Southeast Learning Community
Success Stories
USDA SERO SNAP-Ed Program
Southeast Learning Community
Success Stories

The Public Health Institute (PHI) Center for Wellness and Nutrition supported the creation of the Southeast Learning Community from March 2015 through September 2016 in support of agencies implementing the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – Education (SNAP-Ed) in the Southeast Region of the United States. The SNAP-Ed Southeast Region includes Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

The Southeast Learning Community supported SNAP-Ed’s expanded focus on obesity prevention through policy, systems, and environmental change (PSE), partnership development and common evaluation indicators from the SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework. Passage of the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010 reformed SNAP-Ed and provided increased resources to implement effective public health PSE approaches. By maximizing these new opportunities and providing targeted resources, assistance and support, the potential value and gains for public health and obesity prevention in this territory are substantial.

This success story booklet highlights advances SNAP-Ed implementers in the Southeast Region have made in the past eighteen months through their comprehensive nutrition education and obesity prevention programs, community partnerships and policy, systems and environmental changes. States used strategies ranging from evidence-based to emerging, with a focus on increasing access to healthy foods and physical activity opportunities, many which can be found in the SNAP-Ed Strategies and Interventions: An Obesity Prevention Toolkit for States. These stories also preview next steps for each program’s continued growth and advancement.
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SUMMARY
Alabama’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) nutrition education and obesity prevention services are a combination of educational strategies accompanied by environmental supports. Alabama’s SNAP-Ed began implementing Body Quest, a childhood obesity prevention initiative, six years ago as a school-based effort to prevent and reduce childhood obesity. As the federal Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) guidelines began to more strongly promote a comprehensive, societal approach to obesity prevention, Body Quest evolved to meet this challenge. Body Quest has grown into a comprehensive multi-level initiative that uses individual and public health approaches to address each level of the Social Ecological Model (SEM).

PROBLEM
Limited-resource individuals, such as SNAP recipients, are disproportionately affected by obesity and obesity related diseases. In 47 of Alabama’s 67 counties, more than 33% of adults are obese. Alabama has the 4th highest level of childhood poverty in the nation. Seventy-two percent (72%) of Alabama public schools have 50% or more of students receiving free and reduced meal plans. Associated with high rates of poverty in Alabama are high rates of food insecurity. Alabama ranks 1st nationally in the prevalence of households with very low food security. Accompanying the rise in food insecurity is a rise in SNAP participation. One in five Alabamians now receives SNAP benefits.

SOLUTION
Body Quest is a childhood obesity prevention program for third graders in schools with 50% or more of students receiving free or reduced lunches. The Body Quest curriculum consists of a battery of interactive, colorful, and animé-style materials including seven nutrition iPad apps that allow youth to be reached and energized in new ways (www.BodyQuest.aces.edu). At every class, fruits and vegetables are emphasized and students are provided the opportunity to taste the produce.

PARTNERS
Due to the scope of Body Quest, partners are necessary to accomplish the many goals. The SNAP-Ed program coordinates with other FNS programs, including the Alabama Department of Education and the Alabama Child Nutrition Program. During the 2014-2015 school year, 116 individual schools and 325 classroom teachers partnered with 32 county Extension SNAP-Ed educators to ensure Body Quest reached SNAP-Ed students and parents. In addition, Smarter Lunchroom Movement collaborations occurred between the Alabama Child Nutrition Program, Alabama Department of Public Health and SNAP-Ed and participation with the statewide End Child Hunger in Alabama (ECHA) task force resulted in SNAP-Ed nutrition education at summer feeding sites.

In addition, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) funded a three-year initiative to implement ev-
The comprehensive, multi-level *Body Quest* approach incorporated policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) changes through collaboration with school leaders, parents, and students, which allowed individuals to make healthy choices for diet and physical activity. Two examples of PSE activities are described below.

**Growing Collards in a Novel School Garden Increases Vegetable Accessibility**

In partnership with the Alabama Agricultural Development Authority, SNAP-Ed educator Dominguez Hurry, reaches 145 students at DC Wolfe Elementary School in Macon County through a school garden. Students tend to the garden and the collards are harvested and used in the School Lunch Program. An additional strawberry garden has been started at George Washington Carver Elementary.

**A New School Wellness Committee Engages Parents to Cook Healthy Recipes at Home**

SNAP-Ed educator, Carolyn Rothschild formed a School Wellness Committee at F.S. Ervin Elementary. During monthly meetings, Carolyn engages parents in a discussion on how to shop, cook and eat healthy on a limited budget.

