Tennessee's Extension Food and Nutrition Education Program was set up by the University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service to assist low-income families in improving their diets. Carrying out the program on a one-to-one basis are 365 assistants who are taught the basics of nutrition by trained home economics extension agents. These assistants then go into the field and work with individual families providing knowledge, skills, and motivation to improve diets; assisting families with budgeting problems; disseminating information about institutional services and programs for the family; and helping families broaden the range of their homemaking skills. SPIFFY (Special Program in Food For Youth) groups that feed and teach children about nutrition are also available. (JB)
and hope

bringing help
Counties shown in color on the map below are participating in a food and nutrition education program carried on by the University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service.

Objectives of the program are:

To assist low-income homemakers and youth to acquire knowledge, skills, and motivation which will improve the quality and adequacy of their diets.

To provide knowledge of public and private institutions, services, and programs which will aid the family.

To assist the families with budgeting problems.

To assist participants to develop a broader range of homemaking skills in addition to those associated with nutrition.
Tennessee's Extension Food and Nutrition Education Program

This program began in 1969, after much concern was expressed for the problems of these families. An educational program was needed to help them face the problems of their diets. This concern for the nutrition education of families who are poorly nourished and hungry is the concern of the Extension Food and Nutrition Education Program in Tennessee.

The Extension Food and Nutrition Education Program is a part of people talking to people—face to face. The key people are the 346 program assistants who work with more than 15,000 families. They visit the disadvantaged homemaker and try to help her find ways to improve her family's diet. They work with people who work with more than 15,000 families. They visit the disadvantaged homemaker and try to help her find ways to improve her family's diet. They work with more than 15,000 families.

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Carrying the cane basket as their warm and friendly trademark, the program assistants work in the community where they live. They are interested and enthusiastic women who understand the people, their needs and problems. They reach and teach these people who need to know about food.

The program assistants are taught the basics of nutrition by trained home economics Extension agents. They are also trained in teaching methods and family living. Three weeks of concentrated Welfare Services, OEO, Public Health Department, and Farmers' Home Administration often meet with the program assistants. They explain the services their organization has to offer to the low-income families. Program assistants are then able to refer families to these agencies for additional assistance.
Training many times may mean trying the new methods of food preparation. The program assistants use donated foods furnished by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service for these practice periods. They also use them with their visits with the homemakers.

Learning about other agencies that give aid to families is also a part of the training. Representatives of cooperative agencies such as
In some communities where the Extension staff room for the training meeting, local groups such as the Farm Bureau, rural electric cooperatives, community farmers' cooperatives, churches and housing projects offer their facilities. Program assistants start working with the homemakers "where they are." Because of their own experiences, they understand many of the problems of these homemakers.

"On my first visit with the Jones family, I found water was a problem," reported a program assistant in a training meeting. "They have a well in the yard but it needs cleaning. The water is just a quarter-mile from the neighbor's house. Some of the children are helping to haul the water. With their help, the water quality is improving. The homemakers need help in learning meal planning. They need help in getting started in a nutrition meal plan."

First visits are get-acquainted visits. After the first visits, the program assistant learns more about the family's habits and circumstances. She finds out what the family has eaten in the past 24 hours. This is called a food recall. Such information helps the program assistant plan the lessons for her clients. She then plans lessons for the following visits.

These basic nutrition lessons include what to eat, how much to eat, how to buy food, and when to buy food. The lessons are designed to help the family plan their food budget and to help the family learn to eat healthily. The program assistant also helps the family understand the importance of nutrition in their daily lives.

These lessons are taught in the home. The program assistant works closely with the family to make sure that they understand the lessons. She may hold group discussions or use visual aids to help the family understand the lessons. She also helps the family plan their meals and create a shopping list for the next week.

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are taught in a number of ways, but a person-to-person demonstration gets the best results.
Quite often the homemaker invites a relative or friend in to listen.

"One of my homemaker's mother, who lives in an adjoining county, makes it a point to visit her daughter every time I make a visit," reports a program assistant. "The first time she was there she asked if I teach people to cook?" Her daughter spoke up quickly, saying, 'She helps us more to save our money than just how to cook.'"

Basic techniques of food preparation are taught, using the facilities and equipment found in each home. Sometimes, though, a lesson on cleanliness, sanitation, and good housekeeping has to come ahead of lessons on food preparation.

"For my families who live in houses without screens, I show them that boiling vinegar and water will keep the flies away while we cook and talk about nutrition," explains a program assistant in a Middle Tennessee county.

Tennessee Extension agents are bringing about changes among low-income and disadvantaged families who have nutritional problems.

The food recalls show small but consistent improvements in food their families are eating.
The XXX family has cleaned up their house. They have gotten food stamps and
were able to purchase their first refrigerator. They have learned how
to prepare their food, and now they have realistic plans for the
future. The family has learned about nutrition and
are making better food choices. Some family members have
bought new furniture, and the house is cleaner and more
organized. There is more space for the
children to play.
The nutrition and food related program for youth began in 1970, one year after the work with adults started. The program is called SPIFFY, meaning Special Program In Food For Youth.

