AGENCY ABCs

FNS nurtures families with food, knowledge

Providing food service for the low-income population is the primary mission of the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), along with educating parents and children on the basics of nutrition.

A unit of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the FNS has numerous programs to provide lunch, breakfast and after-school snacks at schools across the country. It also offers food stamps and distributes food through other means to families in its fight against hunger.

To combat the increase in childhood obesity, the FNS aims to educate the public, and specifically children, on the topic of health through its program Team Nutrition. Team Nutrition Schools use both the classroom and lunchroom as avenues for education. For the classroom, nutrition curricula are available for teachers of all grade levels beginning with preschool. For mealtimes, food service professionals are informed on how to serve meals that taste good and meet nutritional standards. An action plan targets school administrators and community leaders, providing action kits for community nutrition and guides for helping build a school environment that fosters healthy lifestyles.

Many of the resources for Team Nutrition are available online and include a poster of the food guide pyramid for young children and a flyer titled “Ten Steps for Parents” that helps parents get involved in their child’s food consumption and physical activity.

The Web site also features a section for students with games, fun links and resources aimed at increasing nutritional awareness. The “yourSELF page” is developed by middle school students for middle school students as part of yourSELF, a magazine published through Team Nutrition. The Web page and magazine explain to middleschoolers the importance of smart food and physical activity choices.

For more information on Team Nutrition or the FNS, or to access its resources, visit www.fns.usda.gov/fns/.

— Erin Verkler

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