
Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP)

# Testimony for the Record

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On behalf of the

Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP)

For The Hearing on the Past, Present, Future of SNAP:

Evaluating Effectiveness and Outcomes in Nutrition Education

Before

The United States House Committee on Agriculture

Wednesday, June 22, 2016

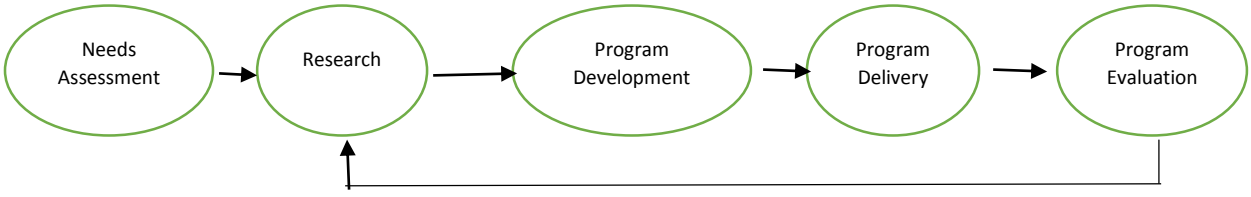
Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Peterson and members of the committee, it is an honor to be invited to testify before you today and submit testimony for the record on SNAP-Ed. Land-grant universities have a rich history with SNAP Education (SNAP-Ed). Beginning in 1988, SNAP-Ed was first delivered by University of Wisconsin Extension. By 1992, seven land-grant universities, via Extension, delivered SNAP-Ed programming and this number grew to 49 states and territories by 2002. Currently in FY2016, there are 49 land-grant universities/Cooperative Extension services providing SNAP-Ed, including both 1862 and 1890 institutions.

With the growth of Extension-lead SNAP-Ed programs, USDA NIFA established the SNAP-Ed Program Development Team (PDT) in 2001. This team includes Family and Consumer Science Program Leaders and other university administrators, SNAP-Ed Program Coordinators, an office manager, and a NIFA representative who are committed to improving the consistency and effectiveness of SNAP-Ed programming through Cooperative Extension in addressing national health and nutrition-related problems facing low-income populations. Each member serves a 2-3 year team. I served as a member of the PDT from 2006-2009.

The Land-Grant Mission and SNAP-Ed

Land-grant universities (LGUs), through Cooperative Extension, are uniquely positioned to serve as SNAP-Ed Implementing Agencies. First and foremost, Extension and the land-grant university has a primary educational mission. They are not a service provider. University faculty have the ability to translate research into educational programs and conduct program evaluation which informs future research. This creates a continuous quality assurance feedback loop. Annual community needs assessments also help shape programming that meets the SNAP participant where they are most receptive to engage in education. These activities are all part of what we call the Land-grant Mission and what Justin Morrill, Hoke Smith and Asbury Lever envisioned over one hundred years ago.

**Figure 1. Program Development Process**




With the passage of the Morrill Act of 1862 and 1890, land-grant universities were established in each state to provide greater access to higher education to the citizens with two primary missions—Research and Teaching. With the passage of the 1914 Smith-Lever Act, these institutions created a third mission, what is known as Extension. The Extension mission was designed to translate the university-generated research and teaching beyond the campus to farms and consumers. Extension was to be a cooperative

activity between the federal government (USDA), the states (via land-grant institutions) and county governments.[1]

The Ohio State University (OSU) SNAP-Ed, in collaboration with Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) and Ohio Department of Health's Creating Healthy Communities Initiative, is currently demonstrating how land-grant universities can conduct research and translate it into educational interventions. This OSU-lead collaborative is working together to develop a tool that will help front line staff to determine what Policy, Systems, Environments (PSE) intervention a group or community is willing to undertake and be successful. The tool will take the interested group through an online questionnaire and depending on the question responses will determine the most reasonable intervention and provide online resources to guide implementation. OSU faculty recruited SNAP-Ed participants and SNAP-Ed staff for the core formative evaluation and have been engaged in the ongoing development of the tool. They also assisted with further refinement by engaging practitioners in farm to school, early child care, farmers markets and healthy corner stores. Given the statewide reach of OSU Extension, they were able to provide populations from a variety of environments rural, urban, and suburban. CWRU is providing their expertise in data analysis and tool construction. The tool questionnaire is now in the preliminary phases of testing and the website is being developed.