Small neighborhood SPIFFY groups of 5 to 15 members are formed primarily in urban areas. Fifty-four percent of the youth population live there, but only 10 percent are being reached through other Extension organizations.

More than 11,000 boys and girls ranging in age from 8-19 are SPIFFY members. Many older teen-age low-income youth serve as junior leaders. There are more than 800 youth and adult leaders who are volunteering to help with this work.

Cheerful, happy, and elated was a 17-year old boy who had his first birthday party. It was at a SPIFFY meeting. Though it was special for him, it had built-in nutrition education for all the members. Because he had been their leader, the other boys and girls made him a
Cooking principles: The adult leader found this an
cooking.

Games and songs about nutrition, role play, community
are helpful in hips to process and

Informal experiences are stimulating. Food buying is often taught in

The educational experiences are stimulating.
involve SPIFFY members in new experiences to help them develop positive attitudes of personal development.

"Billie had never eaten liver before attending the SPIFFY meeting. Those are the best hours he ever spent," a mother was heard to say. "He's drinkin' a lot more milk and eatin' more vegetables now than he used to. Our whole family's eatin' food we didn't think we liked since he has been goin' to those meetings."

SPIFFY members go to day camps. They have fun, lots of good food and learn how food makes them grow and have energy for fun.

Several local health departments are enthusiastic cooperators by taking blood samples of SPIFFY members and analyzing them for the iron content. In 1970, the hematocrit readings showed that 36 percent of members tested had levels of iron below normal. Some were so low that they needed immediate treatment by a physician. Others were helped by including more iron-rich foods in their diets.

"At our SPIFFY meeting we learned to use dry milk and disguise it with flavoring for a nutritious snack. We can get twice as much for our money and it's better for us than those sugary fruit drinks that just make us fat."
From the beginning, the Agricultural Extension Service has built evaluation methods into its program to find out what changes in food habits this program could bring about.

Food recalls, as mentioned earlier, are records of what the family has had to eat in the past 24 hours. Taken every six months, they form the basis for evaluating food habit changes.

### MILK

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### FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

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Significant changes have come about. The program assistants, centering their teaching around the four food groups (meats, fruits and vegetables, milk, and breads and cereals), place emphasis on the most critical needs. Food recalls showed that these families were lacking most in the milk, fruits and vegetable groups.

Now, after they are consuming "empty calories." (An entire family who was drinking cola beverages three times a day is now drinking non-fat dry milk.)

The homemaker has learned how to make buttermilk and cottage cheese from the dry milk. She is now a part of the neighborhood. And, when they learn how to make a buttermilk, she has learned how to make a milk. She has developed confidence in herself. She has learned to cook. She has learned to make a buttermilk and cottage cheese from the dry milk. She has developed confidence in herself.

Home-makers, who enrolled in the nutrition

teachers' training program, have passed on to other homemakers their knowledge of nutrition. These homemakers have written newsletters describing their experiences. They have given these newsletters to other homemakers in their neighborhood. And, when they learn how to make a buttermilk, they are invited to become a part of a nutrition group. These groups are organized by the program assistant. They meet in the homemaker's neighborhood. Monthly, the Extension office mails to these homemakers a newsletter that reinforces what the program assistant has taught. Monthly, the program assistant meets with the homemaker to evaluate her progress. And, when the homemaker shows definite progress, she is invited to become a part of a nutrition group. The program assistant reports to the program director that the homemaker has made progress.

Gradually, after many visits and when the homemaker shows definite progress, she is invited to become a part of a nutrition group. These groups are organized by the program assistant. They meet in the homemaker's neighborhood. Monthly, the Extension office mails to these homemakers a newsletter that reinforces what the program assistant has taught. Monthly, the program assistant meets with the homemaker to evaluate her progress. And, when the homemaker shows definite progress, she is invited to become a part of a nutrition group. The program assistant reports to the program director that the homemaker has made progress.

What do the program assistants feel about their new experience? "I believe I can help each and every one. I believe I can help each and every one."

Program assistants have come about...
for being able to work for them.”

How do the Extension agents feel about the program? “We’re doing more than just teaching nutrition; we’re helping homemakers help themselves, to make their own decisions and not to wait for others to do it for them.”

“Our records show that the program assistants are making progress. It’s certainly a program that’s helping the people who need the help, working with them in a way that they can learn to help themselves. It has changed their thinking about more things than just food.”

To look up and not down
To look forward and not back,
To look out and not in, and
To lend a hand . . .
Program assistants have training in teaching methods, nutrition and family living. Local agencies cooperate by offering their facilities for meeting and in some cases provide materials.

"We get our water from our neighbor down the road. I usually just make two trips a day."