



Pima County Extension Service aide Mini Fragoso (right) discusses nutritious snack foods with Tucsonan Rosalie Yecas and her children, Irma and Mario, in Yecas' kitchen.

42 nutritional education aides teach Arizona families to eat better cheaper

The University of Arizona makes house calls.

In individual and small-group sessions, usually in a client family's kitchen, UA Extension aides teach ways to choose and use nutritious, economical foods.

One week's lesson may be about what vitamin C does and what foods it is in. The next may focus on low-cost foods that are high in protein. Some client families learn to grow food in a backyard or container garden. Nutrition education stresses getting a variety of foods daily from the basic food groups: fruits and vegetables; breads and cereals; dairy products; and meat, eggs, beans and nuts.

The 42 aides in the Expanded Food and Nutrition Program (EFNEP) taught series of such lessons to 1,957 Arizona family homemakers in fiscal

1980. In addition, 3,626 nine- to thirteen-year-olds participated in 4-H nutrition programs that are also part of EFNEP. Maricopa, Pima, Pinal, Santa Cruz and Yuma counties have adult EFNEP programs. Just Maricopa and Pima have 4-H EFNEP.

EFNEP is designed to serve lower-income families. "They can be difficult to reach through other educational methods, but are often the people who can benefit most from this type of information," said State EFNEP Coordinator Beryl Burt, a home economics specialist with the UA Cooperative Extension Service. Evaluations show that the lessons do lead to changes in food habits that are thrifty and healthy.

The Cooperative Extension Service in each county also offers other programs, such as free publications and the popular

Homemakers Clubs, that bring much of the same information to families who do not meet income guidelines for EFNEP.

Door-to-door

Clients in the adult EFNEP program are all homemakers who are raising families. "In families with young children, we have the chance for real impact by improving the children's nutritional habits while they are young," said Billie Mauntel, one of three Extension home economists who supervise Pima County EFNEP.

Some EFNEP client families are referred to the program by health clinics or school nurses who notice nutritional problems, or by other service agencies. Most are enrolled by aides who go door-to-door in their neighborhoods or become known by word of mouth.

"The paraprofessional aides are the key to the program," said Burt. "Most of them are recruited from the neighborhoods they serve. They share an understanding of the community and cultural background with client families."

Through repeated meetings, the aides get to know each family personally. Mauntel noted, "You can't begin to teach until you develop that rapport. The family has to believe you're there to help them and not to judge them."

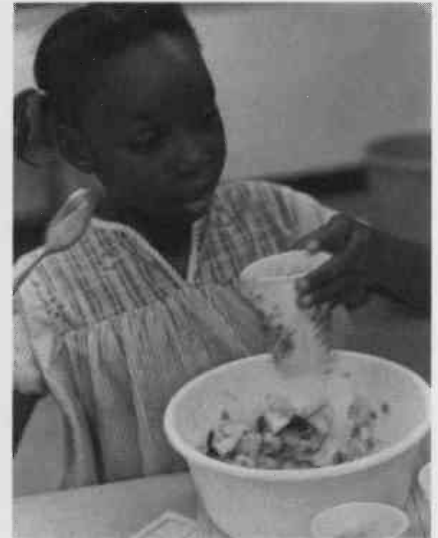
Marie Ramon, who lives near Stanfield in western Pinal County, is glad that EFNEP Aide Hiawatha Vance, a neighbor, came to her door one day and explained the program to Ramon and her married daughter. Vance was a client herself before becoming an aide. Sometimes she gives individual lessons to Ramon and her daughter at their home. Other times, a few neighbors get together for a lesson at Vance's home. Ramon said she likes the group lessons better.

Lessons for both adult and 4-H EFNEP usually include preparation of a food that is nutritious and

economical. That food serves as an illustration for a basic nutrition concept for the day.

For a group lesson at Vance's house in August, the basic concept was that certain foods with incomplete protein can be combined into a meal that has complete protein, that is, protein with all the essential amino acids. Lentils and rice complement each other in this way. Lentils are available to many low-income families in the area through the USDA commodity foods program. Vance and Pinal County Extension Home Economist Darcy Wymore showed the group how to make a lentil and rice casserole flavored with onions, garlic, carrots and cheese.

When vitamin C was the lesson topic at a weekly 4-H nutrition club meeting at C.J. Jorgenson School in South Phoenix this summer, the five youngsters and their volunteer leader made a fresh fruit cup mixture of oranges, apples, bananas and lemon juice. They also drew pictures of vitamin C foods and told which ones they had eaten in the preceding week.



Crystal Baker, 9, serves fruit salad during a 4-H lesson at Jorgenson School in Phoenix.

Backup for Aides

Extension home economists train new EFNEP aides in nutrition and in teaching methods. Continuing in-service training for all aides provides them with up-to-date nutritional and food-buying information, personalized help for teaching specific clients with unusual needs, and ideas for timely lessons. For

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Hiawatha Vance, EFNEP aide in Pinal County, dishes out a casserole that illustrated a lesson about protein. County Home Economist Darcy Wymore (left) and volunteer Alice Manuel (rear) helped lead the lesson at Vance's Stanfield-area home. Participants included Juanita James (right) and Marie Ramon.



While corn was in season this year, Yuma County EFNEP aide supervisor Adelina Daniel (right) taught aides how to make green corn tamales.

example, during green corn season in Yuma this summer, aide supervisor Adelina Daniel showed other aides how to make green corn tamales with various fillings.

