

Making a Difference 2011

Helping Hockley County Residents Eat Better and Safer Relevance

In Hockley County, an estimated 9,526 have incomes that are 185% of poverty or below; 3,249 or 15% receive food stamp benefits. Research has shown that individuals who live in poverty have dietary intakes that are not congruent with current recommendations from the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. This audience, like many, may not recognize their risk for foodborne illness. Stretching resources so food is available throughout the month is also a challenge.

Food safety education is a critical prevention component for reducing the risk of foodborne diseases. Texas AgriLife Extension addresses this need by offering the Certified Food Manager program called *Food Safety, It's Our Business*. The course is designed for foodservice employees and managers. In 2011, Extension began a national exam which is the Accredited Certified Professional Food Manager Exam.

Response

The Better Living for Texans (BLT) - During 2010-11, 29 Hockley County adults participated in three **BLT 3-lesson** series: "Get the Facts"-17; "Three Easy Bites"-9; and "Don't Get Bugged"-3. This program is a cooperative endeavor among the Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), and Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) of USDA. It focuses on meal planning, stretching food dollars, and adopting selected behaviors that can reduce the risk of foodborne illness. BLT is delivered through a variety of teaching methods that reflect audience needs. Teaching methods include, lesson series, single-shot programs, or one to one consultations. The programs were presented by Program Assistant, Kimberlee Kuhlert and me, the FCS Agent. The programs were at Texas Work Source, Head Start, Senior Citizens Centers, South Plains Community Action, Senior Champions Group and Carver Learning Center-Migrant Workers in the county during the 2010-2011 year.

Food Protection Management – To promote the goal of serving safe food, food managers and handlers in Hockley County were offered the *Food Safety, It's Our Business* 16 hour course. This course is followed by an approved Department of State Health Services exam. Hockley County also offered a two hour food handler program, *Food Safety; It's in Your Hands* to food service employees.

FCS agents in Cochran, Hockley and Lamb counties host the course three times a year so that the *Food Safety, It's Our Business* course is offered approximately every four months in the tri-county area. In the process of administering the course, we collaborated on media and marketing, teaching, testing and notification of results. Hockley County offered two 16 hour courses in February (7-8) and November (14-15) that reached 8 people.

- Cochran 2-day FPM Class – June 6-7, 2011
- Lamb 2-Day FPM Class – October 24-25, 2011

In addition, three classes of *Food Safety, It's in Your Hands* reached 30 students at Levelland High , ten (10) students at Middle School and four (4) clients at countywide class in 2-hour Food Handlers course.

Results

Better Living for Texans – The three **3-lesson** series: “Get the Facts”-17; “Three Easy Bites”-9; and “Don’t Get Bugged”-3 were conducted via the use of a pre, post, and 30 day follow-up survey for 29 participants. Twenty-nine completed the pre and post surveys. Ten of those participants completed the pre, post and 30 day follow-up. Most participants were female (19) and Hispanic (4) and Caucasian (25). The average age of participants was 61 years; average household size was 3.5. WIC and SNAP (food stamps) were the programs used most often by participants.

Most participants were following the targeted food resource management behavior either “always” or “sometimes” when they entered the BLT program. Ten used unit pricing as a means to save money. After the program ended there was noted increase in the percentage of participants who intended to practice learned behaviors (“always”) by a majority of the participants. Thirty days later, the percentage of clients practicing these behaviors “always” had dropped, but it was higher than reported when the program first began. This was done by analyzing the data of the 10 of the 29 participants who completed the pre, post and 30 day follow-up surveys.

In the area of targeted food safety practices at entry into the BLT program, 25 to 29 (86%) majority were following most food safety practices. There was a slight drop in the percentage of individuals (from 95.8% to 93.8%) who intended to “always” wash cutting boards and other kitchen utensils after cutting up raw meat or poultry immediately after the program.

34% (n=10) of the respondents reported that BLT was their first exposure to Texas AgriLife Extension. This suggests that the program is reaching new audiences. Of the 10 who could be contacted 30 days after the program, 8 (80%) rated the BLT program as “excellent” and another 2(20%) rated it “good”. Other program totals (one shot) in BLT for 2010-11 is 920 participants.

Food Protection Management- The following are results from the food manager and food handler’s courses for 2011: *Food Safety, It’s Our Business* (CFM). A traditional pre-post evaluation strategy was used to assess how knowledge of food safety concepts and recommended practices changed among attendees as a result in participating in the program. A 20-item instrument was developed to test participants’ knowledge of the content that was covered by the program. Twenty (20) from the three locations during the year completed the test before the program, and then completed the same test after the program. The difference between the 2 scores represented the change in knowledge. Overall, all participants (100%) gained knowledge – answering more questions correctly on the posttest compared to the pretest. There was an 84% pass rate of the 20 participants in the four classes.

Food Safety, It’s in Your Hands (Food Handlers)

Five classes of the 2-hour FH course were given to Levelland High school students (3 classes) and 1 class at Middle School. One class was held at the County Office to general public. The first class was at the Middle school in February, and the second group of classes was at Levelland High School in May. There were a total of 46 participants in the FH course in Hockley County. Mean score pre (% of questions answered correctly): 9 (65%). Mean score post (% of questions answered correctly): 13 (85%) There was a statistically significant increase in test scores (comparing pre vs. post).

The results indicated that the program met its objective of increasing knowledge of food safety facts and recommended practices among program participants in Cochran, Hockley and Lamb Counties. We plan to continue this program in 2012.

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