

impact

of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences



Safe and Secure Food and Fiber Systems **Food Safety Education Program**

Issue

Increased outbreaks of foodborne illness have raised consumer awareness and concern about food safety in purchasing food, eating at restaurants, and food preparation and storage in the home. In 1999 alone, the top five foodborne diseases in Arizona totaled 1986 cases, including 33 cases of E. coli 0157:H7. With the high turnover in food service employees, ongoing food safety education and training is needed. A large percentage of these employees speak only Spanish, creating the need for food handler certification training and food safety education in Spanish. In Yavapai County, Arizona, the new county health code requires that at least one manager per food establishment have manager certification in food safety. In partnership with the county environmental health department, the UA Cooperative Extension in Yavapai County identified food safety education program needs through a food safety education consortium representing governmental agencies, food retailers, culinary association, supermarkets, churches, consumers, and other food service providers.

What has been done?

In 2001, the Food Safety Education Program offered through the Yavapai County Cooperative Extension featured educational programs for small retail food managers, employees, and consumers, to address the needs of food safety education from the farm to the table. Participants obtained research-based food safety information and education through one-to-one contacts, telephone, Internet, distance technology, publications, and community workshops. Two HACCP (Hazard Analysis of Critical Control Points) training conferences were held for 25 restaurant managers; managers also had the opportunity to participate in the statewide HACCP downlink. About 200 employees participated in food safety employee workshops. Fight BAC (fight bacteria) education workshops were held for 425 consumers, and 3000 Fight BAC brochures were distributed in the community. Extension handled 248 public service calls related to food safety.

Impact

The partnership between the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension Yavapai County and the Environmental Health Department has resulted in the County Board of Supervisors' approval of 1.0 FTE to support the continuation of this program in the amount of \$38,000 annually. Survey responses from 1482 consumers, employees, and managers who participated in food safety education indicated they would save money by understanding and applying the principles they learned about food systems. Post surveys of consumers, on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 as the highest, indicated a high (4.6) increase in the awareness and knowledge of food safety practices. And as a result of the HACCP training for retail food managers, 15 of the 25 food establishments represented in the training have implemented some of the HACCP guidelines in their restaurants.

Funding

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