The Extension mission continues today being delivered across each state by a network of faculty, ensuring educational opportunities from the urban core to the most rural locations. These faculty are often referred to as agents, educators or specialists. In 2016, the PDT conducted a survey[2] of land-grant university SNAP-Ed faculty to determine what the qualifications and education those who provide SNAP-Ed programming have. Based on the results of 43 institutions reporting, a total of 3620 persons (2,269 FTE) work with SNAP-Ed. Although some individuals held multiple degrees, SNAP-Ed faculty and staff hold 754 bachelor degrees, 450 master's degrees and 54 PhDs in the areas of nutrition, health, physical activity and education. Two hundred thirty-four (234) held degrees in other fields. In addition, these individuals hold the following registrations or licensures: 209 registered and/or licensed dietitians, 85 state licensed nutritionists, 4 state licensed in physical activity and 32 other certifications. These individual roles are paraprofessional program delivery (54%); professional faculty/staff program delivery (30%); administration and budget (7%); program leadership (6%) and curriculum and support staff (3%).[3]

These educators deliver research- and evidence-based educational programs through both face-to-face and on-line delivery methods. They provide technical assistance to producers, consumers, communities and businesses. Extension faculty also work closely with local, regional and state service agencies and institutions to provide referrals, develop community plans, and to provide education to their clients. By doing so, Extension faculty are able to meet the needs of participants where they live, work, learn, play and pray.

University of Georgia Extension has developed "Food eTalk", an online eLearning nutrition education program designed to provide cost-effective and efficient nutrition education for low-income populations by capitalizing on trends in internet access and use as well as mitigating barriers to attending traditional face-to-face classes. "Food eTalk" is accessible to anyone with an internet connection. It is mobile

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[1] Colleges of Agriculture at Land-grant Universities. Chapter 2. History and Overview of the Land-grant System. http://www.nap.edu/read/4980/chapter/2. Accessed on 6/15/16

[2] Qualifications of Land Grant University Staff Delivering SNAP-Ed. Land Grant Program Development Team. June 15, 2016. Unpublished data.

friendly and designed to be taken at the user's pace and lessons do not have to be taken in a specific sequence. An extensive multi-year evaluation is underway currently, but clearly demonstrates how the Georgia Extension is meeting SNAP participants where they live and learn.[2]

University of Alabama Extension combined research and Extension efforts in the program development process when they developed and continue to evaluate their "Body Quest" program. Alabama Cooperative Extension first implemented the child obesity prevention program "Body Quest" in 1999, and since then program has become a 15-week, multi-level program aimed at reducing childhood obesity in third-graders through multiple delivery methods. In FY2015, the program was implemented to both a treatment and control group of students and their parents, which included social marketing, community coalitions, and parent and child engagement, among other things. The curriculum included materials and iPad applications with amine-style cartoon characters representing different healthy habits to help make the curriculum relatable to the children. By the end of the 15-week period, treatment students reported eating more fruits and vegetables offered through the School Lunch Program compared to the control group. Parents of the treatment group children were given easy to make and inexpensive recipes that incorporated more vegetables, and were given other information and tips through a texting initiative. A post-survey texting poll found that 100% of the parents who received the texts enjoyed them, and as a result treatment group parents found that their third-graders ate an increased amount of vegetables per day compared to the control group.[3]

Focused on Positive Behavior Change

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports that **more than one-third (34.9% or 78.6 million) of U.S. adults are obese and 17% (12.7 million) of U.S. children and adolescents (ages 2 to 19) suffer from obesity.** [4]

Data indicates that low-income individuals are more likely to be overweight and/or obese. Programs such as SNAP-Ed are critical to addressing the current obesity epidemic within the United States and trying to prevent these numbers from increasing with future generations.

