

Health and Nutrition from the Garden

Issue:

Youth who participate in summer camps in Indianapolis should have a safe place to spend the summer, a stimulating environment and the opportunity to learn. Youth in Indianapolis are also at risk for what researchers are calling "nature deficit" where kids do not get to play outdoors, nor experience nature and gardening. Lastly, youth are at risk for overweight/obesity and diabetes because they do not eat a healthy diet nor do they get adequate exercise.

Extension response :

Using the Junior Master Gardener curriculum, Health and Nutrition from the Garden, we reached 82 youth (34 boys and 48 girls) ages 6-10 in 5 different summer camps. The five participating camps were Pike YMCA, Mary Rigg Center, Hawthorne Center, and Loving Care - College Park School. The youth (45% Caucasian, 18% African American, and 14%Hispanic) learned about gardening and plants as they fit into MyPyramid. Through fun interactive activities such as the Hamburger Plant, youth identified the plant components of a food such as a hamburger with cheese: bread = grains; pickle= cucumber; ketchup = tomatoes, cheese = milk = cow = hay or grains. The youth also learned about food safety and proper harvesting and cleaning of fruits and vegetables. Daily physical activity, sixty minutes per day, was also reinforced and gardening was stressed as being a great way to get active. Lastly, youth learned about diverse fruits and vegetables and which parts of a plant they belong to. For example, asparagus are the stems while peas, beans and corn are the seeds.

Impact:

Pre- and post-surveys were administered at four of the five participating camps. Data was not matched. Overall there was a 57% increase in knowledge with average pre-test score of 30% and average post-test score of 70%. There was a >90% increase in knowledge to what JMG stands for: Just clean the surface; Make sure to wash your hands; and Garden veggies should be rinsed before eating. Also, to the multiple choice question where the youth matched fruit/veggie to correct plant part, the kids who were evaluated increased in knowledge by 49% with a 42% increase in overall score (pre- compared to post-test scores).

Partners:

Pike YMCA
Mary Rigg Center
Hawthorne Center
Loving Care - College Park

Contact:

Christina Ferroli, Ph.D., RD
Purdue Extension - Marion County
6640 Intech Blvd., Ste 120
Indianapolis, IN 46278
Ferroli@purdue.edu

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