Empowering Food Citizens Through a Coordinated SNAP-Ed Garden-Based Nutrition Education Program

Caramie Edwards, MS, University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension; Katie Holland, MS, RDN, University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension; Amy McClelland, MS, RD, University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension; Sarah David, MBA, MM, University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension; Crystal Bowne, MPH, MA; Josh Phelps, PhD, jphelps@uada.edu, University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension

Objective: Implement a coordinated nutrition and gardening-based program in a SNAP-Ed eligible school facilitating policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) change interventions.

Use of Theory or Research: Studies show coordinated garden-based nutrition education interventions have potential to improve children’s diet quality and are associated with more positive food choices.

Target Audience: K-5th grade students in a SNAP-Ed eligible school.

Program Description: The University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service (UADA CES) SNAP-Ed Program partnered with other CES programs, community organizations, and an elementary school in Northwest Arkansas to establish a school garden and implement garden-based nutrition education. The garden was constructed between the K-2nd grade and 3rd-5th grade buildings, making it convenient for all students to utilize the garden. SNAP-Ed personnel delivered nutrition education lessons throughout the school year using Pick-A-Better Snack and School Garden Lesson Plans curricula, reaching 893 students. “Garden Time” was incorporated into the school day, allowing students time to visit the garden (40 minutes every 3 weeks). SNAP-Ed personnel participated in parent night events to share information with parents. Members of the School Garden Club worked in the garden and harvested produce during summer. Local farmers and producers visited the school and shared their expertise with students. This project was a collaboration between 4-H Healthy Habits, Arkansas Discovery Farms, UADA Master Gardeners, the Elementary School, and UADA CES SNAP-Ed.

Evaluation Methods: In collaboration with partners, PSE change efforts were identified in accordance with the Program Evaluation And Reporting System (PEARS).

Results: PSE change efforts resulting from implementation of this coordinated program included: initiated use of the garden for nutrition education; initiated opportunities for parents/students/community to work in the garden; initiated and maintained edible gardens; incorporated physical activity into the school day or during classroom-based instruction; incorporated physical activity/reduced sitting during usual, on-going site activities.

Conclusion: This coordinated gardening-based nutrition education program led to initiation and maintenance of PSE change interventions towards empowering youth and families to become food citizens.

Funding: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - Education

Empowering Tennesseans to Improve Nutrition Security and Reduce Food Waste

Kristen Johnson, RD, PhD, Kristen.Johnson@utk.edu, University of Tennessee; Ashley Cabrera, BS, Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation; Karen Franck, PhD, University of Tennessee

Objective: Evaluate a statewide initiative to improve nutrition security and reduce food waste.

Use of Theory or Research: In 2021, 10% of US households experienced food insecurity. Black and Hispanic households experienced food insecurity at higher rates. Yet, one-third of food produced in the US is unused, making food the largest category of material in US landfills. These issues are costly and negatively impact health, well-being, and our environment.

Target Audience: University of Tennessee Extension (UTE) county agents who participated in the 2022 Tennessee Food Waste Awareness Week (TFFWAW) statewide food drive.

Program Description: In April 2022, the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) coordinated TFWAW, a statewide initiative to improve nutrition security and reduce food waste. TFWAW was implemented through a multi-sector network of 40+ county agents who participated in the 2022 Tennessee Food Waste Awareness Week (TFFWAW) statewide food drive.