



# Inoculating Kids Against Childhood Obesity

Since the 1970s, the prevalence of overweight children has tripled. The key is to help children make healthier choices, says Gail Kaye, nutrition specialist for Ohio State University Extension. The challenge is how to do that in a world of chips, candy, and pizza. Kaye and graduate student Paul Branscum have taken the challenge with a new curriculum.

**“We’re teaching kids specific skills, both to build their confidence and develop a desire to make different choices,” Kaye says. “They need both.”**

They began testing their curriculum in 2007 with six lessons for third- through fifth-graders in five YMCA after-school programs in Franklin County. This year they offer 10 more lessons. Each one, scripted by Kaye and Branscum and led by Ohio State University dietetic interns and after-school leaders, includes:

- **A hands-on activity showing benefits and consequences.** “In one lesson, the kids walk around with two balls under their arms, which is pretty easy,” Kaye says. “But when we give them five balls to carry, that’s more difficult — and that’s



the problem when you get too many calories. It’s harder to move, work, and play.”

- **Modeling, which teaches concepts through observational learning and vicarious reinforcement.** According to Nancy Brody, school-age curriculum coordinator for the YMCA of Central Ohio, this is important: “Some kids have an aversion to trying certain vegetables,” she says. “But they see the intern try it, so the kids do, too.”

- **Role playing.** Kaye explains: “When we talk about snack foods, for example, we tell the kids to pretend they’re having a sleep-over, and some of their friends want potato chips. They talk about why pretzels might be better.”

Each lesson uses precise teaching techniques drawn from Social Cognitive Theory that promote behavior change.

“They’re not difficult, but they are specific,” Kaye says. And they’re fun, too.

After each lesson, the kids are offered a choice of three snacks — some healthful, some not — and are asked the reasons for their choice.

“Sure, lots of kids still choose chips,” Kaye says. “We expect that. But the exciting thing is when the kids choose the carrots instead, they say it’s for health

reasons. When we’re done with a lesson, sometimes ‘health’ overrides ‘taste,’ and that shows we’re giving these kids the tools they need to make conscientious choices.”

Results so far indicate children are learning nutrition skills and demonstrating more self-confidence and desire to execute those skills. Brody says parents are noticing the difference. “One parent said the family is making some different decisions at the dinner table as a result of these lessons. That shows us that the kids are taking this information home with them.”

“Today’s children need intervention,” Kaye says. “With this program, we think we can inoculate them against obesity.”



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## Preparing Youth for Success

As Ohio's economy shifts from an industrial to a knowledge base, its young people need advanced skills in innovation and application of new technologies. Ohio State University Extension's 4-H Youth Development programs are perfectly positioned to deliver skills in communications, math, science, and research. 4-H already touches 320,000 young lives in Ohio and is extending that reach through special in-school, after-school, and summer programs.



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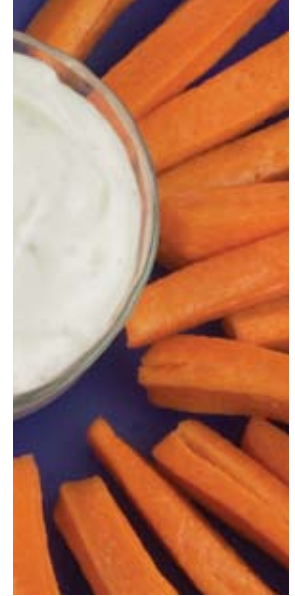
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## Helping Thousands **Make Healthier Choices**

Low-income families tend to compromise when it comes to food, says Joyce McDowell, leader of community nutrition projects for Ohio State University Extension.

“They might choose carbohydrate-rich foods instead of focusing on nutrient density — ‘cheap and filling,’” McDowell says. “But we know that when people eat right and are more active, they’re going to be healthier, especially in terms of cancer, heart disease, and diabetes.”

That’s where FNP (the Family Nutrition Program) and EFNEP (the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program) come in. These federally funded programs reach thousands of low-income Ohioans on nutrition, food safety, and thrifty food shopping.

- **FNP** — This OSU Extension program receives \$2.7 million a year in matching funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Food and Nutrition Service, targeting adults and families eligible to receive food stamps. Currently, FNP is offered in 66 counties.

