

FOCUS ON

Our Family and Consumer Sciences Section: Teaching families ways to enhance their daily lives

– September 9, 2015

What do food safety and nutrition, financial planning, weight control, and proper parenting all have in common? They are a few of the many topics that the Gwinnett County Cooperative Extension's Family and Consumer Sciences section covers in its classes and educational materials. Whether you are a childcare provider seeking training, a first-time gardener who wants to preserve your first harvest, or a parent looking to overcome the challenges of raising a teenager, the Family and Consumer Sciences section has a variety of resources available for you.



Ines Beltran, Family and Consumer Sciences agent, hosts a cooking demonstration at Gwinnett Medical Center.

The Family and Consumer Sciences section is one of three functions that operate as part of the County's Cooperative Extension Service. Gwinnett Extension is part of the University of Georgia's College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences and College of Family and Consumer Sciences and also acts as an educational division of the Gwinnett County Department of Community Services. The UGA connection enables the Family and Consumer Sciences section to tap into research conducted by the University and educational resources provided by other extension services around the country.

Subject-matter experts use these resources to teach classes in the Gwinnett Extension office in downtown Lawrenceville and around the county in senior centers and parks and recreation community centers. **Ines Beltran** is the face of the Family and Consumer Sciences section, having taught more than 600 classes to professionals, seniors, youth, childcare providers, food handlers, and the general public since 2002. Her classes—taught in both English and Spanish—cover topics including nutrition and health, food safety and preservation, childcare, and radon education.



Since 2002, the Family and Consumer Sciences section taught more than 600 classes in Gwinnett.

"Today's families face many challenges in securing financial, health, and educational stability," Beltran said. "It warms my heart knowing that what I do each day helps improve their everyday lives."

Beltran guides participants through the *Walk-A-Weigh* program, helping them lose weight and keep it off through healthy eating, exercise, and group support. The *Cooking for a Lifetime Cancer Prevention Cooking School* provides women who are least likely to be screened for breast and cervical cancer with tips to reduce their risk of getting cancer through healthy eating. She also hosts a series of canning and preserving classes to help home cooks reduce the risk of foodborne illness through safe preserving,

processing, and other food handling practices. TVgwinnett viewers can watch her regularly on *Growing in Gwinnett's* cooking segment, where she whips up tasty, nutritional meals using simple ingredients found in most kitchens.

Beltran and her team of volunteers are currently collaborating with the Parks and Recreation Division and its *Live Healthy Gwinnett* initiative and Gwinnett Medical Center's Diabetes & Nutrition Education Center

to offer free cooking demonstrations geared toward healthy eating and proper nutrition. Each hour-long demonstration is filled with hands-on activities for participants to enjoy.

“Our staff has made a significant difference in the community by providing educational resources for residents,” said Cooperative Extension Division Director **Robert Brannen**. “We’re here to help families apply practical information for lifelong solutions.”

Most of the programs and classes are free or low cost to Gwinnett County residents. For a list of upcoming events or to learn more about the Gwinnett County Cooperative Extension and the Family and Consumer Sciences section, visit www.gwinnettextension.com.