

## **Adult Education Meeting**

### **Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program: Training for Nutrition Educators**

#### **Introduction**

On Wednesday, March 28, I had the opportunity to observe an adult education meeting at the Webster County Extension Office. The meeting was a training class for the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) nutrition educators of Attala, Choctaw, Clay, Montgomery, Noxubee, Oktibbeha, and Webster counties. The EFNEP nutrition educators and home economists meet each month to discuss new nutrition topics, teaching tips, and to plan nutrition programs for the region.

#### **Meeting Content**

The whole meeting lasted from 10:00 A.M. until 2:00 P.M. I observed the first two hours of the meeting. Participants were seated at tables that were arranged in a “U” shape. A podium was placed in front of the meeting room for the speakers. The topic for the meeting was eggs and egg safety, appropriately timed for the Easter holiday.

Cynthia Wilson, Webster County home economist, welcomed everyone to the meeting. The fifteen participants, consisting of EFNEP nutrition educators and home economists, introduced themselves to each other. The meeting began with a flurry of new forms and EFNEP standards. Participants were also urged to promote the 4-H program and the Mississippi Homemaker Volunteers Club to the EFNEP participants in their community. Promotional brochures were provided to all the participants (attachments 1 & 2).

After the EFNEP business was completed, the Montgomery County home economist presented the program on eggs and egg safety. The lesson was presented in a lecture format with occasional participant discussion. As an introduction, various “egg facts” from the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce were presented (attachment 3). The home economist used the *Egg University Handbook* (attachment 4), a publication from the Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service, as a basis for the rest of the program. The speaker was interesting and seemed knowledgeable about eggs. She added humor to the lecture and involved the participants in discussion and questioning a great deal throughout the program. However, she did not use any visual aides or technology in the program.

The next few minutes of the meeting involved the exchange of egg recipes. Most of the participants were actively involved in this section of the meeting. Several of the home economists and EFNEP educators provided copies of recipes and egg cooking tips.

The Webster Extension home economist presented a short segment about Easter egg decorating and safety. She also presented the information in a lecture format. Visual aides were used in this segment; however, they were so small that they had to be passed around the room. I thought that this would have been a great opportunity to use a projector or large posters. A handout was provided afterwards summarizing the presentation (attachment 5).

The Webster County Extension Office provided lunch for the participants. The meal was planned around the egg theme. Ham and broccoli strata, rolls, several meringue pies, and divinity candy was served.

After lunch I left the meeting. According to the agenda (attachment 6), Jackie Pullen, one of the EFNEP educators, was going to present a sample youth lesson titled “V is for Vegetables.” The meeting would then be completed with a sharing session of teaching and nutrition ideas.

## **Harbstreet's Top Seven Issues for Conducting Adult Education Programs**

### **1. Putting the plan into action:**

The EFNEP training classes require facilities with enough parking and a meeting room for fifteen to twenty participants. The Webster County Extension Office provided more than adequate facilities. A “U” shaped room arrangement was conducive to participant discussion and interaction.

Program date and time was arranged so that the meeting occurred during the normally scheduled work hours of the EFNEP educators and the home economists. Each county takes turns hosting the meeting. The program is promoted internally by the home economists of each county. Each home economist is responsible for informing the EFNEP educators of their county about the time, location, and content of each meeting. The home economists are also the primary planners of each meeting. However, the EFNEP educators also provide some input.

The home economists take turns conducting the meetings each month. An EFNEP educator is also responsible for conducting a sample lesson. In this way the participants are helping to teach one another. Otherwise, the only outside resource persons used in the training programs are Nutrition Specialists from the Mississippi State University Extension Service.

Materials used for the training class included handouts, recipes, and small visual aides. The class could have been improved through the use of technology, larger visual aides, or a projector.

Lunch is served at each of the training classes. In the class I observed the meal corresponded to the subject being taught – eggs. The Webster County home economist and the Webster County EFNEP educator prepared the meal.

### **2. Scheduling Facilities and Personnel:**

The facilities at the Webster County Extension Office were evidently reserved in advance. The room was set up and ready for the meeting when I arrived and the speakers were well prepared for their lessons. However, there was a bit of confusion about starting time and location. Some of the participants arrived an hour early, and some expressed difficulty locating the extension office.

### **3. Working with Budgets**

The primary costs for the meeting included facilities, speakers (home economists), transportation, handout materials, and refreshments. The State of Mississippi and the participating counties cover all of the expenses. All of the expenses, excluding the cost of the meal, are covered under the normal daily operations of the Extension Service. Therefore, there were no fees for attending the EFNEP training class.

### **4. Working with Other Staff**

The only staff primarily involved in the meeting was the home economists, EFNEP educators, and the Webster County administrative assistant. There was a successful blend of cooperation among the counties. All staff members who helped in any way were invited to the luncheon.

## **5. Connecting with Industry**

Industries were not directly connected with the training class I observed. However, one of the EFNEP educators uses a local poultry farm as a valuable resource. The farm donates eggs for her to use in all cooking demonstrations and EFNEP lessons in her county. Other hidden resources can probably be found throughout the whole EFNEP program.

## **6. Planning for Professional Growth and Development**

The EFNEP training class that I observed is actually one of the EFNEP program's tools for professional growth and development. The Extension Service provides this program as a way to teach EFNEP educators about nutrition concerns and teaching strategies. Therefore, in order for proper education and training to be provided, it is important for the home economists to remain competent in nutrition also.

## **7. Balancing Work and Family**

The EFNEP training classes are scheduled several months in advance. They are always scheduled during the usual working hours of Extension workers. Therefore, the problems of balancing work and family are not present in this situation. Home economists and the EFNEP educators (the participants) are involved in scheduling meetings in order to avoid schedule conflicts.

## **Personal Impression and Evaluation**

Over all, I felt that the EFNEP training class was a success. The class had a good attendance and participation rate. All of the participants really seemed to enjoy the content and the speakers. The class had an informal atmosphere that made learning more enjoyable. Participants played an active role in the program through discussion and presentations.

Based on my knowledge of adult education, I have a few suggestions for improving the program. First of all, the participants need to be better informed about the meeting. All participants should be notified well in advance about the exact time and location of meetings. A map should be provided to participants who are not familiar with the location. Also, educators should make better use of visual aides, technology, and various teaching methods. I saw several opportunities for demonstration or small group activities. Lectures can be overused. Finally, the training class should make better usage of resources. For example, there are many external resource persons knowledgeable about nutrition and there may be industries interested in contributing to the program.