

Help with an Everyday

On a rainy Saturday, a building on the deserted campus of Hot Springs High School echoes with laughter and clinking dishes. Inside the steamy windows of the home economics lab, it smells like garlic and cinnamon.

The “students” are experienced cooks whose daily homework is managing their diabetes or cooking for a loved one with the disease. They signed up for four free classes in Truth or Consequences for advice they can live with.

Three months after his wife’s diagnosis, Jim Fauglid, a retiree who enjoys cooking Italian meals, is assembling a lasagna recipe that uses eggplant slices in place of noodles. “We have to change our lifestyle of eating,” he says. “This helps.”

The Fauglids, along with 25 others, are taking part in Sierra County’s first-ever Kitchen Creations cooking school for people with diabetes and their families. The classes, offered statewide by NMSU’s Cooperative Extension Service, came just in time for Shirley James, whose annual birthday checkup led to her diagnosis. Three months ago she began taking diabetes medication.

Her biggest challenge? Being consistent about healthy eating and exercise. “It’s an everyday struggle,” James says. “I’m learning day by day, meal by meal.”

In the Kitchen Creations classes, James found herself cooking with two women she often waves to on her daily errands: Marcella Lloyd, diagnosed seven years ago, and Lupe Carrejo, who is helping her husband of 44 years manage his elevated blood sugar with diet and exercise.

These neighborly connections are not just a function of living in a small town. The fact is, one in 11 adults in New Mexico has diabetes.

Diabetes causes untold suffering through complications such as amputations, blindness and heart

mats. For each school, Extension home economists team up with registered dietitians or certified diabetes educators.

“The hardest thing for people when they’re diagnosed is that you can’t take a vacation from it,” says Karen Halderson, Extension diabetes coordinator. “You have to keep eating, so you have to make a whole bunch of decisions every day.”

Kitchen Creations starts with basic information on the Food Guide Pyramid for people with diabetes. A second session covers

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disease, and ranks as the sixth leading cause of death in New Mexico. Treating the chronic disease costs more than \$1 billion annually.

To visualize the 120,000 New Mexico adults with diabetes, think of the population in a five-county area that includes Catron, Grant, Hidalgo, Otero and Socorro counties, says Bruce Jacobs, an NMSU Extension health specialist.

To serve them, NMSU has held 160 Kitchen Creations schools across the state since 2000, with several in Spanish or bilingual for-

sweets and cooking with sugar substitutes. Another week’s lesson is on eating more vegetables with meals and as snacks.

Because people with diabetes are two to four times as likely to have heart disease, the final session focuses on exercise and a heart healthy diet that’s low in fat and sodium and high in fiber. The state health department’s Diabetes Prevention and Control Program supports Kitchen Creations.

Almost 3,000 people in 30 counties have come for the information

Struggle

by D'Lyn Ford

DARRELL J. PEHR



Recipe for success: Clara Kear, right, talks to Marcella Lloyd during a Kitchen Creations class in Truth or Consequences. Participants say they benefit from the sound information, hands-on cooking and support from others with diabetes.

and camaraderie, cooking together in locations such as Farmington, Clayton, Albuquerque, Gallup, Portales and Chaparral. While other classes offer meal tips, recipes or samples, Kitchen Creations participants make the foods themselves.

“There’s something about cooking together that people find very supportive,” says nutrition coordinator Linda Wells, who helped start

the program. “As people in the class learn to make healthy foods, they also encourage each other.”

The approach works. About two-thirds of those who attended reunions a month after the classes reported that they had made major changes by planning meals with the diabetes food guide, measuring portions, reading food labels, and controlling and balancing their carbo-

What is Diabetes?

Diabetes mellitus occurs when the body doesn’t produce insulin or doesn’t use insulin effectively. The body needs insulin to convert sugar, starches and other food to energy.

- Type 1 diabetes occurs when the body doesn’t produce insulin. Daily injections of insulin are needed to function normally. (Five to 10 percent of diabetes cases)
- Type 2 diabetes occurs when the body doesn’t make enough insulin or doesn’t use its insulin effectively. (90 to 95 percent of cases)
- Gestational diabetes occurs during pregnancy and usually disappears when the pregnancy ends. Women who have had gestational diabetes are at greater risk of developing type 2 diabetes later in life.



NORMAN MARTIN

Lending a hand: Brenda Bishop prepares to take a blood sample during diabetes testing in Tucumcari. NMSU's Cooperative Extension Service has teamed up with the Joslin Diabetes Center, affiliated with Harvard Medical School, to encourage people with diabetes to manage their health with regular testing and medical care.

hydrate intake. The National Association for Extension Family and Consumer Sciences honored the New Mexico Kitchen Creations team with its 2004 national Florence Hall Award for programs that meet families' needs.