The goal of SNAP-Ed is to improve the likelihood that persons eligible for SNAP will make healthy choices within a limited budget and choose active lifestyles consistent with the current Dietary Guidelines for Americans and MyPlate.[5]

While not the only SNAP-Ed implementers, LGUs have deep educational roots in communities across the United States. This infrastructure, coupled with the land-grant mission of providing practical, hands-on education, has provided an ideal partnership between SNAP and LGU's.[6] Research has shown that exposing children to hands-on activities with unfamiliar fruits and vegetables can increase a child's willingness to taste

[3] FY2015 Land-grant University SNAP-Ed data accessed from SNAP-Ed Program Development Team. 6/15/16

[4] http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/index.html

[5] http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-education-snap-ed

[6] Julie S. Sexton. "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education Through the Land-Grant University System for FY 2010: A Retrospective Review." Published January 2013. Funded by Cooperative Extension Service Directors/Administrators through National Land-Grant University SNAP-ED Assessment.

these foods.[7,8] By understanding the research and educational delivery methods, Extension SNAP-Ed programs can focus their efforts on positive behavior change.

Nationally, youth under the age of 18 is the greatest segment of the population to participate in SNAP-Ed programs. By targeting a youth audience allows SNAP-Ed influences behavior change earlier in life, promotes lifelong healthy habits, and helps to influence behavior of peers and family members. By adopting healthy eating and physical activity behaviors earlier in life, there is a greater likelihood of reducing risk of nutrition-related diseases and minimizing future healthcare costs.

| **Table 1. Age of Participants** | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **FY15 SNAP-ED[2]** | **FY14 SNAP[9]** |
| Under 5 Years | 7% | 13.9% |
| 5-17 Years | 67% | 30.3% |
| 18-59 Years | 19% | 45.6% |
| 60 Years & Older | 7% | 10.1% |

Extension SNAP-Ed programs are committed to providing education to a diverse audience. That audience reflects the SNAP participation within each community, state and the nation. Table 2 demonstrates how LGU SNAP-Ed programs serve racially and ethnically diverse audiences throughout the country.

| **Table 2. Race and Ethnic Diversity (46 States Reporting)[2]** | | |
|---|---|---|
| | SNAP-Ed Participants | US Population |
| **Race (2,398,271 reporting)** | | |
| American Indian or Alaska Native | 2.2% | 1.0% |
| Asian | 2.0% | 4.8% |
| African American | 19.8% | 12.6% |
| Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander | 0.5% | 0.2% |
| White | 69.8% | 72.4% |
| Other | 4.7% | 9.1% |
| Unknown | 0.9% | |
| **Ethnicity (2,386,463 reporting)** | | |
| Hispanic | 17.5% | 16.3% |
| Non-Hispanic | 81.4% | 83.7% |
| Other | 1.1% | |

[7] Dazeley P, Houston-Price C. Exposure to foods' non-taste sensory properties. A nursery intervention to increase children's willingness to try fruit and vegetables. Doi:10.1016/j.appet.2014.08.040. www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S019566314004486

[8] Dazaley P, Houston-Price C, Hill C. Should healthy eating programmes incorporate interaction with foods in different sensory modalities? A review of the evidence. The British Journal of Nutrition 108(5): 769-77. 2012.

[9] Distribution of SNAP/FSP participation by age and year. USDA Economic Research Service http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-(snap)/charts/snap-participants-by-age.aspx. Accessed 6/15/2015

Offering a Complement of Nutrition & Physical Activity Programs

Land-grant universities offer a complement of nutrition education programs. It is important to understand that, although an entity may deliver multiple programs via multiple funding sources, these programs are complementary and not duplicative. In addition, program funding mechanisms often vary.

For example, SNAP-Ed funds are distributed to state SNAP agencies. The state agency may retain a part or all of the funding. They may also choose to grant funding to one or more implementing agencies. States may elect to accept a multi-year scope of work but often approve only single year plans. Budgets are only allowed to be for a single year funding period with the ability to utilize the funding for a period of up to 24 months. When plans are for only a single year, program continuity and long-term evaluation becomes more difficult. Annual funding proposals can also lead to greater turnover or change in the type and number of implementing agencies within states.

