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Holmes family brings dinner back to the table

MISSISSIPPI STATE – Family dinners are sometimes considered an activity of the past. It is thought of as a memory from the good ole’ days when life was simpler and families were not too busy to cook healthy meals, but why is that? Yes, times are different and perhaps people are busier, but values don’t have to change. Algenia Adams and her family in Holmes County decided that quality time and nutrition are important and they are now having Friday night family dinners every week.

Adams has had an interest in healthy living for many years. She received an e-mail a few months ago offering the opportunity to participate in a program that promotes change in the Delta concerning health and she jumped at the chance.

Adams said, “In young adulthood, when I started having children, I really started to think about healthy living and making sure my kids ate correctly.”

The program Adams joined is Get Healthy, Trim Down Delta. It is a project directed by Mississippi State University Extension Service and supported by the Delta Health Alliance through funding from the Office of Rural Health Policy, a branch of the Health Resources and Services Administration.

The project targeted at Carroll, Holmes, Leflore and Sunflower Counties brought individuals together for forums in each county to discuss the challenges and the positives of living a healthy lifestyle in their area. After the initial forums, community action groups were created. These groups each chose a different focus to fight obesity and promote health in their community.

Adams went to the first community action meeting for Get Healthy, Trim Down Delta in Holmes County not knowing that when she left she would be making a positive change in her life. She joined the community physical activity group, but while at the gathering she listened to what the other groups had to say. She paid special attention to the family dinner group and what they conversed about. She made notes about what was discussed and took them home.

Later that afternoon she went to visit her sister. Her daughters and two more of her sisters joined them. Adams spoke with them about what she learned at the meeting and they began thinking about family dinners and the importance of that quality time spent together. The group of ladies decided then and there they would start holding family dinners together every Friday night.

“We decided to make this a habit. We had gotten so busy and we were not spending time together even though some of us live in the same area,” said Adams.

back to the table, pg. 2

That night they held their first official Friday night family dinner and it has continued on each week. Adams says so many positive outcomes have occurred in her family because of these dinners. It has allowed her family to open up and talk more about what is happening in their lives.

“It has given the adults a chance to talk about the work week and what is going on at home. I have one granddaughter whose grades have significantly improved and she is now on the honor roll. I also have grandchildren who have opened up about being bullied at school,” said Adams.

Not only have the dinners improved the family mentally and emotionally, but physically as well. The family is now choosing more nutritious options than ever before.

“At the beginning, most of the family was drinking whole milk,” said Adams. “Now we are drinking skim milk.”

The dinners have given the family the opportunity to also talk about nutrition and exercise. Adams’ husband, who prior to the beginning of the dinners was diagnosed with diabetes, has seen significant improvements in his health recently. He is eating better and exercising, because of this his blood sugar has gone down and he has not needed insulin shots.

Adams says her family plans to continue on having these dinners and make it a family tradition. Her niece and nephew recently shocked the family by traveling from out of town to be at the dinner.

Adams said, “My niece and nephew surprised the family by coming. They just wanted to be a part of our dinner.”

For more information about the Get Healthy, Trim Down Delta project or the community action groups contact Bobbie Jo Beach at 662-325-3360 or e-mail bjb248@ext.msstate.edu. Also, check out the Get Healthy, Trim Down Delta Facebook page and the project website at www.msucare.com/trimdowndelta/.

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