**Body Quest Beyond School-based Education: Environmental Settings of the Social Ecological Model**

Alabama SNAP-Ed reaches beyond individuals (third graders) to positively change environmental settings through parent and community interventions. *Body Quest* Parent (BQP) sought to influence parental modeling of vegetable consumption and also home vegetable accessibility to increase child vegetable consumption at home. Parents of children participating in *Body Quest* received a series of six inexpensive, easy-to-prepare vegetable recipes to test with their children at home. SNAP-Ed educators engaged students weekly on what BQP activities were occurring in the home. A BQP texting initiative for treatment parents disseminated additional information, nutrition tips and action prompts to increase vegetable consumption in the home. The texting program overcame typical time and transportation barriers that parents face with nutrition programs. A social marketing campaign extends *Body Quest* messaging to promote positive parent modeling to eat more fruits and vegetables, be active and eat meals together. In fiscal year 2015, the campaign included 47 billboards strategically placed in low-income communities near *Body Quest* schools and other SNAP-Ed eligible schools in 30 Alabama counties that reinforced these messages.

**OUTCOMES**

Over 5,375 students participated in a *Body Quest* evaluation study. Findings from the study show that students who participated in *Body Quest* consumed more fruits and vegetables offered through the School Lunch Program than students who did not participate.

The combination of authentic and interactive homebased education was well-received by parents as indicated by continued involvement until the study ended. Using their own resources, more than 50% of parents reported making the recipes that were sent home during the study within two weeks of receiving each recipe. As a result of BQP, parents made two changes that made the home environment more vegetable-friendly, including increasing accessibility of vegetables for their third graders and modeling vegetable consumption. Students reported a
significant increase in daily vegetable intake at home and school after Body Quest compared to before Body Quest and compared to control students.

A total of 36,595,920 impressions were made on individuals living in the communities during the 12-week social marketing billboard campaign. A phone survey of adults (n = 4,928) living in communities where billboards were posted indicated that 66% recalled seeing at least one billboard and, for all three messages, respondents who recalled seeing the billboards reported significant increases in intentions to eat more fruits and vegetables, be more physically active and eat more family meals in the next six months compared to respondents who did not recall seeing the billboards.

Body Quest is strengthened through a combination of interventions at multiple levels of the SEM, including direct nutrition and physical activity education to youth and adults, environmental changes in schools (school gardens and School Wellness Committees) and homes (Body Quest Parent), and community-wide messaging through a statewide social marketing outdoor campaign to reinforce youth and parent strategies.

NEXT STEPS
Alabama SNAP-Ed will provide structures for assessing, partnering, implementing, evaluating and sustaining PSE and direct education initiatives to increase access and appeal of healthy foods and physical activity, while reaching new audiences through social marketing and social media.

Alabama will not look the same in three years.

For more information, please contact:
Sondra M. Parmer, PhD
Program Coordinator
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
Education
Alabama Extension
Parmesm@auburn.edu
(334) 844-2231

This project was supported by Cooperative Agreement Number 6NU38OT000203-04-05 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to the National Network of Public Health Institutes. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of CDC or NNPHI.
The Alachua County Farm to School to Work Food Hub in FLORIDA

SUMMARY
The Alachua County Farm to School to Work Food Hub pairs traditional Farm to School activities with robust Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) programming to provide eligible students with healthy, locally-sourced food options, nutrition education, hands-on school gardening activities, cooking demonstrations, and food tasting experiences.

PROBLEM
With school days more packed than ever and increasing demands on school administrators and teachers, combating childhood obesity requires nutrition educators to be creative in the way they deliver programming. As more schools participate in Farm-to-School programs nationwide, it is important to connect these locally-grown food initiatives with education and student engagement to ensure that the intervention has the most impact.

SOLUTION
Farm to School can support educational outcomes for students through experiential learning activities as a platform to teach core content areas such as science, math, and language arts and by increasing student access to locally-grown healthy foods at schools. The Alachua County Farm to School to Work Hub’s provides nutrition, garden and food safety education, hands-on food preparation activities, and creates policy, system, and environmental change at 20 SNAP-Ed-eligible schools throughout Alachua County to influence healthy eating behaviors in children.

The children are much more likely to try and enjoy vegetables from their own garden. They get the opportunity to eat fresh, flavorful vegetables and discover that they like them!

– Teacher participating in school garden

PARTNERS
Coordination among many university, community, and school groups and organizations is imperative to the Alachua County Farm to School to Work Food Hub’s success. The Hub is a partnership between the Alachua County School Board Food and Nutrition Services, the Growing Educational Training (GET) program of the Education Department, and the University of Florida IFAS Extension Family Nutrition Program (FNP), the SNAP-Ed implementing agency in Florida. FNP faculty and staff engage with school and food hub employees, as well as the School Health Advisory Council (SHAC), to coordinate nutrition, cooking, and garden education for SNAP-Ed-eligible students throughout the district. The FNP Farm to School, Farm to Community teams also leverage existing relationships with farmers and farming organizations to assist the food hub in procuring local product at an affordable price.

