

# Nation-Wide Nutrition Education Program Celebrates 50 Years

**Paula Scott**

**02/22/2019**



February 22, 2019

The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), a nation-wide community nutrition education program, celebrates 50 years of operation this year.

The program is administered by the USDA and National Institute of Food and Agriculture and currently provides services in all 50 states via the land-grant university system. Utah's program is in cooperation with USU Extension under the direction of Paula Scott, Extension associate professor.

EFNEP provides free lessons to families on the basics of food and nutrition, food buying skills, meal planning, food safety and food resource management.

"Today, more than ever, people like to know what they are eating and where it comes from," Scott said. "Knowledge is good. Research has shown that nutrition education programs can lead to healthier food choices.

From 2017-2018, EFNEP peer educators in Utah provided nutrition education to 4,108 youth, 705 adults and 2,842 family members.

Of the adult participants, more than 85 percent showed improvement in food resource management practices, such as planning meals, comparing food prices and sticking to a food budget. More than 96 percent improved in nutrition practices, such as making healthy food

choices, reading nutrition labels and eating breakfast. Eighty-three percent of children and youth improved their abilities to choose foods according to Federal Dietary Recommendations.

"A strong nutrition education program benefits our state's health, as well as the economy," Scott said. "Poor diet and obesity among Americans has been a concern for many years. Providing nutrition education interventions designed to help participating families serve more nutritious meals affordably is a key factor in preventing obesity."

EFNEP is designed to help audiences with limited resources acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and changed behavior necessary for nutritionally sound diets. The program places emphasis on parents and other adult caregivers who have primary responsibilities of feeding young children, as well as specialized programs for moms-to-be and new parents. It also contains a youth component for ages 5 -19.

For more information about the Utah EFNEP, visit <https://utahefnep.org/>.

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