

IMPACT

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Plots for Tots; preschoolers learn about healthy food from their school garden

AT A GLANCE

Engaging young children in growing and learning about their food increase their knowledge of healthy choices and trying new foods.

The Situation

Getting young children to eat healthy can sometimes be a challenge. Obesity among preschoolers (ages two to five) is at 8.4 percent (Center for Disease Control, 2012). Gardening can be a good way to increase the likelihood that youth will eat vegetables (Wansink, Banks, and Just; 2015). Combining gardening and cooking education can teach preschoolers important nutrition information and encourage healthy eating, combating childhood obesity.

Our Response

In 2015, Precious Cargo Early Learning Center in Salmon, Idaho received a grant to install a raised bed garden and do gardening education with youth both at the center and in the community. Center director, Shanda Fitte, reached out to extension to enrich the program with a farm to table program called "Plots for Tots." Fifteen center youth, ages three to five, participated in growing fruits and vegetables throughout the growing season and five Plots for Tots lessons. The lessons included collection of produce from the garden, preparation of a simple recipe and a nutritional lesson.

Program Outcomes

Ten youth completed the post survey interview administered two months after the final lesson. Of those youth, 100 percent reported that they like eating foods they grow and plan on trying new foods. Fifty percent of the youth surveyed said they had made



Youth gather beets to prepare for their rainbow hummus

the recipes presented in the lessons. In topic specific data, seventy percent of youth recalled a "green light" or nutritious drink and fifty percent could name a "red light" or non-nutritious drink. Ninety percent of youth could name a fruit they ate and sixty percent could name a vegetable. Thirty percent could name a vitamin found in their vegetables. Results showed youth retained information from lessons and were willing to try new foods and recipes.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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