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On an average day, approximately 20 high school age students from the Growing Educational Training program can be found tending to the gardens, processing locally-sourced produce for distribution at 25 SNAP-Ed eligible schools with approximately 18,500 students. In the 2015 federal fiscal year, the Hub processed and packaged nearly 15,000 pounds of produce. Tours of the facility were also provided for younger students.

I love coming here. It’s a lot of hard work, but we make a lot of good food and have a good attitude.

– Participating Farm to School student

OUTCOMES
FNP and the Farm to School to Work Food Hub has supported 13 school gardens, provided local produce to 25 school sites, and processed 15,000 pounds of produce in federal fiscal year 2015. Teachers at SNAP-Ed eligible schools have received hands-on training in food safety and gardening. At the end of the growing season, the students are able to taste the fruits of their labor with food tastings and cooking demonstrations, further exposing them to produce they may have never tried or seen before.

I like this because I am good at it, and it helps people.

– Participating Farm to School student

NEXT STEPS
In the coming year, the Alachua Food Hub will expand the teaching gardens a half-acre to include an orchard with 19 varieties of fruit trees. With this addition, there will be a total of 1.25 acres of gardens for students, teachers, school staff, and community members to visit, learn about where their food comes from, and try new fruits and vegetables.

For more information, please contact:
Kelli Brew
Farm to School Coordinator for Alachua County Public Schools
brewkm@gm.sbac.edu
(352) 672-7467

This project was supported by Cooperative Agreement Number 6NU38OT000203-04-05 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to the National Network of Public Health Institutes. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of CDC or NNPHI.
SUMMARY

*HealthMPowers*, a Georgia Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) implementing agency, works with schools and communities to create and sustain positive health change for students, staff, and families through a whole school approach to increasing nutrition education and physical activity and creating environment and policy changes at school sites.

PROBLEM

Georgia has the 19th highest adult obesity rate in the nation at 31%, up from 21% percent in 2000. This epidemic is beginning in early childhood, with one in three children already overweight or obese.

SOLUTION

To address this issue, *HealthMPowers* works with schools and communities to improve student health outcomes by taking a whole school approach to increasing nutrition education and physical activity. The results demonstrate that these holistic efforts are paying off. At partner schools, 87% of students improved health knowledge and behaviors, leading 69% to show improvements in cardiovascular fitness.

Through Empowering Healthy Choices in Schools, Homes and Communities, a research-based, practice-tested program for SNAP-Ed, *HealthMPowers* works with multiple stakeholders including school administrators, staff, students, families, and community members. Using a continuous improvement model, schools like Windsor Forest are provided with training, classroom, and family-based resources and services, program assessment, technical assistance, and evaluation to create and sustain positive change for students, staff, and families.

The Continuous Improvement Tracking Tool (CITT) is an assessment tool developed by HealthMPowers. It is based on the CDC school health guidelines, and measures six indicators of quality school health including policies and environment. This self-assessment is administered at the beginning of a school's partnership with HealthMPowers and is subsequently administered at the end of each participating year.
The school staff also demonstrated their commitment to improving the health environment in the classroom by pledging 18 hours of additional health instruction per teacher. They exceeded their goal last year, providing students with a total of 539 hours of teacher-led instruction in nutrition and physical activity.

OUTCOMES
The school’s Progressive Aerobic Cardiovascular Endurance Run (PACER) scores increased by an average of five laps from pre- to post-test. Both male and female students in the fourth and fifth grades saw significant improvements in their PACER scores, and there was an overall 3% reduction in fourth and fifth grade student BMI percentiles in less than one year.

Most importantly, Ms. Holmes explains that increasing access to physical activity through programs before, during, and after school gave her students the motivation to take charge of their own fitness and set goals for themselves—

“They want to beat their previous PACER score. They just have a drive for it.”

NEXT STEPS
HealthMPowers launched their Community Sector this year. Partnering with existing coalitions in communities where HealthMPowers is already working with schools, HealthMPowers is working to improve access to fruits and vegetables, and implement a multi-channel social marketing campaign to bridge the messaging of healthy nutrition and physical activity beyond the school and into the community.

For more information, please contact:
Adria Meyer
Adria.Meyer@healthmpowers.org
www.healthmpowers.org

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SUMMARY
A Farm to School program in Wayne County Kentucky provides fresh produce for school lunches and an opportunity for students to learn how to garden and prepare healthy foods. A three-acre garden supplies fresh produce to five county schools for their lunch programs from August through November. Extra produce harvested from the farm is donated to limited-resource families in the community. This success started as a solution to combat hunger and improve the health of students and families in the community.

PROBLEM
Kentucky ranks number one among states in high school obesity, number six in obesity among 2 to 4 year olds from low-income families, and number eight in obesity among 10 to 17 year olds. Kentuckians have low fruit and vegetable consumption, with 45.9% of the population consuming fruit less than once per day and 25.5% consuming vegetables less than once per day. Additionally, 21.9% of all Kentucky children experience food insecurity and that rate is even higher in Wayne County with 27% of county children facing food insecurity.