In addition to SNAP-Ed, LGUs receive Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) funding through USDA NIFA. These Smith-Lever 3d funds are distributed as capacity funding. EFNEP began in 1968 and is conducted by all Cooperative Extension Services. EFNEP provides education utilizing a paraprofessional model in many states. EFNEP is grounded in direct education. On average a participant receives an average of 9 hours of instruction over 6-18 months utilizing evidence-based curricula. They must complete a series of standardized evaluation and dietary recalls prior to program graduation. EFNEP is designed to reach families with children in the home and low-income youth.

Extension faculty also utilize local, state, regional and national funding from federal, state, foundation and private sources to fund nutrition education opportunities. Each funding source can be used to complement and expand the body of knowledge and scope of an intervention. For example, University of Missouri SNAP-Ed conducts a social marketing campaign entitled "Live Like Your Life Depends on It." This campaign is targeted to adults' 35-years and older promoting healthy dietary and physical activity behaviors. This campaign utilizes billboards, radio and print media as well as posters and flyers to promote these messages. SNAP-Ed funding can only be utilized within geographic areas where 50% or greater of the population is at or below 185% of poverty. By leveraging their partnership with the Missouri Council on Activity & Nutrition (MOCAN) and its partner agencies, the message can be further replicated throughout the state in geographic areas where SNAP-Ed cannot fund this effort.

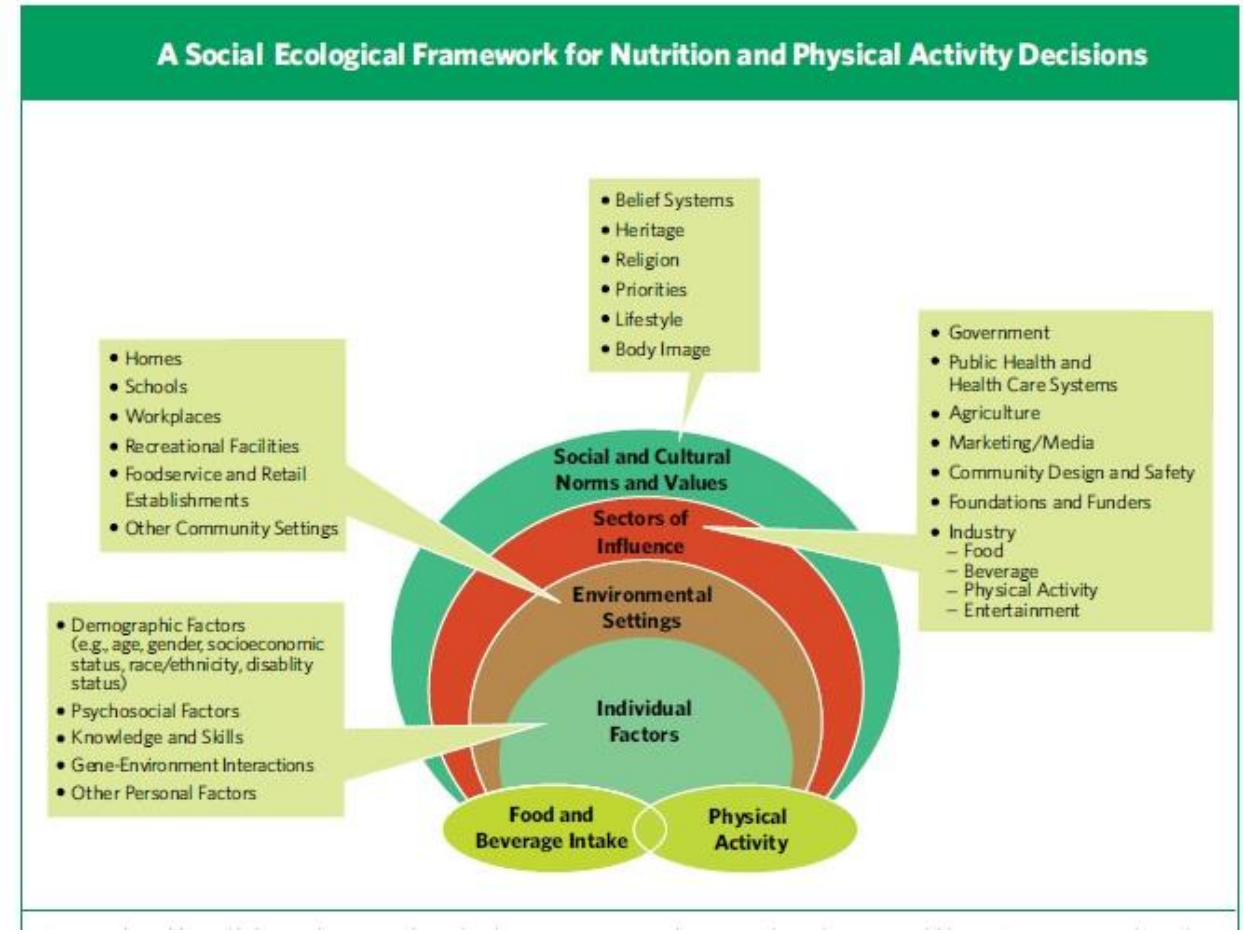
Improving SNAP Participants Lives and their Food Environments

