

# Making a Difference

## 2020 Parker County Healthy Food Preparation Kathy Smith, County Extension Agent – Family and Community Health

### Relevance

During the past 20 years, there has been a dramatic increase in obesity in the United States and rates remain high. According to the Centers for Disease Control, in 2011-2014 more than one-third of U.S. adults 36% and approximately 17% of children and adolescents aged 2-19 years are obese. Observed increase in caloric intake may be associated with the increase in eating out. Data from the USDA Economic Research Service reports that in 1970, 25.9 percent of all food spending was on food away from home. By 2012, that share rose to its highest level of 43.1 percent. The data also suggest that, when eating out, people either eat more or eat higher calorie foods or both. This tendency appears to have been increasing over the years. Many people become overwhelmed when they think of menu planning and trying to prepare healthy, cost-effective meals for their families. Fortunately, County AgriLife Extension agents have the knowledge and expertise to provide resources that will help encourage at home family mealtime.

### Response

The overall goal of this program was to improve the diet quality of individuals by building and improving skills in meal planning, food shopping and home food preparation. The program also addresses a Leadership Advisory Board TCFF issue regarding Nutrition labels and physical fitness. A secondary goal of this plan was to foster family engagement as well as social interaction built into the educational programs. The Family and Community Health Committee provided guidance addressing these goals. Due to COVID 19 many programs did not take place or had to be changed. Programs conducted include the following:

**Cooking Well Mediterranean Cooking Class.** This was a class held in February that taught the benefits of the Mediterranean eating plan and how to prepare different food. The workshop taught the basics of the Mediterranean Eating Pattern. Participants learned about different foods and participated in making and tasting several healthy Mediterranean dishes.

**Walk Across Texas** – an eight-week community program delivered through a web-based platform to help people of various ages and abilities establish the habit of regular physical activity. WAT! challenges teams to track and log mileage to virtually walk across the state of Texas (832 miles). Through a team-based approach, participants are engaged in friendly competition to promote engagement during the program.

Walk Across Texas was promoted and marketed through news articles, flyers, and social media. The groups targeted included county employees, churches, city municipalities, general public, school employees and Weatherford College. The program included a Kick-Off, a Midway Encouragement, and a Celebration. Each team conducted their own events. This year Path to Plate theme was incorporated with the challenge and included a weekly newsletter that focused on food commodities grown in Texas, nutrition, and recipes. The newsletter also included mileage walked for teams. Incentive items were offered throughout the 8 weeks. The top three teams and individuals were recognized at the end. All teams that walked 832 miles received completion certificates.

**Color Me Healthy** - A nutrition and physical activity program for children ages four and five was conducted with Head Start and Weatherford I.S.D. Ikard Elementary. It was designed to stimulate the senses of young children: touch, smell, sight, sound, and of course, taste. It used color, music, and exploration of the senses to teach children that healthy eating and physical activity are

fun. Color Me Healthy curriculum was comprised of nine sequential lessons chosen from Color Me Healthy and incorporates components allowable with SNAP-Ed funds.

**Get the Facts** - This was 4-part series that taught participants learn how to use the Nutrition Facts panel to make healthy food choices when shopping and preparing food. Lessons covered each week included: Nutrition Facts Label, Fats, Sodium and Added Sugar. The classes were recorded and presented on the Weatherford Library Facebook Page each Wednesday in October.

**Healthy Family Meals Month Tips** - Healthy Family meal tips were posted on Facebook in September to commemorate Family Meals month. They focused on the benefit of family meals and included information about food preparation and nutrition.

**Parker County Healthy Kids** – Participated in a weeklong Healthy Kids Series with the Center for Children’s Health sponsored by Cooks Children’s Hospital. Made a presentation on Go, Slow and Whoa Foods and Re-Think you Drink. Talked about foods such as fruits and vegetables you should eat every day. Also talked about drinking beverages that have no sugar added.

**Dining for the Holidays** – In place of Dinner Tonight Cooking Schools a group of County Extension Agents met to plan demonstrations for holiday meals. These included demonstrating family favorites made healthy. Since there was not anyone who signed up for the online classes, some of the demonstrations were posted on Facebook.

**Healthy Food Preparation News Articles** – Through the newspaper, social media, and the Parker County Website, this County Extension Agent prepared and submitted news articles on topics that featured: food preparation, family meals, helping kids eat healthy, take out meals, mindful eating and more.

## Results

**Cooking Well Mediterranean** - There were 13 total participants; Participants learned about the Mediterranean Eating Pattern; 100% learned about healthy foods ideas; 100% increased their understanding of healthy food choices; 100% demonstrated they could prepare Mediterranean influenced recipes.

**Walk Across Texas** – There were 139 walkers; 19423.3400 miles were walked; Diabetes Savings: \$348,311; CVD Savings: 300,695; Economic Impact: \$649.006.

**Color Me Healthy** - 36 pre-school children at Head Start learned about eating fruits and vegetables and learned about ways to be active. Due to COVID 19, there was not an evaluation completed. However, through observations the children learned well and were interested in the lessons and activities. They were always glad to see us back and to learn more.

**Parker County Healthy Kids** - There were 617 people reached with 60 engagements.

**Get the Facts** - There was not an evaluation conducted however, there were quiet a few viewers each week: 1. Nutrition Facts Label – 182 views; Facts on Fats – 172 views; Facts on Sodium – 160 views; Facts on Added Sugar – 229 views.

**Healthy Family Meals Month** – Average of 75 to 90 reached on each tip.

**Dining for the Holidays** - Have about 100 views for each segment.

**News Articles** - There were 16 news articles were prepared related to food preparation. Reached 6,000 through news outlets, Facebook and the webpage.

**Collaborations** – Weatherford Library, Cooks Children’s Health Coalition, Head Start; Parker County; Weatherford College.

## Future Programming

Will continue to host Walk Across Texas. In 2021 Dinner Tonight will be held virtually or live

## Acknowledgement

Thank you to Extension Specialist for program support and expertise: Michael Lopez. Thank you and appreciation goes to the Family and Community Health Committee. Data has been shared with the FCH Committee, the Leadership Advisory Board as well as key elected officials.