

A NEW Approach to Healthy Eating

The 2003 Hawai'i Health Survey reveals that more than half of Hawai'i adults are overweight or obese. Young people in the islands are also at risk: in some Hawai'i communities, the rate of obesity in children ages 6 to 11 is twice the national average. About three-quarters of Hawai'i residents don't eat enough fruits and vegetables, and many suffer from diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, or diet-related cancers.

To combine their strengths and enhance their effectiveness, CTAHR extension faculty in four counties and two college departments—Human Nutrition, Food and Animal Sciences and Family and Consumer Sciences—have joined together to coordinate their outreach in the areas of food, nutrition, and health. Under an umbrella program called Nutrition Education for Wellness, or NEW, this team of extension agents brings its varied expertise to a wide range of projects that promote healthy eating and exercise habits, encourage safe food handling practices, and improve the access of limited-income households to good nutrition. From diabetes screening to home gardening tips, money management training to youth development, NEW unites diverse outreach elements that can influence food choices. In addition to educational resources developed by members of the college, the NEW Web site (www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/new) provides extensive links to nutrition-related information available from government and nonprofit sources.

NEW's team approach has been spearheaded by extension faculty, but the program's project roster includes research and instruction components as well, such as materials developed for young athletes by food science and human nutrition students. The collaborative projects developed under the NEW umbrella reflect partnerships not only within CTAHR but also with colleagues at mainland universities and local, state, and federal agencies. By linking projects and pooling resources, NEW enables more efficient outreach to improve the health and well-being of Hawai'i's people.

The Nutrition Education for Wellness program brings together diverse outreach projects that influence choices about food and exercise.



As part of the Great Kaua'i Weigh Out, adults learn about the benefits of walking.



Keiki measure the fat content of different fast foods during the Great Kaua'i Weigh Out—Kids Too.

Photos courtesy of Laura Kawamura