

# 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 concern about food safety related to purchasing food, eating at restaurants, and food preparation and storage in the home. In 1999 alone, the top five foodborne diseases in Arizona totaled 1,986 cases, including 33 cases of *E. coli* O157: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 industry council appointed by the Board of Supervisors representing industry, regulatory, academia, and consumers.

### What has been done?

In 2002, the Food Safety Education Program offered through the Yavapai County Cooperative Extension served 1,709 residents. The program 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, publications, a quarterly food safety newsletter (900 distribution) and community seminars. Manager Certification Training was offered monthly serving 201 restaurant managers; managers also had the opportunity to participate in research based seminar food safety updates; 388 employees participated in food safety employee bilingual workshops. Fight BAC (fight bacteria) education seminars were held for 320 consumers, and 2000 Fight BAC brochures were distributed in the community. Extension addressed 226 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 third year of this program in the amount of \$38,000 annually. Food service managers and employees have increased their knowledge, skills and application of food safety principles in the work environment to "Make Yavapai County a Safer Place to Eat". Pre/Post test evaluations continue to result in high ratings, on a scale of 1 to 5 (low to high) mean ratings were 4.8. As a result of education efforts, a more knowledgeable workforce is applying safe food practices. Consumers increased their awareness of potential food hazards and actions they can take to improve food safety in the home according to post survey mean ratings of 4.5 on a scale of 1 to 5, (low to high). One consumer said, "I always wash my cutting board with soapy water but no one ever told me about the need to sanitize! I also now know how to keep my food out of the danger zone".

### Funding

University of Arizona Cooperative Extension Statewide Safe Food 2010 Initiative  
Yavapai County Board of Supervisors

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