

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**Virginia Cooperative Extension Expands Healthy Living Program with Gift from the Walmart Foundation**

Thousands of low-income youth in Virginia learn to prepare healthy foods and how to make good food choices in an effort to reduce childhood obesity and improve health.

Newport News, Virginia – December 6, 2013

This year the Walmart Foundation announced its continued support of 4-H Healthy Living programs with a new \$2 million donation to expand the Walmart 4-H Youth Voice: Youth Choice program in Virginia and 20 other states. This new gift will allow the Walmart 4-H Youth Voice: Youth Choice program to expand its reach from 15 to 21 states across the nation, reaching nearly 75,000 at-risk youth and their families with interactive education about nutrition and food security challenges. The Wal-Mart foundation has been a strong supporter of 4-H Healthy Living programs for several years having granted \$4.3 million to 4-H since 2009.

In Virginia, the Walmart 4-H Youth Voice: Youth Choice program is engaging young people and their parents by focusing on forming healthy eating habits based on the "My Plate" dietary guidelines provided by the USDA. The educational programs provided with this funding also involves a collaboration with Virginia Cooperative Extension's 4-H Youth Development, the Family Nutrition Program, and Family and Consumer Sciences.

In Newport News, Jacqueline Simmons and Tammy Coker, Food Nutrition Program Assistants, are teaching Teen Cuisine with a Denbigh High School's life skills classes which includes cooking skills. "It has been a joy to watch the excitement of the youth when they realize what they can accomplish such tasks as chopping an onion or an apple with a "real" knife. They are learning the difference between grate and shred, mince and dice, blend and cream as they learn important nutrition concepts for their health and well-being. These experiences will go with these students for a lifetime because we are able to take these experiences and share them with others," Honaker concluded.

According to the Child Trends Data Bank, child-aged food insecurity is associated with a greater risk for being overweight. Food insecurity can result in lower diet quality and less variety, both of which can contribute to being overweight and nutritionally deprived. Evaluation results from the 2011-2012 Youth Voice: Youth Choice program years show that participating young people reported a higher

Invent the Future

understanding of nutrition and physical activity knowledge and an increased active use of that knowledge. Additionally, participants' attitudes towards nutrition and physical activity became more positive and young people showed an improved ability to make healthy food choices, even in food insecure settings.

"The Walmart Foundation has been a committed partner to 4-H in the fight to help youth live better, healthier lives," said Donald T. Floyd Jr., National 4-H Council president and CEO. "Food insecurity and poor nutritional choices pose numerous potentially damaging risks, including delayed cognitive development in children and chronic ailments such as diabetes and heart disease. The Walmart 4-H Youth Voice: Youth Choice program provides youth with the opportunity to take the lead to actively address these issues with their families, peers and their communities, resulting in a significant positive health impact."

###

Contact: Sonja Mitchell, Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agent, Virginia Cooperative Extension, (757) 591-4838, sonjatm@vt.edu