Food insecurity affects 14.9% of American households, and rates are approaching 25% among black and Hispanic households. Nutritionally poor foods are often less expensive than healthful foods, and food insecurity is associated with poor diet quality and diet-sensitive diseases, including diabetes, hypertension, and hyperlipidemia. Food insecurity has also been associated with other behavioral factors related to chronic disease self-management and poor disease control. [10]

SNAP-Ed is the educational component of SNAP. SNAP is the nation's first line of defense against hunger and a powerful tool to improve nutrition among low-income people.[4] SNAP-Ed is designed to provide nutrition and physical activity education to SNAP recipients of all ages. While not having a specific food security goal or focus, SNAP-Ed supports SNAP's role in addressing food security.[4] SNAP-Ed

[10] Grilo SA, Shallcross AJ, Ogedegbe G, Odedosu T, Levy N, Lehrer S , et al. Food Insecurity and Effectiveness of Behavioral Interventions to Reduce Blood Pressure, New York City, 2012–2013. Prev Chronic Dis 2015;12:140368. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.5888/pcd12.140368.

is grounded in the Social Ecological Model (Figure 2)[11,12,13] which demonstrates that education and interventions must occur at the individual, policy, system and environmental level of a community. SNAP-Ed must now be delivered as a combination of direct education and either multi-level interventions and/or public health approaches. All curricula and interventions must be evidence-based, meaning they must be tested for validity and reliability. Simply put, SNAP-Ed is changing participants' health, lives, and their food environments.




Extension SNAP-Ed programs would all agree that they strive to do the following:

- Improve diet quality
- Increase physical activity
- Stretch food dollars. (avoid running out of money before the month ends)
- Increase healthy food access

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[11] What is the Social Ecological Model (SEM), Communication for Development (C4D)? www.unicef.org/cbsc/files/Module_1_SEM-C4D.docx. Accessed 6/16/16

[12] System, Environmental, and Policy Changes: Using the Social-Ecological Model as a Framework for Evaluating Nutrition Education and Social Marketing Programs with Low-Income Audiences. Journal of Nutrition Education. 2001. Vol 33(1): S4-S15

[13] Social Ecological Model. SNAP-Ed Plan Guidance. https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/national-snap-ed/snap-ed-plan-guidance-and-templates. Accessed 6/20/2016

"Better Living for Texans" (BLT) demonstrates how one evidence-based program may have several of these goals within itself. BLT is a statewide program serving 217 of 254 counties in Texas, and is aimed at helping educate how to eat healthier while saving money on their grocery bills. BLT offers educational classes, newsletters and other services with a goal of providing up-to-date nutritional advice to SNAP recipients so that these consumers will be able to make healthier food choices. The program has documented positive behavioral changes in its participants in many areas, including the ability to prepare nutritious family meals; improved food shopping skills; the ability to manage their food budget; increased physical activity levels and improved safe food handling practices.

