

Learning to Eat Well, Be Active, Feel Great! That was the primary focus of the Family Nutrition Night event held recently at Southside Elementary School. The event was a collaborative effort between the LSU AgCenter, Hodge Bank, Jackson Parish Hospital and Brookshire's.

The event started with a presentation on how parents can make a big difference in their child's life. Parents and their children learned the two keys to a healthy lifestyle are good nutrition and getting enough exercise. They learned the short term and long term effects of a healthy lifestyle. The short term benefits are looking good, feeling good, having more energy and overall better health. The long term benefits include less risk for cardiovascular disease, diabetes, osteoporosis and certain types of cancers. Parents are role models for their children's good health.

Family members, kids and parents alike, took a trip through five interactive stations where they learned more about eating well and getting active. Community leaders, Jonesboro Hodge, Louisiana Tech University students and Southside teachers volunteered to teach the five stations; Right-size Your Portions; Re-think Your Drink; The Low Down on Snacks; Let's Get Active; and Start Your Day the Right Way. The stations included hands-on activities for kids and parents where they investigated a component of nutrition.

Participants learned how to determine which drinks have vitamin C in them, how much sugar and fat are in beverages, how to detect iron in cereal, ways for the whole family to get active and how to read labels to select healthy snacks and other foods. After the event families were encouraged to make a pledge to make at least one change in their eating and activity habits for their family as a result of what they learned at the Family Nutrition Night event.

After visiting the five stations families were provided a healthy meal sponsored by Hodge Bank, Jackson Parish Hospital and Brookshire's. Family Nutrition Night is a project of the LSU AgCenter Community Nutrition Programs and local agency collaborator. We want to thank our volunteers for their part in making Family Nutrition Night a fun and educational event. Volunteers for the event were Garner Johnson, Rachel Judd, Kristen Chapman, Phyllis Huckaby, Tammy Sutton, Danial Jeffreys, Shirley McConnell, Lisa Hicks Hammock, Jaydria Taylor, Erilha Hall, and Shaundra Gray.

The Family Nutrition Night project is available for any group who would like to partner with the LSU AgCenter Community Nutrition Programs. For more information about the Family Nutrition Night Project, contact Cathy Judd at the LSU AgCenter Extension Office at 318-251-5134 or cjudd@agctr.lsu.edu.