Idaho Food and Nutrition Program Dispels Confusion About Childhood Obesity

The Situation
In 1997, grant money was received from the Food Stamp Program to teach nutrition, food buying, and resource management to limited income families in Power County. The Food Stamp Grant Program in Idaho is called Idaho Food and Nutrition Program (IFNP). The IFNP sometimes finds families confused as to how to feed their families nutritionally within their means. Food related problems such as childhood obesity create more confusion. Both of these issues can cause family mealtime stress.

Our Response
Nancy and Jim signed on the IFNP after learning that the program had some suggestions for helping families with obese children. Their 8-year-old daughter Jennifer had weight problems and they were concerned.

The IFNP Nutrition Advisor learned that Nancy and Jim both worked at grocery stores in their town. They often were so exhausted after work that they bought dinner at the local deli. This habit was taking a large part of their paychecks, and the food choices they were making at the deli were high in calories and fat. Another problem was bringing home outdated potato chips that were “free”. They learned this was “false economy” for them because the chips were high in fat, sodium and calories that they didn't need.

After taking the IFNP lessons they learned to plan ahead with easy menus. They also got their shopping done each week so they had what they needed on hand. This made the evening meal easier to prepare at home. They could control the calorie and fat content as well as control the cost of the meal.

The Nutrition Advisor shared ideas with the family on how they could have relaxed non-critical family meals with their obese daughter. With encouragement they came up with these additional ideas: 1) only prepare as much food as they need to be healthy; 2) involve the entire family in fun sports; and 3) involve the entire family in growing a garden.

Achievements
When the family graduated from the program they were diligently working on their goals. They have had good success so far with their garden and family activities. Jennifer has grown taller without gaining weight.

The Future
IFNP will continue to apply for food stamp grant money to work with limited income families in Idaho who are not reached by other nutrition related programs.
For More Information

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