

Food and Nutrition



WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY STEVENS COUNTY EXTENSION

The Food \$ense program teaches youth with limited incomes the skills to eat healthfully and to be active. The project emphasizes increasing fruits and vegetables, food safety, and making healthy food choices.

Establishing healthy eating habits in childhood is especially critical at an early age (Rabe, Ohri-Vachaspati, and Scheer, 2006). Parents of children who participate in Food \$ense often report that their children have fewer colds and are not sick as often. The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program, a program similar to Food \$ense, has demonstrated that *for every dollar invested in nutrition education there is an \$8 reduction in health care costs later on.*

Stevens County Food \$ense program began in 2004 with 30 hours of nutrition education delivery in the **Columbia School District**.

We have added six more schools: **Northport, Wellpinit-Spokane Tribe, Summit Valley, Evergreen, Loon Lake, Orient, and Mary Walker School**. We are now teaching over 700 hours. In each of those schools we have hired part-time employees to deliver the program.

In 2007, **324 youth** received an average of 8.5 hours of contact in school classroom and after school settings. Those youth **reported an increase in consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables** and using MyPyramid in selecting healthy food choices.

Youth evaluations indicated that

- **61% of the youth ate more fruits and vegetables every day**
- **76% were washing their hands before preparing foods**
- **59% increased physical activity to 60 minutes most days, and**
- **51% were eating a breakfast including three food groups.**

Food \$ense Grant Dollars for Stevens County
(based on 2008 budget year: includes salaries)

\$56,800

Rural economic impacts:

When a low-income family learns how to make better use of its limited food budget, that's education with economic impact.

And when children learn good eating habits, they not only learn skills for life but frequently pass those skills on to their parents.

Debra Siks, a Stevens County Extension Food \$ense educator, said, "Parents come to me and say their kids come home wanting to make dinner, wanting better, more nutritious food."

Siks works in the Northport schools, where she teaches kids nutrition, how to read labels and prepare meals. "Choices made as a child," Siks said, "effect who we are as adults."

When one in three children will develop diabetes or be obese, the value of Food \$ense really begins to add up. Kids who eat healthy are less likely to develop health problems and that affects the health care bottom line in communities like Northport.