MU Extension offers a variety of nutrition education programs and materials for young children, adolescents, and adults. These programs can be used both in and out of school settings and most are designed to extend the lessons learned to the home as well. This month’s newsletter story highlights a few of these programs.

The Springfield YMCA, a Missouri Foundation for Health Healthy and Active Communities grantee, integrated Food from the Farm into its Summer Odyssey youth summer camp. This summer camp where youth participate for 12 hours per day for nine weeks is both fun and educational. YMCA early childhood educators incorporate Food from the Farm into other activities that support healthy eating, farm to school, and gardening. At the summer camp, educators provide two hours per week of instruction and activities using lessons from Food from the Farm program manuals.

Food from the Farm
Food from the Farm is a kindergarten farm to school program. Farm to school programs connect schools with local farmers, educate students about healthy eating and agriculture, increase the local farm economy and increase the nutritional value of school food.

MU Extension adapted Food from the Farm from The Food Trust’s Kindergarten Initiative. Food from the Farm helps students understand where their food comes from and encourages healthy eating. Kindergarten teachers spend two hours per week on direct teaching, lesson planning, and food tastings. Lesson content, rather than being taught separately, is integrated into the required kindergarten class work. As shown in the example of Springfield YMCA, this program is not limited to schools; components of Food from the Farm can be incorporated into activities and instruction wherever young people learn.

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Food from the Farm is more than just a nutrition education curriculum. It is a holistic program that features four main components: classroom lessons and activities, local fruit and vegetable tastings, trips to local farms, and parent involvement.

For eligible schools, food from local farms is provided by the Food from the Farm program. The school then prepares the food and serves it as tastings during class. Currently, eight schools in west central Missouri participate in this program.

Due to the limited fresh fruit and vegetable growing season in Missouri, students may taste local foods such as milk, yogurt, crackers and cheese during the winter months. They may also taste non-local fresh fruits and vegetables when local produce is not available. Food from the Farm includes lessons about local vs. non-local foods which complement these tastings.

Farm trips occur two times per school year, once in the spring and once in the fall. These trips enable students and parents to make connections with the farmer and see where and how food is grown. During a recent farm trip, students and parents got to describe the colors of the farm according to the season, visit the fields and high tunnels where vegetables are grown, and taste foods such as spaghetti squash and roasted pumpkin seeds.

Parent involvement is an important but challenging component of Food from the Farm. Since parents are not a captive audience at school, program coordinators use other strategies, such as having a booth at the annual back to school fair, to help make parents aware of Food from the Farm. Parents are also invited to participate in in-class cooking activities where fruits and vegetables are highlighted as main ingredients in the recipes. These activities emphasize three points; they help parents feel comfortable preparing fruits and vegetables, they show parents that kids will eat fruits and vegetables, and since students are also involved in the activities, they show parents that kids can help with food preparation.

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If you would like to have Food from the Farm in your school or organization, please contact Annette Triplett (triplettan@missouri.edu or 573-882-2428). This program is currently funded through the USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Education funds, so MU Extension can only provide financial assistance to those schools which are eligible for SNAP Education. However, any school or organization with adequate nutrition education funding can incorporate Food from the Farm into its lesson or activity plan and can receive technical assistance from MU Extension nutrition educators.

**Early Sprouts**

Early Sprouts is another nutrition education program available through MU Extension. This pre-kindergarten gardening program developed by Keene State College researchers in New Hampshire, increases young children’s food preferences for six target vegetables (tomatoes, peppers, carrots, green beans, butternut squash and Swiss chard). The children help plant and harvest vegetables from a garden. Then they use their senses to get to know the vegetable without having to eat it. Finally, there is a cooking activity in which the kids help prepare a recipe featuring one of the six target vegetables and they get to eat what they prepared. As part of the program, each child takes the recipe and the ingredients to prepare it home to their parents, who are asked to prepare the recipe again. Early Sprouts will be taught in Kansas City and Boone County Head Start centers.

**Kids in the Kitchen**

This curriculum encourages young people to eat healthier meals and snacks as a result of hands-on cooking experience. Young participants learn to prepare simple, healthy foods they can make for themselves and their family members. The curriculum has three levels: Level A—6 to 9 year olds, Level B—10 to 12 year olds and Level C—13 to 15 year olds.

The Springfield YMCA is using lessons from Kids in the Kitchen in its summer programs. Dana Rust, with the Springfield YMCA said, “Our kids have really enjoyed these lessons.” Since mid-June, 500 kids per day have been taking part in the YMCA summer programs.


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MU Extension Offers Nutrition Education Programs and Materials (continued from page 3)

Show Me Nutrition

Show Me Nutrition is a comprehensive nutrition curriculum that teaches youth from preschool through junior high how to have a healthy lifestyle. The curriculum supports Missouri’s Show Me Educational Standards (adapted from the National Health Standards) and supports grade level expectations for math and communication arts, where appropriate. Several important health themes such as nutrition, food safety, physical activity, media influence and body image, are taught in each grade level and the grade levels are designed for continuity. Age-appropriate content, activities and handouts make learning about healthy eating fun for students in all grade levels. The preschool through fifth grade curricula include family newsletters that help family members and caregivers support learning at each grade level. Each curriculum includes handouts to reinforce lesson content with families and caregivers. More information is available through the MU Extension Publications website: http://extension.missouri.edu/publications/DisplayPub.aspx?P=smn100.

Many schools in Missouri qualify to have MU Extension nutrition educators teach both Kids in the Kitchen and Show Me Nutrition curricula at no charge. To find out more, please contact a member of the MU Extension Implementation Team.

*Special thanks to Annette Triplett, MU Extension, for her contributions to the text and photos about Food from the Farm and Early Sprouts. Descriptions of Kids in the Kitchen and Show Me Nutrition are courtesy of MU Extension Publications.

**MFH Healthy & Active Communities—Implementation Team**

**Purpose:**
The MU Extension Implementation Team provides grantees with assistance in implementing project activities. They are available by phone and email and for meetings in your community to provide program implementation support. Types of assistance might include: program specific assistance on topics such as worksite wellness, farm to school, and starting and sustaining community gardens; recruiting participants for community initiatives; fostering organizational buy-in and support; effectively engaging policy makers; and strategies to build community-partnerships to ensure program sustainability.

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