) Coloring contest for children

A cookbook of kid-friendly recipes, including recipes made at Kids Cook at the Market, was distributed at each session to ensure that all participants received a copy. These, in turn, could be used by the youth to involve their parents at home.

**Resources Involved:** Networking is vital in effective Extension programming. The following were instrumental in the success of the Farmers’ Market/Diabetes Initiative:

- WIC staff (cookbook printing, assembly, and laminating)
- Master Wellness Volunteers (planning & implementation)
- FCS committee (issue identification, planning)
- Jill McKeever (volunteer, promotion, and food blog – www.simpledailymommas.com)
- Southwest Dairy Museum (donation of cheese for queso"
- Texas Diabetes Council ($2,000 grant used to purchase child-sized aprons, canopies, cooking equipment, diabetes teaching aids, display materials)
- City of Sulphur Springs (oven for baking session, free exhibit space each month)
- Farmers’ Market vendors (free produce for Kids Cook at the Market)
- Texas AgriLife Extension (grant support, displays, and publications)
- 4-H Foods Leaders (promotion & implementation)
- Bobby McDonald (www.frontporchnewstexas.com) - publicity
- Farmers’ Market link (www.sulphurspringsfarmersmarket.com) – publicity
- *Sulphur Springs News Telegram* – publicity
- Chamber of Commerce – publicity
Accomplishments: In addition to newspaper columns reaching 23,000 readers and 10,700 hits on two websites, an average of 155 families was reached each month through the Extension exhibit at the Farmers’ Market. Through one-on-one contact, individuals received answers to their questions, as well as written information on various topics to take home. Through agent demonstrations, observers gained knowledge on the selection and preparation of fresh fruits and vegetables, dehydrating produce for later consumption and learned versatile ways to use produce in recipes. As a direct result of promotion of the two diabetes series at the Farmers’ Market, seven local families committed to participate in the fall 2010 series.

Kids Cook at the Market provided hands-on experience for an average of 15 youth each session. In addition, some of the older youth developed leadership skills by assisting younger kids during the preparation stage. They learned the following concepts:

- How to select fresh produce (avoid bruises, nicks, spoiled areas; firm produce)
- Knife safety (how to hold the knife, cutting away from self, etc.)
- Importance of hand hygiene (when to wash, length, use of soap, avoiding cross contamination)
- Cooking and baking safety (hot mitts, handle turned in, adult supervision)
- Nutrients in various fruits and vegetables (vitamins, minerals, fiber)
- How to read and follow a recipe (gathering correct ingredients & supplies, measuring)
- Cooking and baking terms (sift, blend, mix, abbreviations)
- Importance of physical activity (flexibility, weight control, circulation, etc.)

Comments from some of the youth participants follow:

- “I can’t wait to try this at home!”
- “I never thought I would like bell peppers and onions, but they’re good!” (quesadilla session)
- “Can I make one for my brother?” (fruit kabob session)
- “Can I take one to my mom? How about my aunt?” (muffin session)
“This would be good on a hotdog!” (salsa session)  
“I can’t wait till next time!”  
“Can we do this all year?”  
“I want to do what you do!” (My personal favorite!)

Consumption of fruits and vegetables was promoted through the coloring contest, with monthly winners announced in the local newspaper. Approximately 45 entries were received each month.

**Future Implications:** Due to the popularity of Kids Cook at the Market, plans are to continue the event each year, with publicity taking place in the schools, as well as previously listed media outlets. A puppet show featuring the food groupies will be added in 2011. The script is being written by one of the Hopkins County Master Wellness Volunteers. The 4-H Foods project group focus for 2011 will be fruits and vegetables, with a field trip to Jarvis Farms, a local co-op business who also provides fresh produce to the restaurant industry.

My FCS committee is working on plans to involve adults in some sort of hands-on event, such as a fruit and veggie cook-off in the summer. This would hopefully spark an interest in creatively using produce in recipes as well as increase in consumption.

A diabetes lunch-and-learn series is scheduled for 2011 at the Senior Citizen’s Center. The center director has a large e-mail list for publicity purposes.

**Other Extension Programs:** Healthy lifestyles lead to longer lives. Nutrition programs have been provided for: TOPS (Take Off Pounds Sensibly); Head Start; School Health Advisory Committee monthly parent program; Teachers’ sorority; County Line Baptist Church Women’s group; Ag-in-the-Classroom (MyPyramid); Gluten-free Support Group; and Professional Ag Worker’s. Two diabetes series were conducted in 2010, reaching 38 families with proven results in better management of their disease.
A monthly coloring contest, featuring fruits & vegetables, was held each month during the Sulphur Springs Main Street Farmers' Market. Winners were announced in the Sulphur Springs News Telegram. Approximately 65 entries were submitted each month.

The *Tree of Life* activity was a big hit among the youth. Participants “planted, watered, and harvested” fruit. The result – a nice juicy piece of fresh fruit!