SOLUTION
Under the direction of the Cooperative Extension Agent for Agriculture and Natural Resources, a Wayne County school garden was planted for a unique harvest time, from August through November, when school is in session. This solution allows the produce to be incorporated into the school lunch program. University of Kentucky (UK) Cooperative Extension worked with the school to identify the best crops to grow for this unique harvesting timeline. The school started by growing items that could easily be used in the food service program, such as broccoli, cauliflower, grape tomatoes, and spinach. Each year, the food service director and agriculture instructor provide input to determine new fruits and vegetables to grow the following season and add to the school lunch menu. The school garden began on a half-acre plot in 2011 and has grown to 3 acres in size. The produce harvested in 2015 included the following:

- 1,000 pounds of slicing tomatoes
- 450 watermelon
- 1,000 heads of broccoli
- 600 cantaloupe
- 200 pounds of peppers
- 415 eggplant
- 200 heads of cabbage
- 520 pounds of red potatoes
- 1,000 pounds of cucumbers
- 2,000 pounds of grapes
- 9,000 ears of corn

PARTNERS
The Wayne County School Garden is a result of collaboration with Wayne County School System, UK Cooperative Extension Service, local farmers, public health, youth organizations, and community volunteers.
The garden requires abundant labor in order for the vegetables to be harvested and is done by students taking agriculture classes. These students spend many hours outside the classroom getting hands-on experience. Extra vegetables available from the garden are donated to limited resource families.

OUTCOMES
It is estimated that the garden saved the school food service $12,000 during the fall of 2015, but its lifelong impact on the students’ health is immeasurable. The UK’s Literacy, Eating, and Activity for Primary (LEAP) program has been incorporated into the elementary school garden initiative, giving students an opportunity to learn about growing, harvesting, cooking, trying different types of produce, and outdoor garden activities. This curriculum indicates improvement in knowledge and behavior from participants:

- 40% of participants improved in asking parents for fruits and vegetables at home.
- 74% of participants improved in identifying healthy snack choices.

These lessons included food tastings, where children were encouraged to try new foods, including vegetable soup, apples, beets, and raw turnips.

- 90% of participants tried new foods during the tastings
- One parent delightfully commented, “I can’t believe my child tried vegetable soup.”

The students’ acceptance of eggplant on the school lunch menu is an example of successfully introducing a new non-typical Kentucky vegetable in Wayne County.

NEXT STEPS
The Wayne County Future Farmers of America school garden began six years ago on a half-acre plot, increasing in size each year and is currently at four acres. A central receiving point for the produce is needed to keep daily track of inventory, age of inventory, and imminent harvests. Produce is stored at all five school kitchens plus an additional kitchen. As the volume of produce increases, a more sophisticated handling system is being explored to efficiently utilize the produce.

For more information, please contact:
Todd Trapp, Manager
Policy Development Branch
Division of Family Support
Todd.trapp@ky.gov
(502) 564-3440

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The Quitman County Food Pantry Provides Families with Food and Nutrition Education in MISSISSIPPI

SUMMARY
The Quitman County Food Pantry serves over 800 families during each distribution month providing families with a box of food that can make up to three meals. Food items vary, but generally include peanut butter, orange juice, dried beans, macaroni and cheese, whole grain cereal, rice, canned vegetables, and fruits. Sometimes they receive meats, and fresh vegetables such as sweet potatoes and cabbage. The Food Pantry cannot accept a lot of fresh foods as they do not have enough refrigeration. Participants also receive nutrition education and opportunities to taste recipes using the items in the food distribution box.

PROBLEM
About 1 in 4 people (22%) in Mississippi are food-insecure, well above the national average of 14%. Quitman County, located in the Mississippi Delta, is poorer than the average Mississippi county and has one of the higher rates of food insecurity at 32%. In addition, 16% of adults live with diabetes, while 41% of adults are obese. Despite the high food-insecurity rate and chronic health needs, prior to 2014, the county did not have a food pantry or similar organization.

SOLUTION
With the encouragement and training from the Mid-South Food Bank in Memphis, Mississippi State University Extension Service employees SNAP-Ed Educator Angie Crawford and Extension Agent Mari Alyce Earnest started The Quitman County Food Pantry. They decided to locate the distribution in Lambert, MS, at the Trinity Community Center, a former grocery store converted into a community center. The community center was owned by Delta Ministries in Tupelo and was hardly being used. When the food pantry idea was presented to them, Delta Ministries offered the location free of rent and utilities. The Quitman Food Pantry kicked off its distribution in April 2014 when an 18-wheeler from Memphis pulled in with a truckload of food. The community center location officially opened in May 2014.

