

# Extension 'Cord

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## Connecting People, Resources, & Knowledge

"Welcome to the Extension 'Cord, a monthly briefing paper from WSU Snohomish County Extension. Even though we have existed for over 100 years, we have realized that too many people are unaware of the diversity and impact of our programs. Each issue will highlight the purpose, activities and results of one particular program. The 'Cord will showcase the work of our 1,000 volunteers and 25 staff. Please do not hesitate to contact any of our staff for more information."

Curt Moulton, Extension Director



Snohomish County Food \$ense team



## FOOD \$ENSE – Helping Youth, Adults and Families Eat Healthy and Be Active

**FOOD \$ENSE is WSU Extension's nutrition education program** for children, adults and families with limited incomes. It is funded by a collaborative effort of USDA Food and Nutrition Service's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Washington State University Extension, Snohomish County Human Services and 32 local school and agency partners in Snohomish County.

**FOOD \$ENSE** provides nutrition education through seven trained nutrition educators who have a passion for what they do each day in schools and agencies throughout the county. And they are good at what they do.

"I have heard my students talking to each other about their snacks. They are bragging to each other about whose snack is the healthiest and why," says one 3rd Grade Teacher at Discovery Elementary.



Experiential learning techniques and science-based information engage the audience and motivate them to eat better and exercise more.

**FOOD \$ENSE** targets prevention of chronic health issues:

- Teaching informed food choices and physical activity to promote healthy weight and reduce risk of chronic disease by consuming more fruits and vegetables, choosing a variety of nutrient dense foods and serving appropriate portion sizes.
- Improving food security for low-income individuals and families as participants learn food resource management skills.

In 2009, 1354 youth were served by the program. Most were enrolled in a 6, 12 or 14 lesson series determined by their grade level as a part of school enrichment programs. The remaining youth were taught through a Boys and Girls club after school program. Evaluations indicated that 61% of the youth ate more fruits and vegetables every day, 77% were washing their hands before preparing foods and 69% increased physical activity to 60 minutes most days of the week.

The adult program enrolled 202 adults in a series of nutrition lessons. The Everett Community Justice Center, Early Childhood Education and Parents Program (ECEAP) family nights and Women Infants and Children's (WIC) Clinics played key roles in this adult nutrition education outreach. Of the adults who completed the series of lessons, 52% of the participants improved in one or more nutrition practices.

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**The Salad Bar Challenge** is a unique and fun way to measure behavior change with youth. 4th and 5th Grade students participate in a pre and a post salad bar challenge. This activity challenges students to try 20 bite-sized pieces of fruits and vegetables. At that post challenge in the Spring, the student surveys show that they are more willing to try all the fruits and vegetables and their approval rating of the fruits and vegetables has increased. The students take home a hand-out with color pictures and information about the fruits and vegetables they have tried so they can show their parents and can eat their favorites at home. Feedback from students, parents, and teachers tell us that this happen in their homes.

We hear how **Food \$ense has changed behaviors** most every day. For example, a 3rd Grade girl who was challenged with weight issues, learned how to make a pyramid parfait with yogurt, fruit, and low fat granola. She told us that she had a birthday party and instead of having cake and ice cream each birthday party guest made their own parfait and they all thought it was cool. She recognized it was a healthier choice.

One of the adult participants from the Everett Community Justice Center shared that one evening all he had to eat was a can of beans. So he knocked on his roommates doors and suggested that they combine what little food they had and make a collaborative meal. They ended up with a great soup and some cornbread that fed the whole house of six. He told our educator that before taking her class he would not have thought about doing something like this and would have just eaten the beans from the can.

Though many of the outcomes of our program are obvious such as increased fruit and vegetable consumption, saving money and wiser food choices, in the long- term, we are striving to help create a generation of adults and families who will be more healthy, more fit, more self-sufficient and less dependent upon the health system and food programs.



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