

## Nutrition Education Program: Food Environments



As a part of the Nutrition Education Program (NEP), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-Ed) has recently been expanded to include environmental impacts. In conjunction with direct education, these impacts expand the reach of NEP through partnerships and program flexibility.

NEP works with local public health departments, Master Gardeners, and local non-profit agencies to create healthier food environments in grocery and corner stores, school and community gardens, and emergency food access sites. Through these projects, more fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy, and lean meats are made available to SNAP eligible Nebraskans where they work, shop, play and eat.

### Food Environment Strategies



#### Healthy Food Retail Projects

Provide access to nutrition education and healthy foods in grocery and corner stores



#### Garden Projects

School and community gardens provide a platform for nutrition and physical activity education



#### Emergency Food Access Projects

Collaborating with pantries for more nutritious donated foods

#### By the Numbers

The Choose Healthy Here pilot project included in-store promotion of healthy foods and skill building activities in 12 stores among 12 counties.

In 2016, gardens grown with NEP collaboration raised and donated over 4,000 pounds of produce worth an estimated \$4,900.

One Voices for Food Project site established evening food pantry hours, bringing 260 people in the first four months, which is almost double that of daytime hours.

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## A Closer Look

At least 35 different items of produce were grown and donated. The exact varieties were not recorded, but they were collected from a variety of locations and gardens, suggesting that there was more than one type of tomato donated, for example. Tomatoes were the most donated item, with the most harvests, and the second longest donation period (85 days from first to last). Squash had the longest donation period with 96 days.

Tomatoes accounted for 948 pounds worth an estimated \$1,357.37, and squash came in second with 551.5 pounds worth an estimated \$858.32.

Over 30 unique partnerships were created and maintained through food environment work. Four separate grants totaling over \$10,000, including the potential for an additional \$25,000, were secured in the last year.



*“I didn’t think I would like gardening, but now I love it. You guys better do this next year, or I’ll be mad!” – Youth participant at Raising Nebraska*

The partnerships made not only extend throughout Extension and Nebraska, but also to Missouri, Iowa, South Dakota, Indiana, and Michigan. These combined efforts strengthen both NEP’s evaluation and reporting, and national SNAP Ed reporting through common measures.

### *What’s next for food environments?*

In collaboration with Master Gardeners, NEP will expand its produce contributions to food pantries through donation gardens. The pilot phase for this project will begin in the 2017 growing season.

With help from Issue Team 17 (Improve Access to Affordable, Nutritious, and Safe Food) a youth gardening curriculum has been identified to pilot in the 2017 growing season with kindergarten through fifth grades.



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This material was funded in part by USDA’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Expanded Food & Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP). The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, call 1-800-430-3244.

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