The Quitman County Food Pantry orders 10,000 to 15,000 pounds of food and serves more than 800 families during every distribution month. Most participants are African-American and tend to be older. When school is not in session, participants bring their grandchildren or great-grandchildren.
To receive food from the pantry, participants must be citizens of Quitman County and have proof of either Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), or other government assistance. The participant can also self-declare a need. The Educator develops recipes and conducts cooking demonstrations of the recipes using the items in the food distribution box.

“The pantry has been a blessing to my family. I’m eating more fruits and vegetables, and I’ve tried new foods. The salad Angie (Crawford) made today was very nutritious and something I hadn’t thought about before. I enjoyed it! This has made a difference for me.”

-Mary Jane Walker of Crowder, MS

OUTCOMES
Each distribution month, over 800 families receive a box from the food pantry filled with enough items to prepare up to three meals. Participants also receive nutrition education and opportunities to taste test recipes using items provided in the box.

Over the past two years, the SNAP-Ed Educator has used the distribution time to also discuss healthy living. She engages participants in conversation to increase awareness of the importance of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, or to talk about their needs.

“I’ve never thought about making a salad with just plain white beans like what was done today. I love fruits and vegetables, because the fruits are the only sweet things I get a chance to eat. I feel like this has helped my eating habits.”

-Delois Turner of Lambert, MS

NEXT STEPS
On days that the Quitman County Food Pantry is not open for distribution, the community center is used for birthdays, family gatherings, senior club meetings, and even an indoor walking club. Because of the growth and awareness of the Food Pantry, Ms. Crawford has been asked by other organizations to partner with them on nutrition education programming. Future partnerships with community organizations to deliver nutrition education may develop as a result of the Food Pantry success.

SNAP-Ed Educator Angie Crawford demonstrates how to make Mediterranean Chicken and White Bean Salad, based on items in the food boxes.

For more information, please contact:
Sylvia H. Byrd, PhD, RDN, LDN
Extension Professor/Project Director
Office of Nutrition Education
Mississippi State University Extension Service
shb5@msstate.edu
(662) 325-0919 (Office)
(662) 769-2680 (Mobile)

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SNAP-Ed and Housing Authority Partnership Supports Healthy Lifestyles for Residents in NORTH CAROLINA

SUMMARY
Down East Partnership for Children (DEPC), a nonprofit Smart Start organization, serves children and families in Nash and Edgecombe Counties of North Carolina. In partnership with the Housing Authority, DEPC offered on-site healthy playgroups and distribution of a magazine focused on healthy eating, physical activity for limited-budget families.

PROBLEM
Evidence shows positive health outcomes for both children and families when there is an increase in knowledge and skills of healthy eating and active lifestyles and increase access to healthy foods.

The DEPC worked with the Housing Authority to develop and implement onsite playgroups for young mothers and their children emphasizing health practices and to share “ChopChop” magazines through Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed).

Families and children meet weekly for two hours for 16 weeks focusing on healthy foods, nutrition, and physical activities. Lesson plans developed by the DEPC Playgroup Facilitator include a healthy taste testing with a brief explanation of where ingredients are purchased and their cost. Active play both inside and outside are incorporated and modeled during each playgroup session.

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SNAP-Ed and Housing Authority Partnership Supports Healthy Lifestyles for Residents in NORTH CAROLINA

DEPC Playgroup Facilitator include a healthy taste testing with a brief explanation of where ingredients are purchased and their cost. Active play both inside and outside are incorporated and modeled during each playgroup session.

**OUTCOMES**

Families receiving the “ChopChop” magazines are more inclined to enroll in the Nutrition Education Workshops and gain increased knowledge, skills, and resources to make incremental changes in practices and behaviors that will lead their families into healthier lifestyles within their limited budget parameters. Families are empowered, equipped with tools, and have confidence to provide a healthier lifestyle for their children.

**NEXT STEPS**

The Housing Authority and DEPC have set dates for new Nutrition Education Classes. In response to participant’s requests, DEPC will partner with Cooperative Extension to provide cooking classes that will supplement the SNAP-Ed Nutrition classes. A follow up survey of last year’s participants to determine the effectiveness of the classes and resources provided will be administered as a next step.

For more information, please contact:
Debra Lanham
Down East Partnership for Children
(252) 985-4300
dlanham@depc.org

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SUMMARY
North Carolina Child Care and Head Start sites expanded their Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) nutrition education to include positive changes to the center environments and policies, including foods and beverages provided, feeding environment, feeding practices, and professional development.

PROBLEM
Good nutrition and plenty of physical activity are key to a young child’s growth and development. These behaviors begin early in life and are fostered by the environment in which children live and play. Because many children spend much of their day in child care settings, these environments are critical to the development of healthy behaviors. Healthy environments and policies help to sustain the positive messages beyond a single program and lead to long-term improvements. Creating a healthy environment requires leadership support and commitment.

