



MSU EXTENSION: BUILDING HEALTHY HABITS FOR A HEALTHIER GENERATION



Of those surveyed:

78%

ate meals with their family on a regular basis



77%

know how to make healthy food choices

75%

ate breakfast regularly



74%

pay attention to how much water they drink each day

50%

paid attention to the food label for the food they ate



39%

gave healthy food and snack ideas to their families



THE ISSUE

Today's high rates of obesity and chronic disease are wreaking havoc on families physically, mentally and financially. To reduce this stress and burden, and build a healthier generation for the future, people need the skills and knowledge that enables them to lead healthy lifestyles. By helping youth develop healthy habits and attitudes about food, nutrition and physical activity, they will be better equipped with the tools and information necessary for healthy lifestyles in adulthood.

MSU EXTENSION ACTION

To prepare children and youth with these critical competencies, Michigan State University (MSU) Extension 4-H Youth Development is teaching youth about food, nutrition, physical activity, personal safety and mental health. Through their various programs and activities, MSU Extension is helping to build a healthier future generation by empowering Michigan youth to make proactive and healthy choices, now and in the future. In 2018, this programming reached nearly 1,300 participants, made possible in part by a grant from the Walmart Healthy Habits program.

THE IMPACT

After participating in Michigan 4-H healthy living programming, youth indicated high levels of knowledge about healthy lifestyles and choices they could make to improve their overall health. In addition, youth reported positive attitudes about healthy lifestyle choices, and many said they were already making important healthy living decisions. Armed with these tools and information, youth are better equipped to make healthy living decisions for a lifetime.

Teaching the skills for a healthy life

A survey of local students at Manistique High School found that young people were eager to learn life skills for an independent lifestyle: how to change a tire, how to open a checking account – things they would soon have to do on their own postgraduation. To help teach the high schoolers about basic cooking and food safety, Manistique High School reached out to Schoolcraft County MSU Extension, one of 15 counties offering Walmart Healthy Habits grant programming in 2018.

Over the course of three weeks, MSU Extension 4-H program coordinator Jill Connin taught 26 high school youth a series of lessons from the 4-H curriculum 4-H Teen Cuisine. Teens not only learned about balanced diets, but also about food safety and basic food preparation. In addition to weekly lessons, youth got to try their hands at the skills they were learning as they took part in cooking lab sessions each week.

After the class:

- 92 percent of attendees improved at least one or more healthy nutrition practices.
- 73 percent improved at least one or more food safety practices.
- 71 percent improved at least one or more healthy physical activity practices.

“Teens are very aware that they will soon be living on their own and perhaps don’t feel adequately prepared,” explained Connin. “I have witnessed 15-year-olds not knowing what a carrot peeler was or 17-year-olds not knowing how to cut apart a head of broccoli. If we want them to eat a healthy diet in the future, they need to be taught these skills and 4-H is perfectly positioned to do just that.”



“[My daughter] was at a birthday party and she reminded us that we need to get the food put away before moving to presents – and then she helped with the task!”

- Parent of a 4-H healthy living participant

In 2018, the state’s \$63.1 million investment in MSU AgBioResearch and MSU Extension generated more than \$1 billion for Michigan residents. Every dollar the state invested in MSU AgBioResearch and MSU Extension resulted in an additional \$2.26 leveraged in federal funds and external contracts, grants and other revenues, as well as \$5.80 in additional community benefits. As a result, MSU Extension and MSU AgBioResearch are able to serve Michigan residents with a benefit/cost ratio of 16:1.

These cost benefits are huge, but they are not the only benefits that MSU Extension brings to the state. Through Michigan 4-H Youth Development, more than 203,000 youth learn compassion, respect, leadership skills, responsibility, the value of hard work and other critical abilities. In addition, MSU Extension early childhood education programs prepare thousands of Michigan’s youngest children for school success. Learn how you can contribute to this type of programming at: msue.msu.edu/giving.