



Jack Kelly Clark

Fresno County home economist Jeanette Sutherlin provides adult EFNEP program participants with basic nutritional information.

## EFNEP makes a difference

Celebrating its 20th birthday this spring, Cooperative Extension's Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) is making the transition from adolescence to maturity.

Its mission remains the same, to improve the dietary well-being of low-income families. But its methods are changing to reach more low-income families in California.

The basic EFNEP premise of "neighbors helping neighbors" also is unchanged. Nutrition education assistants are recruited from low-income neighborhoods, trained, and assigned to work with other low-income families in their neighborhoods.

Coordinated by Cooperative Extension home economists in each of the state's 17 EFNEP counties, the training covers basic nutrition and health practices; food planning, selection, and buying; economical food preparation; and food storage, safety, and sanitation. Nearly 12,000 families enroll annually.

Under the traditional approach pioneered by the USDA Extension Service, nutrition education assistants returned to their home neighborhoods and provided

one-on-one instruction. Follow-up studies leave no doubt about the effectiveness of the one-on-one approach in improving diets, changing food-related behaviors and attitudes, and teaching ways to get more nutritional value for each food dollar spent.

However, a 1985 national study, in which California participated, and two California follow-up studies indicated that group teaching also is an effective, and more efficient, way to teach the EFNEP curriculum to low-income, ethnically diverse families. In 1986, group teaching became the primary method for delivering EFNEP information.

Since 1986, the basic EFNEP program has been supplemented with new methods for reaching even greater numbers of the target population. They include working with local emergency food distribution systems, training staff and volunteers in related agencies that work with low-income groups, and developing creative media approaches such as a food stamp hotline, a Spanish-language radio program, and videotapes to disseminate nutritional information.



Frank Zalom

Brussels sprouts are one of several Central Coast crops that area IPM advisor Carolyn Pickel, above, is helping farmers grow with fewer pesticides. Below, a UC researcher examines an alfalfa plot.