“Most of our programs are offered through WIC (Women, Infants, and Children program), food pantries, senior centers, Head Start, Job and Family Services,

homeless shelters, public housing — we partner with everyone,” says Ana Claudia Zubieta, director of Ohio FNP.

The program is flexible depending on participants’ needs. Leaders can offer a single hour-long program or a series of programs over several weeks. The staple ingredient is reliable, research-based information: “If you educate people, you empower them to make good decisions,” Zubieta says.

And they do. Results from 27,000 evaluations from the first nine months of the 2006–07 fiscal year showed positive behavior changes across all categories, from using a meat thermometer to planning meals to eating more fruits and vegetables.

- **EFNEP** — OSU Extension receives \$2.2 million a year from the U.S. Department of Agriculture for EFNEP. The target participant is a homemaker with children living at 185 percent of poverty or less. In the 2005–06 fiscal year, EFNEP

reached 5,500 Ohio families; 90 percent of participants graduated from the six-lesson EFNEP curriculum. Nearly 80 percent improved their nutrition practices, such as using the “Nutrition Facts” labels; and 74 percent improved in managing resources, such as shopping with a list or planning meals in advance.

Mark Hayden, EFNEP program assistant in Hamilton County, sees results in the Over-the-Rhine neighborhood he lives and teaches in. “A lot of things that we take for granted, many participants have never tried before,” Hayden says. For example, he often cooks a pot of rice during class just to contradict the common conception that rice is difficult to cook. “Simple, basic things are what I concentrate on.”

Hayden was delighted that three of the six women honored as the year’s “Successful Women in Over-the-Rhine” were recent EFNEP graduates, and two others were directors of programs that partner with EFNEP to offer the classes.

“It shows what a huge impact EFNEP has on that neighborhood,” Hayden says.



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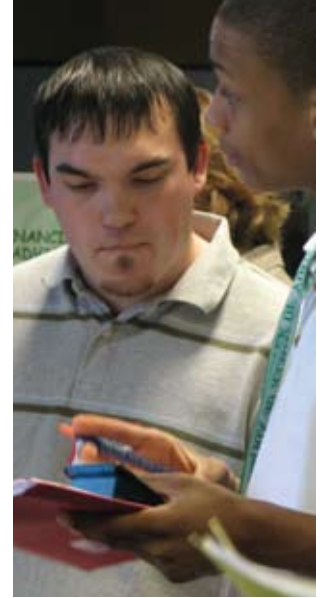
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# Making Ohioans Money Smart

Ohio State University Extension offers money management programs that work. A 2007 analysis of nearly 900 participants showed 93 percent learned new information and planned to use it, with more than 70 percent planning to set aside money for unplanned or occasional expenses; save toward a goal; reduce debt; or spend more wisely.

“These respondents participated in a variety of classes — anywhere from two to 10 hours,” says family resource management specialist Sharon Seiling. “But it looks like almost everyone leaves with valuable information.”

Among Extension’s offerings:

- **New Start** — This Department of Justice-approved program meets the “Debtor Education” bankruptcy requirement. The two-hour course is offered in 41 counties. Carol Miller, Clark County Extension educator, says participants often feel a stigma in filing bankruptcy, but most face circumstances beyond their control.

“So many people are on the edge, and then an illness or unemployment or divorce comes along, and it finishes them off,” she says. Nancy Hudson, Extension specialist in family finances, who oversees the program, says, “We hear appreciation that this is taught in a practical, nonjudgmental way, by people who care.”

- **High School Financial Planning Program** — In 2007, OSU Extension and the Ohio Credit Union League trained more than 600 teachers in this revised National Endowment for Financial Education (NEFE) curriculum, which includes financial planning, budgeting, investing, credit, insurance, and career decisions. It will help address Ohio’s new financial literacy graduation requirement, which begins in 2010. “Teachers are excited,” says Hudson, who was instrumental in the new curriculum’s launch. “They like the instructor and student materials, web-based support — and the fact that it’s all free.”

- **Real Money, Real World** — This program provides classroom lessons and a hands-on simulation to help young people realize the relationship between education, income, and lifestyle decisions. Between February and August 2007, 2,404 youth in 12 counties participated, and evaluations showed the program significantly raised their awareness about financial management.

