The Fun with Fresh Food (FFF) Rainbow Nutrition program is a 6-week series of 20-minute interactive rainbow-themed food “commercials” to improve attitudes toward fruits and vegetables (FV). Each week centers on a color (i.e. purple), with a mystery food (i.e. cabbage). Sessions include taste tests, produce giveaways, and child involvement in recipe demonstrations. Average weekly attendance was 110 people. Weekly post-program parent surveys indicated 83% of adults gained FV knowledge and 78% intended to incorporate a recipe or tactic at home. Focus group data showed increased confidence in serving FV, greater interest in children cooking and eating FV, and the rainbow theme being a significant draw. The FFF program suggests short, repeat exposure to FV can have a strong impact on parental self-efficacy for cooking and eating FV and child interest in FV.

Results and Impact

Over 650 children and parents attended FFF in summer 2018. Average weekly attendance doubled from 55 participants in 2017 pilot season to 110 participants in 2018 with introduction of rainbow theme. Adults brought children ages 5 months to 18 years, with 94% of children aged 13 or under. Week-to-week retention was high; 50 children from 29 different families attended 3+ sessions and 25 children attended 5+. Each week, at least 45 bags of the highlighted produce were given away.

Greater interest in children cooking and eating FV

• "My daughter was so excited afterwards and she wanted to help to make the foods and snacks we learned about each week. Very helpful with a picky snack eater!"
• "My daughter liked the carrots the BEST!! She has been eating carrots most days as a snack since that week!"
• "I think the aim of the program was to show that eating healthy can be simple. We tried new recipes because of this program."

Rainbow theme as significant draw

• "The "Eat a Rainbow" theme was perfect. Every week, [she] asked, "Mimi, what color are they doing today?" I think they’re doing purples. I really enjoyed that."
• "We came out the door, looked to our right and saw all this colorfulness going on. "What’s that?" That kind of drew us over. Then we came back each week to see what was gonna be the new thing. ‘Cause all we knew was the color, not how it was gonna be used or the next recipe...so that was kind of intriguing."

Conclusion and Sustainability

The FFF program suggests short, repeat exposure to FV can have a strong impact on parental self-efficacy for cooking and eating FV and child interest in FV. Short demos may reduce barriers by illustrating healthy eating does not have to be time consuming or difficult. The FFF model could be employed in rural, urban, and suburban settings to reach families across the country in a whimsical yet substantive way. Though initially funded by small community grants, FFF has garnered support from local businesses to continue to provide families with produce and education in the future.