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University of Alaska Fairbanks Cooperative Extension Service nutrition educators in Fairbanks, Tok and Bethel will lead grocery store tours this summer to help individuals learn how to eat healthy and stretch their food budgets.

Helen Idzorek, who coordinates Extension nutrition education programs, said the Cooking Matters at the Store program targets low-income families with children ages 5 and under. The program will be piloted in the three communities.

Reina Hasting, who has been leading tours in the Fairbanks area, said, “It’s about learning how to shop and buy healthy foods on a budget.”

Hasting leads small group tours that include the fresh produce, dairy, cereal, canned food and freezer areas of the store. She talks about nutrition, reading labels, unit pricing and other tips for saving money. A bag of whole carrots, for instance, can be half as expensive as baby carrots, she said.

The tour ends with a challenge. Participants gather at least one item from each food group — vegetables, fruits, protein, dairy and grains — and must keep the total at $10 or less. They get to keep the food and receive a booklet with low-cost recipes and more tips.

The 90-minute tours are supported by the nonprofit organization Share our Strength and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education. Participants must be eligible for programs such as Women, Infants and Children (WIC), food stamps, Head Start, and free and reduced lunches or have an income that falls within the eligibility guidelines for these programs.

The tours will continue through August. Anyone interested in participating may contact Helen Idzorek at 474-7930 or haidzorek@alaska.edu.

ON THE WEB: www.uaf.edu/ces/hhfd/fnp

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