SOLUTION
The North Carolina State University’s SNAP-Ed program, Steps to Health, worked with child care and Head Start Centers to expand beyond direct nutrition education and implement healthy changes in the centers’ environments and policies.

Steps to Health encourages child care and Head Start centers where the Color Me Healthy nutrition education curriculum is delivered to implement strategies from the Color Me Healthy for SNAP-Ed Supplemental Toolkit. The toolkit provides strategies to make policy, systems, and environmental changes to create healthier environments for children.

The toolkit includes the NAP SACC (Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care), which is part of an evidence-based obesity prevention program. Completion of the NAP SACC tool helps sites identify areas to improve their nutrition environment and policies. An action plan is created using the tool to develop goals and strategies for improvement in these areas. Steps to Health works with site staff to help identify barriers, needs, and goals, and to provide staff training.

OUTCOMES
In Federal Fiscal Year 2015, 100% of participating Head Start and childcare centers that completed the NAP SACC before and after program delivery reported making at least two changes in their environment and/or policies. Changes were made in all categories measured with NAP SACC, including foods and beverages provided, feeding environment, feeding practices, professional development, and policy.
At one of the Head Start sites, Color Me Healthy reached 75 Head Start students. Parent feedback forms showed that:

- 100% of parents observed an improvement in their child’s willingness to taste fruits
- 93.3% of parents observed an improvement in their child’s willingness to taste vegetables
- 100% of parents observed an increase in their child’s physical activity.

Examples of environmental and policy changes made at a Head Start Center include:

- Increasing the availability of fruits, vegetables and whole grains
- Decreasing the frequency of serving 100% juice
- Increasing the utilization of healthy eating learning materials
- Providing families more nutrition resources
- Expanding the number of health and nutrition-related topics included in the center’s child nutrition policy.

For more information, please contact:
Gretchen L. Hofing
Department of Youth, Family, and Community Sciences
NC State University
Gretchen_Hofing@ncsu.edu
(919) 515-9141

This project was supported by Cooperative Agreement Number 6NU38OT000203-04-05 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to the National Network of Public Health Institutes. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of CDC or NNPHI.
SNAP–Ed is Building Capacity to Implement Policy, Systems and Environmental (PSE) Change in SOUTH CAROLINA

BACKGROUND
The South Carolina Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) program is administered by the state’s Department of Social Services; implemented in most counties by the state’s Department of Health and Environmental Control, Clemson University’s Youth Learning Institute, or the Lowcountry Food Bank; and evaluated by University of South Carolina’s Center for Research in Nutrition and Health Disparities. The program operates in 39 of the 46 counties in the state and delivers nutrition education curriculums to low-income populations throughout the lifespan, conducts and trains partners on Cooking Matters, and is beginning to provide guidance to sites and partners on the implementation and promotion of nutrition and physical activity supports.

PROBLEM
SNAP-Ed programs were in a period of transition in South Carolina during Fiscal Year (FY) 2016, as new federal rules and guidance began to require not only direct education to SNAP-eligible populations, but also engagement in the process of changing the policies, systems, and environments (PSE) that affect Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participants’ ability to realize goals developed through nutrition education. For instance, SNAP participants are encouraged to purchase and consume more fruits and vegetables in SNAP-Ed, but many South Carolina communities lack access to affordable fruits and vegetables. While this expansion in program scope was necessary and exciting, implementing agencies had varying levels of readiness to fulfill this new role.

SOLUTION
Recognizing the capacity building needs and opportunities the SNAP-Ed program was encountering during this year of transition, evaluation efforts focused on conducting a PSE baseline assessment for the state. Evaluation tools were developed based on the following resources: SNAP-Ed Strategies and Interventions: An Obesity Prevention Toolkit for State, Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Grant Program Guidance for FY2016, and the Western Region’s SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework: Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Prevention Outcomes. These tools were then used to gather information from SNAP-Ed staff, current and potential partners (e.g., South Carolina Library Association) and sites (e.g., individual library branches, health clinics, schools, food pantries), and SNAP-eligible individuals with the goals of identifying capacity building needs and opportunities and prioritizing PSE strategies. Further, state-wide gatherings were held with all agencies involved in SNAP-Ed administration and implementation multiple times during the year to create the space and opportunity for enhanced coordination and learning amongst implementing agencies, primarily focusing on the implementation and promotion of PSE strategies.

PARTNERSHIP AND PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS
Implementing agencies began to redefine their role and relationships with existing partners, as well as to develop new partnerships focused on implementing and promoting PSE strategies this year. Two partner successes include Chapin We Care and the Boeing Center for Children’s Wellness.

