



Cornell University Cooperative Extension Monroe County

Program Success Story



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Low-income individuals often deal with a myriad of difficulties in their day-to-day lives. Limited resources can effect one of the most important decisions for these individuals, their daily food choices. Sojourner House is a women's rehabilitation home for individuals and mothers with children. Upon completion of this treatment program, the women will transition into individual housing often on limited income and resources. CCE's Nutrition Program has worked with groups at Sojourner in the past. The positive response from these women has allowed us to continue our work there with Cooking and Nutrition Classes for the groups.

I held an eight-week program based on the goals of ESNY and the curriculum Eating Right is Basic. Emphasis was placed on the new My Pyramid, healthy food choices for children, food safety and the personal interests of the participants. After completing our first class, I realized the women really wanted to learn the "basics" of healthy eating. Some of these women have not cooked a meal in years nor have they eaten a "balanced" meal for some time due to drug/alcohol addiction. These addictions took over their lives and food was not a priority at this time. Well time has changed! These women were ready to feed their bodies with healthy food and nutrients they needed! The woman loved making Spinach salads,

cutting up fresh vegetables and reading Nutrition Labels. Our "healthy sundae party" at the end of our eight-week commitment was by far one of their favorite classes.

I received such a positive response from both participants and staff. On our last class I was presented with a Sojourner coffee mug (logo of shelter, structure and strength) and a beautiful card with a personal message from all the participants. Portia, the volunteer coordinator, said the ladies felt the material presented would be useful to them as they prepared to be out on their own. As we packed up and wished our luck to one another, one woman came to me and said "thank you, now my addiction is fruit. I forgot how good it is! I built a relationship of trust and rapport with this special group of ladies, and was asked to come back and continue with this group in the future.

The largest barrier by far was fear. Fear from the participants of failure. These ladies had very low self-esteem and were reluctant at first to engage in our activities. In time, the ladies realized this was not a classroom setting, nor was that my style of teaching. Realistic goal setting and hands-on activities were key components for this group. As the lessons continued, the participants stated that they looked forward to the education and the participation with others as a group.