Regardless of the state or the community, Extension faculty are working to meet the needs of SNAP-Ed participants where they live, work, learn, play and pray. Table 3 provides just a few of the sites where Extension SNAP-Ed programs are being delivered.

**Table 3. Delivery Sites Examples (not an exhaustive list)**

| Direct Education | Policy, Systems, Environments (PSE) |
|---|---|
| Community Centers | Farmer's Markets |
| Emergency Food Assistance Sites | School & Community Gardens |
| Churches | Retailers |
| Healthcare | Local Government Entities |
| Libraries | Food Producers |
| Retailers | Community Agencies |
| SNAP Offices | Healthcare |
| Worksites | Childcare Providers |
| Youth Program sites | Community Design Agencies |

Finally, I would like to leave you with a few examples of how SNAP-Ed delivered by a land-grant universities can make an impact on a local community as well as individual SNAP recipients.

The presence of SNAP-Ed in the Tracy, MN classrooms has led to a strategic partnership with others in the school district, such as school food service as well as the FFA chapter's community garden. Because the school district procures food directly from local producers, the SNAP-Ed educator was able to work with the school food service director to promote locally grown menu items to the students. Through a USDA grant that Tracy Schools received, they were able to install a walk-in freezer and cooler which allowed the district to purchase greater quantities of produce and created new markets for producers. In 2012, University of Minnesota SNAP-Ed evaluated these efforts impact on increasing fruit and vegetable consumption. Their results are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4. Tracy MN SNAP-Ed Fruit and Vegetable Intake Data**

| | Increased Fruit Consumption | Increased Vegetable Consumption |
|---|---|---|
| Grade 3 | 68% | 46% |
| Grade 4 | 57% | 29% |
| Grade 5 | 51% | 33% |
| Grade 6 | 64% | 41% |

In Lyon County, Kansas, the SNAP-Ed nutrition educator expanded the regularly offered nutrition classes by working with the local grocer to provide in-store healthy food demonstrations that correspond with the store's weekly sales circular. For many years, the store manager has provided discounts on purchases made for SNAP-Ed food demonstrations for nutrition classes. Now, the educator has been invited to conduct in-store demonstrations with an emphasis on proteins, fruit and vegetables. With the assistance of Kansas State University graphic artists, recipe card, menu and full sheet recipe templates have been created. These items can be localized to promote store-specific information. The grocer displays recipe cards with the sale items. The local school district also promote these recipes on its parent webpage. This community-wide support has resulted in 1) increased sales of featured items; 2) customers reporting replicating the recipes at home; 3) grocery staff also report making the recipes at home; and one person who indicated they were able to "cook something for dinner that wasn't frozen." The store manager summarized the project success "I am very happy with the (SNAP-Ed) partnership to provide informational resources for our community, in trying to make it a better place to live, work and raise a family."[14]

In Missouri, MU Extension faculty developed a number of programs for direct education as well as Policy, Systems and Environment (PSE) interventions.

"Show Me Nutrition" (SMN) is a comprehensive curriculum that teaches youth from preschool to junior high how to adopt a healthy lifestyle and make positive behavior changes. The curriculum supports both Missouri and national health education standards. Several important themes are taught at each grade level, such as nutrition, food safety, physical activity, media influence and body image. Each grade level is designed to be taught alone or promotes continuity for children as they are promoted through school. Age-appropriate content, activities and handouts make learning about healthy eating fun for students of all ages. The pre-school through fifth grade curricula include family newsletters that help engage family members and caregivers in supporting their child's education as well as replicating the recipes and physical activities at home. Each curriculum also includes handouts to reinforce each lesson.[15] "Show Me Nutrition" has been sold into 47 states and 3 foreign countries. As of FY2015, over 19% of Extension SNAP-Ed programs incorporated SMN into their program. Additional non-Extension SNAP-Ed Implementing Agencies also utilize the SMN curricula.