1. Chapin We Care is a food pantry committed to providing nutrition initiatives to increase their clients’ overall health, and also hosts a free medical clinic on its property twice a month. Nutrition educators initially developed a partnership with the agency to conduct monthly nutrition and cooking classes focused on using items from the pantry and showing clients better options for healthy meal preparation. Clients enjoyed the classes and healthy snacks provided, asking questions about fat and sodium content, as well as serving...
size and the general effect of healthy eating on overall health. Nutrition educators also provided the pantry with brochures, cookbooks, and recipe cards that are now available on a daily basis for clients. Recognizing the barriers both clients and patients of the clinic were encountering in accessing healthy produce, the pantry director reached out to the nutrition educators for guidance. They were able to connect her with a farmer who accepts SNAP that they had developed a relationship with through providing nutrition education at several farmers markets around the state. This connection resulted in the creation of a sustained bimonthly farmer’s market at the pantry that is held during days that the clinic is also operating to make the produce accessible to patients and staff.

2. Boeing Center for Children’s Wellness is an obesity prevention program that works with schools on their wellness initiatives. Participating schools are provided with an action guide called the School Wellness Checklist that is made up of evidence-based strategies and policies recommended by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention and Institute of Medicine to impact the health of the school environment and reduce childhood obesity over time. After implementing a certain amount of strategies from the Checklist, schools receive $1,000 to fund work on additional strategies. Recognizing the reach and influence that this initiative had within multiple schools districts around the state, nutrition educators developed a partnership with the Center. This new partnership resulted in getting an additional strategy added to the Checklist focused on evidenced-based nutrition messaging. Nutrition educators have, thus far, developed and finalized an initial “Get Involved with Team Nutrition!” Toolkit that provides a first quarter nutrition message, posters that reinforce the message, and letters to disseminate to teachers and parents that include tips on how to address and implement each message throughout the duration of the quarter. The toolkit will be piloted in three school districts this year. Partnering with the Center for Wellness and Nutrition is also allowing for easy monitoring of the implementation and reach of the strategy.

For more information about the Boeing Center for Children’s Wellness project, please contact Dana Mitchel at dmitchel@lcfbank.org.

SNAP-Ed is Building Capacity to Implement Policy, Systems and Environmental (PSE) Change in SOUTH CAROLINA
ACCOMPLISHMENTS
The following were steps taken throughout the year with the goal of building the capacity of the South Carolina SNAP-Ed program to work with sites and partners on implementing and promoting PSE strategies:

• The evaluation team conducted baseline interviews at the beginning of FY2016 with implementing agency staff to understand their current PSE capacity and gain input on capacity building strategies. The team has been conducting post-interviews at the end of the year to understand increases in capacity and additional needs.

• Interviews were conducted with current and potential state-level and county-level partners of SNAP-Ed to understand their current interests and capacity to implement PSE strategies.

• Focus groups were held with SNAP-eligible individuals to understand preferred PSE strategies that would address barriers to healthy eating in a sample of communities where SNAP-Ed is implemented.

• Multiple state-wide convenings were held that focused on PSE successes, challenges, and implications from evaluation findings.

• State-wide workgroups were developed, with representation from each SNAP-Ed agency, focused on PSE evaluation and marketing.

• Position descriptions for newly hired nutrition educators and performance evaluations for previously hired nutrition educators were updated to reflect the new PSE role of the program.

• SNAP-Ed agency representatives participated in regional (e.g., SERO Evaluation Workgroup) and national (e.g., ASSNA Evaluation Committee) networks, and training opportunities (e.g., SNAP-Ed Tri-Regional Healthy Eating Meeting, NCCOR Connect and Explore webinars) to build capacity towards meeting new federal rules and guidance.

For more information, please contact:
Genine Hodges
South Carolina SNAP-Ed Administrative Agency
Genine.Hodges@dss.sc.gov

This project was supported by Cooperative Agreement Number 6NU38OT000203-04-05 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to the National Network of Public Health Institutes. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of CDC or NNPHI.
SUMMARY
The Farmers’ Market Fresh (FMF) social marketing campaign promoted fruit and vegetable consumption to limited-resource consumers through educational sessions at 15 farmers’ markets throughout 12 Tennessee counties. Program activities included promotional activities for adults, food demonstrations and sampling, and children’s challenge activities.

PROBLEM
Limited-resource individuals consume fewer fruits and vegetables than their higher-income counterparts. Low-income communities have limited access to quality, affordable fresh fruits and vegetables. Strategies aimed at increasing access and providing education on selecting and preparing fresh fruits and vegetables are needed to improve fruit and vegetable consumption among populations at risk.

SOLUTION
In 2015, the University of Tennessee Extension UT SNAP-Ed: TNCEP program developed and implemented FMF, a social marketing campaign engaging limited-resource consumers at the market. The primary objective of this campaign was to promote fruit and vegetable consumption through farmers’ markets accepting Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)/Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) benefits. The objective was accomplished through promotional activities for adults, food demonstrations and sampling, and children’s challenge activities. FMF was actively promoted to SNAP recipients through a variety of marketing activities, including social media posts, newspaper articles, and posters and flyers at sites frequented by limited-resource families such as Health Departments, Women, Infants and Children Clinics, Department of Human Services Offices, Head Start, Commodity Food Distribution sites, and other social service agencies.

