

IMPACT

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Boise's Mobile Van Program reaches EFNEP youth

The Situation

Boise Mayor Dave Bieter was concerned with the city's rising childhood obesity rates and a growing population of refugee youth. He met with parks and recreation officials who wanted to reach groups of youth from low-income homes who lived in distant neighborhoods without easy access to parks or recreation programs. They wanted to reach the youth with a traveling after-school program. With financial help from the Mayor's office, the parks department purchased and outfitted a van with sports equipment, but they lacked the funds to staff it fulltime. At the same time the supervisor of the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) understood the growing obesity problem. She also noted the increasing number of refugee youth, while struggling to reach them with EFNEP's 4-H nutrition program. EFNEP funding provided only one half-time employee and nutrition education supplies; another avenue was needed to reach this new EFNEP audience.

Our Response

A September news article announced the launch of the Mobile Van Program. The article spurred the EFNEP supervisor to meet with the superintendent of the parks and recreation department; they recognized that they had similar problems and similar goals. The Boise Parks and Recreation Department formed a formal partnership with the University of Idaho Extension-EFNEP; it began the following March. Today the partnership provides joint funding for one full time employee to manage the Mobile Van Program and money for nutrition education materials. Nutritious snacks are donated by the Freedom Resource Center, a local non-profit. Michigan State University Extension's *Jump into Foods and Fitness* curriculum supplies the research-based nutrition education lessons and suggested physical activities.



Mobile Van Program youth. Photo by K. Maloney

Program Outcomes

During FY2008 the Mobile Van Program reached 2,129 youth. Males made up 53%; females made up 47%. Ages ranged from pre-kindergarten to grade 10. Results from the EFNEP reporting system showed that short and simple nutrition messages encouraged the youth to try a new food each week; 34% of the youth now eat a variety of foods.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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