In the simulation, participants choose a career and get a checkbook with their monthly income as the balance. Then they move among stations to find housing, transportation, groceries, and other necessities. It’s an eye-opener.

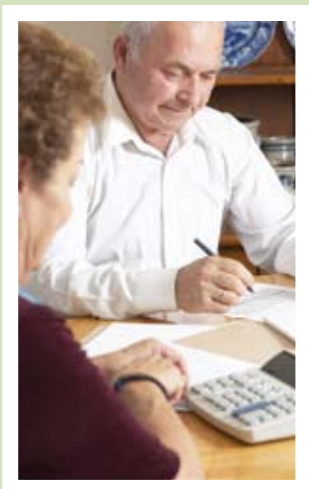
“About half were really stressed out,” says Susan Colbert, Extension educator in Franklin County, after a simulation co-sponsored by OSU Extension and the Godman Guild last summer. “They said, ‘How do my parents do it?’”

One participant, Symone Westbrook, 15, says she was surprised that child-care expenses were more than her rent: “I was not expecting that at all.”

James Jenkins III, 15, says he chose to be a dietitian in the simulation and made \$3,500 a month. “I was surprised at how much car insurance was,” he says. “And that sometimes a two-bedroom apartment can be cheaper than a one-bedroom. You have to manage your money wisely.”



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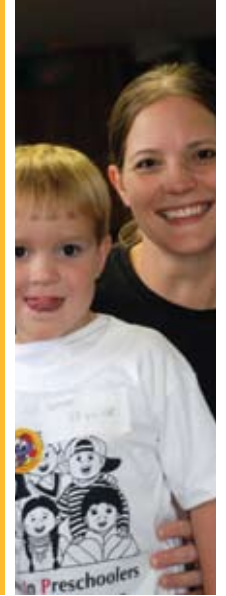
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## Fighting the Unseen Handicap: OSU Extension Brings Much-Needed Vision Screening to Preschoolers

“What you don’t see won’t hurt you.” So goes the popular saying.

But when it comes to vision disorders among preschoolers, nothing could be further away from the truth. Conditions such as amblyopia, strabismus, and refractive error are the leading handicapping conditions of childhood — yet fewer than 14 percent of preschool-age children have eye exams and fewer than 22 percent even have their vision screened.

Ohio State University Extension is doing something to solve this problem. Through a partnership with Ohio State University’s College of Optometry and the Columbus Foundation, Extension educators and 4-H teen leaders participated in a first-of-its-kind pilot program seeking to evaluate the effectiveness of training lay people to conduct vision screenings at the community level.

“Undetected vision disorders handicap Americans in many ways, from learning to participation in social activities to economic productivity,” said optometry professor Paulette Schmidt, a nationally recognized researcher in pediatric vision screening. “I wanted to take our award-winning research into the communities to help Ohioans, and OSU Extension was the perfect match because of its mission and its presence in every county.”

Funded by the National Eye Institute and OSU Cares, the program — titled “Through the Eyes of a Preschooler: Envisioning the Future” — was piloted in three counties representing urban, suburban, and rural populations: Summit, Shelby, and Henry.

OSU Extension educators recruited a community volunteer and five to six 4-H members in each county to be trained and certified by College of Optometry experts, after which the trainees held a one-day screening session for local preschoolers.

Pam Leong, an OSU Extension family and consumer sciences educator who assisted with the pilot in Shelby County, said she was impressed by the dedication and quality of the 4-H volunteers who participated in the training.

“They are giving so much of their limited spare time and are just thrilled to be a part of such a valuable community service,” she pointed out, adding that the teens are already committed to doing more screenings at a local manufacturer’s health fair, at a preschool, and for a home-schooling group.

Jackie Krieger, a 4-H educator and director of the Summit County office of OSU Extension, said she has been receiving calls from more 4-H members

wishing to assist with screenings and from preschools requesting their services. “I have offered my colleague in Portage County the opportunity to join us in this important work. We never want the vision screening equipment we received to sit in our office unused,” she said.

Unused it won’t be. Schmidt is planning to refine the program and make this model available for wide distribution to train lay people and educate communities about the importance of effective vision screenings. And OSU Extension will be an integral part of this work.



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