

Extension provides nutrition education at Lewiston's health clinic

The Situation

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, a person is considered uninsured if they are not covered by any type of health insurance for the entire year. In Nez Perce County in 2010, 16 percent of the population under age 65 had no health insurance coverage. From that group, 8.4 percent were children under the age of 19.

The Snake River Community Clinic (SRCC) in Lewiston is a non-profit, free medical clinic for people who are uninsured, have a low income, and are not provided for through private insurance, Medicare, or Medicaid. They are the "working poor" – the minimum wage workers who are trying to provide food and shelter for their families but do not have employer-provided health benefits or money for health insurance or medical care. The SRCC serves a population of 2,330 patients from north central Idaho, southeast Washington, and northeast Oregon.

Families with low income often focus on quantity rather than quality of food. The goal concerning food is getting enough rather than getting the best. Fast foods and high fat foods are readily available and inexpensive sources of energy. Making healthy food choices is difficult on a very limited budget. Nutrition education is critical to encourage better alternatives for limited income families.

Our Response

In July 2010, the Nutrition Advisor from the Extension Nutrition Program (ENP) in Nez Perce County provided an on-site Health Education Series at the clinic. Thirty-five patients, including six patients with diabetes, were able to participate in workshops titled Fiber and Food Labeling, High vs. Low Saturated Fat Options, How much sugar are you drinking?, and 10 steps to a healthier me.



Mackenzie Femreite, Nez Perce County Extension Nutrition Advisor, distributes fresh vegetables.

Program Outcomes

After attending the Health Education Series, participants completed a short anecdotal questionnaire to assess their learning. Respondents identified characteristics of healthy foods as those that are fresh, high in vitamins and fiber, and low in fat and sugar. They reported the importance of eating healthy foods to help control blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar levels. They also reported a better understanding of reading food labels and how to use the information to make better nutritional choices to feed themselves and their families.

References

Snake River Community Clinic, <http://www.srcc-freeclinic.org>.

University of Idaho Indicators Northwest, <http://www.indicatorsnorthwest.org>.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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