FMF was implemented at 15 farmers’ market in 12 Tennessee counties. At the markets, UT County Extension Agents, para-professionals, and volunteers offered a series of nutrition education sessions that included food demonstrations, recipe tastings, and information on selection, storage, and preparation of a variety of produce items. Over a three-month period, a total of 121 food demonstrations were implemented resulting in 29,071 educational contacts. An additional 310,651 indirect contacts were made through exhibits, newspaper articles, publication, social media, and television promotion FMF.

PARTNERS
Partners were key to the successful implementation of FMF including UT SNAP-Ed: TNCEP Coalition members, Farmers’ Market Managers, Farmers’ Market Vendors, County Health Councils, Chambers of Commerce, as well as social service providers. At many of the markets, vendors donated the produce items that were featured as part of the FMF recipe demonstrations.
OUTCOMES

Across the 12 pilot counties, during the 2015 program year:

- FMF participants surveyed reported increased consumption of locally-grown fruits and vegetables.
- SNAP redemption at the FMF pilot markets increased by 25% in 2015.
- Farmers’ Market partners reported increased excitement at markets with the promotional exhibits.
- In 2016, the number of markets requesting participation has increased to 38 sites.
- The program has generated increased interest from market managers to the State Agency regarding how to accept SNAP benefits at local markets.

NEXT STEPS

In response to the requests received from market managers to participate in the FMP program, the program continues to expand across the state. As of May 2016, the program is active in 39 Farmer’s Markets in 34 counties across Tennessee, with an average reach of at least 27,000 contacts per county.

For more information, please contact:
Dr. Christopher Sneed
Extension Specialist, Social Marketing
UT SNAP-Ed: TNCEP
csneed@utk.edu
(865) 200-4534
SUMMARY
The Hadley Park Community Center after-school program replaced unhealthy snack foods with healthier options for their participants.

PROBLEM
Students were eating many unhealthy, calorie-dense, nutrient-poor snacks when they came to the after school program.

SOLUTION
The Hadley Park Community Center after school program removed the unhealthy snacks and offered healthier snack options combined with nutrition education to the students.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION
Hadley Park Community Center is a local center in the heart of North Nashville, which offers patrons of all ages a safe and friendly place for various activities and programs. Eboné Colclough has been working with youth in the after-school program at the Hadley Park Community Center since 2012. When she first started her program there, the Community Center offered an array of unhealthy foods as snacks for the children. Eboné convinced the director of the Community Center to remove the unhealthy foods and offer healthier options to the students. The director was very reluctant at first to make this shift because she knew how unhappy it would make the students; however, she finally relented, and replaced the unhealthy foods with healthy snack options.

The students learned about MyPlate, and how they lacked essential nutrients their bodies needed by eating unhealthy snacks. They learned how important nutrients are to their overall health and about the consequences of eating and drinking more calories than they need to maintain a healthy weight. Most of the students were shocked to learn the amount of sugar in the beverages that they normally drink. Students were given the opportunity to taste many different foods, with an emphasis on fruits and vegetables, and to prepare healthy snacks, such as a yogurt smoothie made with spinach. After various SNAP-Ed food demonstrations and other nutrition lessons, the participating students at Hadley Park began making comments about wanting healthier snack options to the staff. Prior to SNAP-Ed, the students were given cheese and crackers/chips (with which they would make nachos), chocolate covered pretzels, and on a few occasion fruits.

PARTNERS
Hadley Park Community Center, Center’s staff, and food supplier.
Students would also bring in fast food, chips, sugar sweetened drinks, and donuts as afternoon snacks. The students requests for healthier snack options included items such as more fruits and vegetables (specifically apple slices and carrots), yogurt parfaits, and veggie chips.

To implement this change, the Community Center collaborated with its food supplier to see what healthy snack options were available. The Community Center ensured that the new healthier options included adequate snack choices for students of all ages that participate in the after-school program. The new foods were introduced to students along with nutrition education.

OUTCOMES
When the unhealthy foods were first removed from the Community Center, the students begged to have them back. Over time, while learning about healthier options, the students’ complained less and less about the new snack choices and even began requesting healthier options. The director says she no longer hears complaints about the healthy snack options. The students have adapted to the new foods, and actually enjoy them.

NEXT STEPS
Tennessee State University SNAP-Ed is in the process of adding additional healthier snack choices to all their sites across the 9 counties they serve in Tennessee by actively working with distributors and program coordinators.

For more information, please contact:
Debbie Goddard, MS, DTR
Nutrition Education Programs Coordinator
Tennessee State University Cooperative Extension
dgoddard@tnstate.edu
(615) 963-1828