By the numbers

Though it's a struggle, managing diabetes is critical to avoid the life-changing complications of heart disease, blindness, kidney failure and amputations.

"The good thing about diabetes is that the individual is in control," Halderson says. "Many others can help, but they're really in charge of managing their own diabetes."

Along with diet and exercise, regular medical care is essential. Though diabetes rates are similar across the state, access to informa-

"There's a big need in our little community."

tion and health care isn't uniform.

Tucumcari, for example, has a population of 9,800, including 650 adults with diabetes. However, it has no registered dietitians to advise them, says Brenda Bishop, Quay County Extension home economist. Area doctors, who treat myriad health problems in family practices, have a hard time staying up with the latest in diabetes care.

"There's a big need in our little community," Bishop says.

To fill it, NMSU teamed up with the Joslin Diabetes Center—the nation's oldest such program, affli-

ated with Harvard Medical School—to offer diabetes tests and education.

The goal is reaching rural areas and groups that are most vulnerable to diabetes, including Native Americans, whose diabetes risk is three times that of non-Hispanic whites, and Hispanics, whose risk is twice as high.

In Quay County, four Extension and two health department staff members learned to administer a series of critical tests for those with diabetes. They begin with blood pressure and LDL cholesterol checks for heart health. "About 90 percent of our first-timers have blood pressure that's too high," Bishop says.

Next, they prick fingers for a blood test. The test, known as the A1C, helps patients know how consistent their blood sugar levels have been, based on red blood cells that regenerate every three months. A urine sample is used to test for proteins that indicate kidney problems.

Those who are tested learn what the information means and what

they can do to improve their numbers. "We want to empower people to understand their own test results and ask good questions about their care," says Martha Archuleta, Extension food and nutrition specialist.

Participants, who are urged to have eye exams to prevent vision loss, leave with a folder of test results they can take to their next doctor's appointment.

In three months, they return for a second set of diabetes tests. "It's so rewarding when people stop you in the grocery store and say,



Family backing: Thirteen years after she was diagnosed with diabetes, Carmen A. Griego looks forward to learning more during support group meetings at the Santa Fe Extension office. She says support from her husband, Antonio, family and friends helps her live with diabetes.

‘Guess what? I got my blood sugar down, and I feel so much better,’” Bishop says.

Joslin testing is under way in San Juan County and in Crownpoint, in partnership with a Navajo Nation special diabetes project. Colfax and Bernalillo counties provide local testing, and the health department’s mobile clinic vans offer it at local churches and community centers in Doña Ana and Luna counties.

Some 1,500 participants have been tested so far. In Santa Fe County, 75 percent have made return visits to the doctor for follow-up care, Archuleta says.

All in the family

Carmen A. Griego of Santa Fe, diagnosed with diabetes 13 years ago, avoids scheduling morning appointments on the fourth Wednesday of each month. That’s when her diabetes support group meets at the Santa Fe County Extension office.

“When you’re diagnosed with diabetes, you want to know everything you can about it,” she says. “Still to this day, I’m looking for something new.”

Griego says she’s kept up to date on recommendations for her diabetes, thanks to programs from home economist Imelda Garcia and other guest speakers.

A veteran at managing the disease, she credits Antonio, her husband of 51 years, and her friends in the support group. “It helps to exercise together,” Griego says. “It’s easy to find excuses, but if you have somebody depending on you, you make a bigger effort.”

When the Griegos celebrated their 50th anniversary last year with six grown children, they invited Garcia because she felt like a member of the family.

“When one family member has diabetes, they all have it,” Garcia says. In New Mexico, virtually every family is acquainted with diabetes. **R**

Coming Attraction

To bring diabetes information into more New Mexicans’ homes, NMSU’s Cooperative Extension Service is producing a cooking show.

Four pilot episodes of “Tasty Solutions for Diabetes” will be completed this spring. Hosts are Lola Cunico, registered nurse and certified diabetes educator; and Kelley Coffeen, a home economist and food consultant.

In addition to how-to segments on breakfast, lunch and dinner, the show will feature eating and exercise tips from two people who are successfully managing their diabetes. Experts with the Joslin Diabetes Center will also give advice.

For information, e-mail vstudio@nmsu.edu or call (505) 646-2701.



TOMILEE TURNER

More information:

- NMSU Family Health and Wellness page: <http://spectre.nmsu.edu/Dept/welcome.html?t=health>
- NMSU diabetes publications: <http://cahe.nmsu.edu/pubs/>
- New Mexico Department of Health: <http://www.diabetesnm.org/>
- American Diabetes Association: <http://www.diabetes.org/home.jsp>
- Joslin Diabetes Center: <http://www.joslin.org/>