"Eating from the Garden" (EFG) is an MU-developed curriculum that combines direct education with PSE strategies. EFG provides research-based information to high needs youth in schools and community programs. Through nutrition education and gardening activities, EFG's goal is to increase consumption of fruits and vegetables as well as increasing local access to fresh produce. Each school or community program that participates is actively involved in the preparation and maintenance of the garden site. The local program also determines how the produce, in excess of food tastings, is utilized—sent home with participants, donated to emergency food sites, used to augment their food service program, or as part of a local farmer's market. One school worked with their nutrition educator to be referred back to the state SNAP agency to determine how they could accept EBT/SNAP benefits if they utilized the produce grown in a school-based farmer's market. The market would be held once a week during after-school pick-up so parents could select fresh produce to incorporate into their family's meal. Given a

[14] Lyon County Grocery Success. Kansas State University. Information submitted by Paula Peters. Received 6/17/16

[15] Show Me Nutrition. University of Missouri. http://extension.missouri.edu/p/SMN100. Accessed 6/15/16

poor spring 2016 growing season, they were not able to provide adequate produce for their school families, so they invited local producers to join their market. This was the only market available to a community where over 60% of the school children are eligible for free-/reduced-lunch and SNAP recipients. At a separate school, one family, whose child participated in EFG, replicated the garden effort in their own home. This family reported being able to provide adequate produce for their family for over 3 months in 2015, thus, stretching their limited food dollars and reducing their reliance upon SNAP benefits.

"Eat Smart in Parks" and "Shop Healthy, Stock Healthy" are two more recent interventions developed to address the policy, system and environmental change component of SNAP-Ed and to improve the overall food environment of the SNAP audience.

"Eat Smart in Parks" (ESIP) was developed by a statewide collaboration, including University of Missouri Extension, Missouri Parks and Recreation Association(MPRA), and the Missouri Council for Activity & Nutrition (MOCAN) as well as MU Parks, Recreation and Tourism faculty and the MU School of Journalism's Health Communication Research Center. The goal of ESIP is to promote healthy eating options in Missouri state and local parks. Although parks are a valuable resource for children and adults to maintain and improve their health through exercise and recreation, the high-calorie, salty foods served at some parks can quickly negate the benefits of being outside and moving more. Parks who participate in the ESIP program receive customer research, menu analysis, taste tests, healthy product identification and sourcing assistance, marketing materials and healthy food incentive ideas. In Fountain Bluff, MO, park customers surveyed indicated they wanted healthier options. This research inspired the park manager to partner with a local grocery to buy fresh fruit and vegetables packaged in small, snack-sized servings. The grocer packages the produce which reduces labor and ensures a fresh, quality product. The park manager also decided to keep the price point lower and have a smaller profit margin on the healthy items to increase sales.[16]

"Stock Healthy, Shop Healthy" is a comprehensive, community-based program that allows communities to improve access to healthy, affordable foods by working with small food retailers. Millions of Americans, many whom are SNAP recipients, have limited access to a supermarket, which means they rely on fast food restaurants, gas stations and corner stores to feed themselves and their families. This often reduces their ability to buy healthy foods and can increase their risk for overweight and obesity. "Stock Healthy, Shop Healthy" provides guidance to a community to increase healthy food access by engaging small food retailers and community members, therefore, addressing supply and demand at the same time.[17]

Let me close by again thanking Chairman Conaway, Ranking Member Peterson and all of the committee members. It has been an honor to be able to share just a small portion of the impacts made by Cooperative Extension and the land-grant university system through SNAP-Ed.

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[16] Eat Smart in Parks. University of Missouri. http://extension.missouri.edu/mocan/eatsmartinparks/. Accessed 6/15/16

[17] Shop Healthy, Stock Healthy. University of Missouri. http://extension.missouri.edu/stockhealthy/. Accessed 6/15/16