

FOCUS

ON

Making Oklahoma Healthy

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service • Oklahoma State University
Spring 2011

Poor nutrition and limited physical activity contribute to Oklahoma ranking as the 8th most obese state and 6th in the nation for adult heart disease, hypertension, and diabetes (Oklahoma State Department of Health, 2008). These rankings reflect our high density of fast food establishments, low fruit and vegetable consumption (50th nationwide) and low levels of physical activity (5th most inactive nationwide) (Centers for Disease Control, 2010). In addition, Oklahoma has large Native American and Hispanic populations and ranks 37th among the 50 states in terms of poverty, all of which are associated with greater health disparities (US Census, 2009).

The poor health conditions of Oklahomans are associated with staggering and burdensome economic consequences. In 2008, obesity related health care costs reached \$854 million in Oklahoma (Centers for Disease Control, 2010). In addition, the total annual health-related cost of foodborne illness in Oklahoma was estimated at \$1.7 million in 2010 (Produce Safety Project at Georgetown University, 2010).

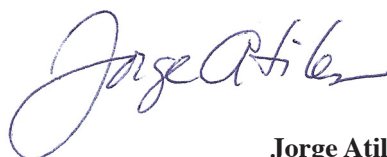
From 1981 to 1999 hospital costs related to obesity among children and adolescents nationwide increased 3.6 times to \$127 million. If left unchecked, it is projected that by 2018 Oklahoma will have one of the highest rates of obesity in the nation and will incur an estimated \$3.2 billion in health care costs attributed to obesity (United Health Foundation, 2009).

Participants in Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service programs have the potential to change behaviors in the following areas:

- Increased availability and consumption of healthful foods (fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy)
- Reduced consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages and highly processed foods
- Reduce the proportion of children and adolescents age 2 years through 12th grade who view television, videos, play video games, or are online for more than 2 hours a day
- Reduced the proportion of adults who engage in no leisure-time physical activity
- Increased meals prepared at home
- Increased use of safe food handling practices by consumers
- Increased use of safe practices when preserving foods at home

Improved health status of Oklahomans has the potential to advance the socio-economic development of the state. A healthy population leads to a more productive work force, and healthy children are in school more often and are better able to learn. Educational attainment is positively associated with both higher income and better health of individuals. Improving health status and thus educational achievement provides Oklahoma a potential gain of \$3.8 billion dollars in wages, taxes and productivity (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2009) and potential savings of \$390 million in saved Medicaid and Medicare costs related to obesity (Centers for Disease Control, 2010).

We hope the contents of this FOCUS newsletter shows the role we play in curbing obesity for the state of Oklahoma.



Jorge Atilas
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Healthy Oklahoma Impact Team

ISSUE:

During the past several decades, the percentage of those overweight has steadily increased in Oklahoma. As many as one in five Oklahoma children are at-risk of overweight or overweight; and two-thirds of adults are overweight or obese. Among children and adolescents, overweight increases the risk of type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and cardiovascular disease. The health of Oklahoma youth can be improved by increasing knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors related to food and physical activity. Overweight, obesity and associated health problems have a significant economic impact. The estimated annual cost of overweight and obesity in the United States is \$117 billion. Just a 10 percent sustained weight loss has been estimated to reduce an overweight person's lifetime medical costs by \$2,200 to \$5,300.

RESPONSE:

To address this issue, 46 Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service County Extension Educators selected the Healthy Oklahoma impact team as their focus through 2010. In 2010, the Healthy Oklahoma impact team had 137,088 public contacts and 8,596,140 mass media contacts through a variety of programs. Two youth programs, *Healthy Oklahoma Youth* and *Farm to You* were specifically evaluated for behavioral impact.

IMPACT:

Healthy Oklahoma Youth

The Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service *Healthy Oklahoma Youth* program educates Oklahoma youth on healthy food, nutrition and physical activity behaviors with the aim of reducing overweight and risk for related chronic disease. Efforts are conducted primarily in elementary classroom settings across the state using a six lesson series. Topics include increasing consumption of breakfast,

using nutrition facts labels to make healthy snack choices, making healthy choices when eating out, making healthy beverage choices, increasing intake of dairy foods, fruits and vegetables, and increasing time participating in physical activity. Lessons are aligned with the Oklahoma Priority Academic Student Skills (PASS). To further support Oklahoma youth nutrition and physical activity education in schools, thirteen supplemental teacher lessons also aligned with PASS Steps to *Healthy Oklahoma* are available.

In 2010, the *Healthy Oklahoma Youth* program reached a total of 15,840 youth. The program was found to result in important improvements in food, nutrition and physical activity behaviors among participating Oklahoman youth which can have a role in reducing overweight and risk of related chronic diseases.

The *Healthy Oklahoma Youth* program resulted in statistically significant improvements:

- 34 percent increase in eating whole grain breads and cereals.
- 27 percent increase in eating fruits and vegetables.
- 26 percent increase in drinking milk or eating cheese or yogurt
- 32 percent increase in eating low-fat meats
- 33 percent increase in eating foods from two or three MyPyramid food groups for breakfast.
- 30 percent increase in snacking only when hungry.
- 39 percent increase in using nutrition facts labels to make food and beverage choices.
- 34 percent increase each in eating small amounts of high fat foods and sugar-sweetened beverages.
- 22 percent increase in time spent in physical activity.

Farm to You Exhibit

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service programs targeting youth populations joined efforts with State agencies and agricultural commodity organizations, including the Oklahoma State Department of Health WIC Service and Southwest Dairy Farmers, to offer an interactive educational exhibit, *Farm to You*, linking agriculture as the source of nutrient dense foods and role of these foods to health. Exhibit messages are research based and consistent with United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005 and MyPyramid.

In 2010, the *Farm to You* exhibit was experienced by approximately 19,600 youth and supported by 133 community volunteers. The exhibit was found to enhance behavior change in students who were exposed to both classroom nutrition education lessons and the exhibit compared to those exposed solely to the classroom lessons.

The *Farm to You* exhibit resulted in statistically significant improvements:

- Increased consumption of whole grain foods.
- Increased consumption of fruits and vegetables.
- Increased consumption of dairy foods.
- Increased use of the nutrition facts label for choosing healthful foods.
- Increased consuming smaller amounts of high fat foods.
- Increased consuming smaller amounts of sugar-sweetened beverages.

The *Farm to You* project received national attention by being featured in *Weighing the Options: How Can We Encourage Healthy Weights among America's Youth*, a publication of the National Issues Forum Network, West Virginia Center for Civic Life. Also in 2010, the project received the Dr. Rodney Huey Memorial Champion of Oklahoma Health Award.



Students in Oklahoma County learn about the amount of sugar in beverages.



Students in Pittsburg County learn healthful ways to prepare fruits and vegetables.



Students in Love County have fun being physically active.



Students in Latimer County participate in physical activity.



Students in Garfield County learn how to compare nutrition labels.



Students in Garfield County learn about nutrition and physical activity related to heart health.

FOCUS is a publication designed to direct attention to innovative Cooperative Extension Family and Consumer Sciences programs and to share program philosophy and updates of new and changing program directions. Your comments and suggestions for topics for future issues are welcomed and appreciated. Please send all correspondence to FOCUS, Family and Consumer Sciences Cooperative Extension, 135 Human Sciences, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078. FOCUS is published three times yearly by the Family and Consumer Sciences Cooperative Extension program.

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