Oregon Family Nutrition Program (OFNP)

They gather together for their weekly nutrition and cooking lesson as part of the Parent Enhancement Program in Corvallis. They chop, mix, and sauté. They learn and laugh and bond and take home ideas for keeping their families healthy. And they bring their children, who play happily in a room nearby. “We want to help our families stretch their food dollars while making healthy choices,” says Tina Dodge Vera, nutrition educator of Las Comidas Latinas for Linn and Benton counties. The bilingual six-week class attracts young mothers who, according to follow-up surveys, make lasting changes. “We talk about shopping, meal planning, and family responsibilities around food,” explains Tina. This is one of the many successful Oregon Family Nutrition Programs in Oregon, aimed at helping families make healthy choices within a limited budget and choose an active lifestyle guided by the USDA My Pyramid Guide.

In Portland, the Extension office collaborates with county health departments, Hacienda CDC, Catholic Charities’ after school programs, and parish health promoter outreach programs to provide classes throughout the Portland metro area. More than 120 Hispanic lay health educators have attended train-the-trainer workshops and teach through nine Catholic parishes in Portland. “Our goal is to help Hispanic families maintain some of their traditional diet while being mindful to eat more fruits and vegetables,” says Extension faculty Lynn Steele, who has been with the program since 1993. “In addition to the lessons on nutrition, meal planning, healthy snacks, and low-fat cooking, we provide information about diabetes awareness and heart-healthy eating tips.”

“These are true programs of federal dollars working on your community,” says Janice Smiley, Washington County Extension faculty. “The partnership with USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service requires local match, which comes in the form of salaries, facilities, and supplies. In the past five years, funding has more than quadrupled as a result of building community partnerships.”

Some OFNP statistics
Support: In FY 2006, $6 million from the USDA Food and Nutrition Service was matched by $6 million in local resources, including staff and volunteer time, facilities, and materials. Extension and community staff were joined by 331 volunteers who contributed 5530 hours of service.
Results in 2006: More than 25,000 adults and youth in 31 Oregon counties participated in classes that resulted with 75% of adult participants showing improvement in one or more nutrition practices.