

NIFE MS Deputy Ambassador's Self-Reflection

Newsletter Op-Ed

Written by LaShaundra Crook

“I was excited to work on this project,” said LaShaundra Crook, MS, RDN, LD. “The overall nutrition goal of the education sessions was to encourage participants who were people with disabilities, their families and the health professionals who serve them to eat more fruits and vegetables. Educating community members on making healthy dietary changes is what I love doing.” Crook served as a Deputy Ambassador for Nutrition is for Everyone Mississippi (NIFE MS), where she developed the curriculum for the project and presented it at workshops in five cities across Mississippi, and also presented in a webinar.

“Each session began with a general overview of the MyPlate. Workshop participants were encouraged to eat a variety of fruits and vegetables, consume more whole grains, choose lean proteins and protein sources, and increase their intake of low-fat and fat-free dairy products. We discussed the health benefits of eating foods from each food category daily. As we discussed fruits and vegetables, I would ask the participants if they consumed a variety of fruits and vegetables or only consumed a handful of favorites. Most admitted to only consuming a few favorites. They had not ventured into trying new fruits and vegetables. So they were encouraged to try something new the next time they went shopping for groceries.”

“Another part of the session focused on purchasing and preparing foods at home,” said Crook. “I often hear clients say that eating healthy is expensive. So we discussed ways to eat healthy on a budget to include preparing meals and snacks at home.”

“At the end of the session, the attendees participated in a hands-on food prepping activity that reinforced the messages of eating more fruits and vegetables, buying in bulk and meal prepping. I believe this was the most informative and empowering part of the session. Some of the comments made during the activity were, “I can do this at home,” “I’m going to have my mom buy fruits and vegetables,” “I’m going to start eating tomatoes.” Those comments let me know they were on the right track to eating healthier.”

Crook said, “I’m glad I had the opportunity to work on this project. It’s my hope that the participants took what they learned and shared it with others. After all, nutrition is for everyone.”

Crook presented to a total of 79 individuals at the in-person workshops. Thirty-nine of the workshop participants from three different locations were from high school transition classes. The young participants loved the hands-on snack activity. Forty-five registered for the webinar, with 31 people attending. Twenty-eight individuals completed the survey sent as a follow-up to the webinar. This same survey was used at the in-person workshops.

The webinar is archived on [Mississippi Parent Training and Information \(MSPTI\)](#) and on [Institute for Disability Studies \(IDS\)](#).

