

Elgin Health Fair Promotes Community Awareness & Healthy Eating Habits

Beverly Henry, who teaches nutrition and dietetics in the School of Family, Consumer and Nutrition Sciences, represented NIU on the leadership team for Activate Elgin. As part of this city-wide effort, NIU nutrition students worked together to increase awareness of community members for healthy eating, physical activity, and wellness.

Henry and the nutrition students used a primary health promotion approach to design activities for health fair participants. Four booths were set up for children to advance through.

The first booth focused on the concept of —Breakfast First||, in which children learned about the importance of having a healthy breakfast every morning. Children developed reasons for eating breakfast and displayed them on poster board. They also created calendars on which they placed stickers representing days they had eaten breakfast. Finally, the children completed a colorful maze using healthy breakfast options for getting through the maze.

A family mealtime display for the second booth taught the concept of “Families that eat together, stay together.” At this station, children participated in coloring activities for their favorite meals. Also available were cards with



Children color favorite meals

conversation starters for family mealtime and kid-friendly recipes.

Family fitness was encouraged at the third booth with fun activities that family members could enjoy during the day. Activities were low-cost and simple, such as jump-rope, hula-hoop, and jumping jacks. The display painted a portrait of key health issues and the fitness pyramid.

At the last booth, children had the opportunity to apply what they had learned at each of the previous displays by answering discussion questions. The activities ended with a fun and interactive set of games for the children, including bean bag toss and a croquet-based golf game.

Nutrition students’ hopes were that by coming together in a fun, informative and supportive event, children and families could then take what they’ve learned and apply the information at home to make positive health behavior changes. Not only did the NIU students have information to offer the community, but they learned a great deal themselves. Key lessons included the importance of knowing your audience, knowing about various cultures, and the importance of learning how to engage children in a fun, yet productive, learning environment.



Children play bean bag toss