Besides the paraprofessional aides, EFNEP in Arizona depends heavily on volunteer group leaders.

"We were told when we started that you can't get low-income people to volunteer, but we have lots of volunteers working with EFNEP in their own communities," said Burt.

Volunteer Alice Manuel helped Hiawatha Vance with the lesson about protein combinations. Maricopa County's 4-H EFNEP has about 100 volunteer group leaders, including about 75 working in their own communities. About one-third of them are teenagers, the rest adults.

Teen volunteer Shaunda Walters of Phoenix explained why she spends time teaching groups of 8- to 12-year olds about good eating: "It's fun. You feel good knowing that you're teaching them something that's worthwhile." She often gets the older club members to help her teach the younger ones.

Crystal Chambers, 16, has led one Phoenix 4-H group that learned about growing vegetables, and four that studied foods. She says of her

club members, "I was in it when I was their age, and I enjoy leading them now so they can learn what I have."

The 4-H EFNEP clubs teach members more than nutrition and plant-growing, said Maricopa County 4-H agent Marifloyd Hamil: "This 4-H program has given many inner-city youths their first opportunity to have a club experience, to participate in a group, to name their group, to elect officers and to carry



Phoenix 4-H teen leader Crystal Chambers discusses the need for milk with club members Jeff and Elena Pablo.

out leadership responsibilities." Many young people who have entered 4-H via EFNEP have gone on to other 4-H project areas or attended 4-H summer camp.

Lesson Content

The content of EFNEP lessons has changed over the years to mesh with other federal anti-hunger programs. Burt said, "When people started receiving food stamps instead of USDA commodity foods, the EFNEP lessons started to focus more on the buying of food rather than the use of specific commodities." Commodity foods are still distributed on some reservations in Arizona. Many EFNEP client families receive neither stamps nor commodities.

Other topics treated in EFNEP lessons include sanitation, food storage and preservation, nutritious snacks, planning of balanced meals, and differences among family members' needs.

Many low-income families who stand to benefit from nutrition education need other types of assistance, too. Referrals to other agencies are an important part of the program. Some referrals are to another Cooperative Extension Service program that employs paraprofessional aides as teachers, the Home Management Service. This



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A Phoenix 4-H foods club, led by Wanda Sanders and Shaunda Walters (upper left and right) celebrates completion of a 10-week series of lessons.

program for low-income families teaches nutrition and food-buying skills, too, but goes further. It offers information about health, home repairs, clothes making and mending, child development, budgeting money and time, and other dollar-stretching skills.

Some EFNEP aides, on their own

time, help clients with problems that are not directly related to nutrition.

Sonia Mills, a Yuma County EFNEP aide for the past four years, works with about 40 families in the Gadsden area. She visits each homemaker one to four times a month. For various families, she has helped arrange an adoption, settled

disputes, gotten electrical service started, and provided transportation to service agencies.

Last year, rents were raised without proper advance notice at the deteriorating "Blue Camp" public housing project. More than half of the 20 to 25 tenant families were Mills' clients at the time. She and eight tenants went to the next city council meeting to protest the rent hike. Told to return at the next council meeting, they came back with twice as many tenants. The rent increase was stopped. Even though rents were raised two months later, the increase was smaller than originally announced, and was accompanied by some minor repairs. The tenants, including one 18-year resident of the project, felt that they had won a partial victory, or at least made themselves heard for the first time.

Tenant Rosafina Lopez said that she and the others would not have brought the rent complaint to the authorities if not for Mills' encouragement.



Sonia Mills, EFNEP aide in the Somerton and Gadsden area, visits with former client Elida Aguirre and daughter Aida.

Effects on Diet

"I'm always trying to make people aware of their rights," said Mills. "On the surface, these things may not have anything to do with nutrition, but when you're dealing with people's money and jobs, these affect how much they have left to spend on food."

A former client of hers, Elida Aguire, said that the education about standing up for rights is as important as the nutritional education.

In Tucson, EFNEP aide Rachel Arreola, also working on her own time, helped organize meetings two years ago in the San Antonio barrio she serves. Residents were upset that their schoolchildren had to cross an arroyo to reach a school-bus stop. Besides the problem of occasional water in the gully, the site attracted transients. Residents sought and got a change in bus routing. Their meetings began again this summer to consider other neighborhood issues.

In another type of spinoff, youngsters in several Phoenix 4-H



Phoenix 4-H'er Rodney Samuel won a blue ribbon at State 4-H Roundup for a sub sandwich demonstration.

EFNEP clubs planted iris bulbs to beautify the grounds around community centers and homes.

This type of community involvement increases the aides' effectiveness with their clients, but EFNEP's real successes are in improved food habits rather than community development. Aides in the adult EFNEP program keep extensive documentation about each client family. The records include listings of the new food-buying and food-using practices adopted by the client, plus 24-hour dietary recall questionnaires completed every six months.

Most clients show significant improvement and "graduate" out of the program in 18 months or less. Clients who are not making progress are referred to agencies oriented more toward direct service than education.

The record keeping is time consuming, but it does show the evidence for EFNEP's results: thousands of Arizona families eating meals that are both more nutritious and more economical than what they ate before.



Pima County Extension Home Economist Helen Underwood (right) gives a brief nutrition lesson at the Tucson food stamp distribution center. Food stamp recipients can find out about EFNEP at the center.