

2007 NC Fruits & Veggies Star Awards Announced

CHARLOTTE – The winners of the 2007 North Carolina Fruits & Veggies Star Awards were announced on August 8, 2007 by the NC Fruits & Veggies Nutrition Coalition (formerly the NC 5 A Day Coalition) at their annual symposium in Charlotte, North Carolina.

The NC Fruits & Veggies Nutrition Coalition, in collaboration with the N.C. Division of Public Health and other statewide partners, awarded five organizations for their innovative efforts to promote the positive health benefits of eating five or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day.

The annual awards recognize successful programs in three areas: school/child care, worksites and business/other.

The 2007 winners are:

Gold Star Award for School/Child Care

*Avery County Schools Child Nutrition /
Newland Elementary School*

(Pictured: Sandra Guinn and Sheila Bauer)

At Newland Elementary School, it's cool to eat fruits and veggies! The staff at Newland have worked hard to make fruits and veggies not just nutritious, but FUN. This year, children tasted new and exotic produce. They planted bushes, fruit trees, and other plants. They even tested their skills in a produce-themed field day that was complete with coconut bowling, potato sack races, and a blueberry relay. On field day and every day, Newland's staff and students are real winners when it comes to healthy eating.



Silver Star Award for School/Child Care

Mitchell County Schools

(Pictured: Christen Snyder)

If you hear children shouting, "Give Me Five A Day!", it's likely a group of Kindergarten students from Mitchell County. This spring, all the Kindergarten classes participated in the "Give Me Five a Day" program. The program included nutrition lessons, taste tests, an interactive book that the children got to keep, and - the most popular activity by far - a puppet show featuring Little Miss Muffet and her good friends, Orange and Broccoli. It's easy to see why Mitchell County Kindergarteners are excited about eating fruits and veggies, and why they are still shouting, "Give Me Five A Day!"

Christen Snyder, a project coordinator with Mitchell County Schools, shared a success story from her award-winning "Give Me 5 A Day" program with Kindergarten students. "There was a little boy who said he did not like any fruits or vegetables, and he refused to try any of them during our taste-test.

Finally, he agreed to try a grape with me. All the other students and teachers gathered around to cheer him on. He tried the grape, and he actually liked it! Other students also tried fruits and veggies



that they had never eaten, and realized that they liked them too. A success of our program was simply exposing these children to new, healthy foods."

Gold Star Award for Worksites

Mecklenburg County Health Department/ Fit City Worksite Wellness

(Pictured: Julie Jackman)

While many workers in need of a mid-morning or afternoon snack find themselves making a daily choice between the cookies or the chocolate from the vending machine, employees at the Mecklenburg County Health Department had some healthier options this year. The Fit City Worksite Wellness Team introduced the "Fit City Healthy Snack and Fruit Baskets," which are filled with fruit and healthy snacks that are available throughout the day. The results? One employee who purchased snacks from the baskets commented, "With this program I have been able to eat fruit on a regular basis...something I was not doing at all." That seems to say it all!



Gold Star Award for Business/Other

Foothills Fresh Extension Leadership Team (Catawba, Cleveland, Gaston and Lincoln Counties)

(Pictured: Linda Minges, Melinda Houser and Leigh Allen Guth)

"I didn't know we had that around here!"

The Foothills Fresh Leadership Team says that's a frequent comment from people who have just heard a presentation or seen a Foothills Fresh display. The "Foothills Fresh" campaign encourages people to increase their daily intake of fruits and veggies, to buy from local farmers, and to visit local farms. The leadership team in the four-county region educates people about what is grown locally, where to find it, and why it's best to buy locally. The leadership team also promotes farm tours and keeps the public informed about offerings at the local farmer's market. One of the greatest indicators of success is that several of the 46 participating farms reported an increase in sales in 2007, and attributed that increase to participation in Foothills Fresh!



Silver Star Award for Business/Other

NC Cooperative Extension – Iredell County

(Pictured: Ann Simmons)

If there is an event happening in Iredell County, it's likely that Ann Simmons, a Family & Consumer Sciences Agent with the Iredell County Cooperative Extension, will be there. She will not only be encouraging the event's participants to eat more fruits and veggies, but she will be showing them creative and delicious ways to do it. She says "simple, quick recipes that taste good make the difference." This year, she partnered with a number of local organizations to reach community college employees, children in summer programs, childcare providers, parents, diabetic patients, senior citizens, and others. What does her audience say? One person who attended a nutrition class commented, "I have never really liked vegetables, but I am going to try this recipe." What a success!



Diane Beth, the NC Fruits & Veggies Nutrition Coordinator, expressed the importance of organizations getting involved in fruit and vegetable promotion. "The five programs that we honored today can be models for other organizations across the state to follow. If the message to eat more fruits and vegetables is going to reach all North Carolinians and have an impact, there has to be support at the organizational level," she said.

"By making fruit and veggie promotion a priority, these organizations have demonstrated their commitment to improving the health of the people in their communities," said Zoe McKay-Tucker, co-chair of the NC Fruits & Veggies Star Awards Committee. "Today we had the opportunity to thank them and to recognize their exemplary work. It has been an exciting day!"

Eating a healthy, balanced diet with at least five servings of fruits and vegetables a day is essential to an individual's overall health and well-being. Research shows that eating five or more fruits and vegetables each day plays an important role in decreasing risk for serious chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, stroke and diabetes.

Yet, 77 percent of North Carolina adults report not reaching the minimum of five servings of fruits and vegetables each day. Statewide, the annual cost of poor nutrition, overweight and obesity is estimated at \$15.85 billion.

The NC Fruits & Veggies Nutrition Coalition, formerly known as the NC 5-A-Day Coalition, strives to promote better health for all North Carolinians by increasing their fruit and vegetable consumption. Coalition members across the state plan and implement activities at the local level, including programs and promotions in supermarkets, schools, restaurants, cafeterias, worksites, health agencies and community groups. Coalition members include representatives from government, academia, industry, media and other non-profit and private organizations. Membership is open to any organization or individual wanting to promote the message to eat fruits & veggies for better health. The NC Fruits & Veggies Nutrition Program is housed in the Physical Activity and Nutrition Branch, NC Division of Public Health.

To learn more about the program or to become a Coalition member, visit www.fruitsandveggiesnc.com.