

WIC News

Health
and
Happiness



Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children

Health and Happiness: Choices with a Positive Impact

As the premiere public health nutrition program, WIC has a proven track record of helping families live healthier lives. Our commitment to health includes each of our own efforts to eat well, be active, and find balance to meet our individual goals. A key piece that sometimes gets overlooked is the role that happiness plays in a healthy lifestyle. Happiness and health are undeniably intertwined. In this edition of *Texas WIC News*, you all shared inspiring stories and tips to weave more of both into our own lives and those we interact with every day. Turn to page 4 to see just how many of our agencies embraced the call to action for last year's challenge — Growing the 5 Seeds of Happiness. The WIC Wellness Works insert explains how you can train your brain to stimulate positive brain chemistry.

When it comes to achieving a healthy diet, many of us find that consistently eating nutritious foods can be a big challenge not only for our clients, but for us, too. We hope you will find some inspiration on page 7, which

focuses on the Mediterranean diet — an eating pattern that many find realistic, flexible, and delicious. The most important part is choosing a plan you can stick with, and this one has a lot to offer!

Much of what we personally feel and do is often visible and felt by others. Our choices influence everyone we interact with, and our actions contribute to the health of the community around us. I hope it brings you joy to know that the work you do every day makes an immense impact on the health and happiness of those who surround you.

From the Texas WIC Director

- Lindsay Rodgers, MA, RD, LD





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Lindsay Rodgers
Texas WIC Director

Amanda Hovis
Director, Nutrition Education / Clinic Services Unit

Rachel Edwards
Manager, Clinic Services Branch

Shirley Ellis
Manager, Nutrition Education Branch

Mandy Seay
Publication Coordinator

Clare Wolf
Managing Editor / Designer

Chris Coxwell
Photographer

Lorise Grimbball, Matt Harrington, Renee Mims,
Melanie Smith, Kelley Reed
Contributing Editors & Designers

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Growing the Seeds of Happiness: What a Wellness Challenge Did for WIC

by Katie Coyne, MS, IBCLC
Breastfeeding Training Specialist



It is easy to see the negative in the world or even in our own lives. The recent WIC Wellness Works challenge reminded us of the importance of happiness and provided tangible ways to find, create, and recognize happiness. Most researchers agree that happiness is a blend of internal and external factors. Simply put, happiness is complicated. There are some people who seem to be born happy and others who feel they have to fake it. No matter which type you connect with, happiness is a choice and a skill that can be learned. On top of that, it's a skill that is beneficial to your overall health.

There are plenty of misconceptions about happiness. Some may think they must be annoyingly peppy to be considered a happy person, and that they cannot ever have negative thoughts. This couldn't be further from the truth. Happiness is not a destination, it is a journey. Research suggests your satisfaction with life, along with how good you feel on a day-to-day basis, are the keys to happiness. Both of these are within your control, but can be difficult at times.

Growing the Five Seeds of Happiness was one of WIC staff's wellness challenges last year. The wellness packet pointed out that people who feel positive emotion most of the time:

1. Meet their basic needs.
2. Participate in supportive relationships.
3. Practice positive thinking.
4. Fill their lives with meaning.
5. Give and receive kindness.

Research has shown actions in each of these five areas commonly lead to feeling content with life. The more enjoyable moments we have each day, the happier we are in general. To feel long-term contentment, our brains need to regularly experience positive emotions like joy, calm, and gratitude. The feeling can be passed along to others. Each week, the focus was to grow one of the seeds of happiness through some of the action steps provided in the employee packets. Each action step taken allowed staff to color in a section of the mandala, which was included in the packets. In addition to these action steps, the "Happiness Grows Here" bulletin boards allowed for sharing what makes you happy and happy acts you share with others. The bulletin boards across Texas WIC clinics were incredible and made a huge impact on employee morale. Each agency embraced the challenge in a unique way. Common feedback received from local agency staff was that this challenge was different, important, and didn't ask for a difficult lifestyle change.

Beyond using this wellness challenge to increase our own happiness, how can we harness this power and share it with our WIC clients? Local Agency 71 in Collin County already took its wellness challenge one step further. Assistant WIC Director Kim James, MS, RD, LD, put up a happiness bulletin board in a clinic. The intention was for WIC clients to feel the effects of the happiness challenge. Kim knew the WIC clients would not be used to something like this in their waiting room, so she empowered her coworkers to talk to the WIC families

(continued on page 6)

Happiness Testimonials

Diana Rincones, Nutrition Tech — Local Agency 35

Many local agencies got creative with their happiness challenge activities. At Local Agency 35 in Denton County, employees would occasionally hula hoop in the waiting room during lunch breaks. Peer Counselor Coordinator Esther Lozano explained they wanted to celebrate happiness with joyous activities like hula hooping or potluck lunches.

Diana Rincones, nutrition tech for Denton County WIC, said she most enjoyed the magnets and messages posted above her work station, as well as using the Happify app. *“The magnets and daily reminders can make a difference. Having one posted above my work station was perfect. I need that magnet after a difficult situation — it reminds me of all the good out there and the difference I can make.”*

Carrollton Clinic



Lilian Gloria, WIC Site Manager — Local Agency 26 described the thought process behind the happiness board:

“Our team understands ‘Happiness’ as simple acts of kindness, forgiveness, sharing, giving, expressing gratitude, embracing diversity and tolerance. Therefore, we wanted to center our poster in the fact that being happy has to be tangible and evident to everybody surrounding us, because when you embrace a positive and enthusiastic attitude, you are able to spread the seed of happiness. That is why our main idea was to learn how to wear happiness and dress up with fun and joyful colors as one of our daily actions.”

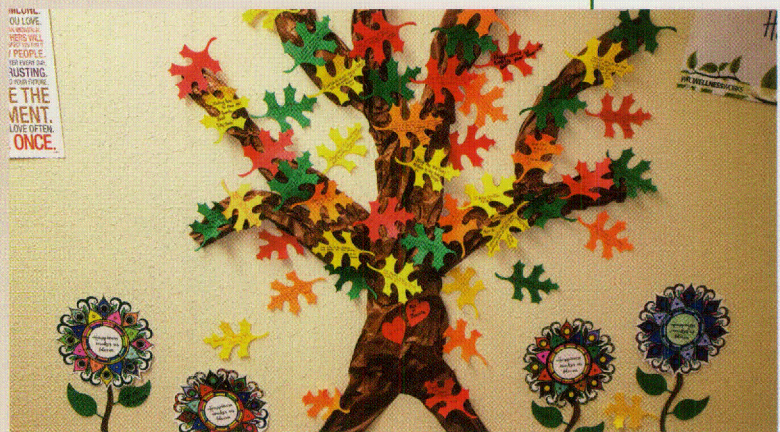
The background of our poster pictures a sunny day with green pastures... and represents a fresh start on our pursuit of happiness. In the middle you see a clothes line with one dress for each staff member. At the bottom, the flowers open up to display an action or something positive that made us feel great and one flower that will be blooming with our happy attitude as a team.”



North West WIC Clinic

Jacie Vasek, RD, LD — Local Agency 27, shared her testimony:

“Local Agency 27 is in the balcony and we are loving the view up here! Our staff has been busy spreading happiness at all of our clinics, and we can tell a difference! All of the staff has really enjoyed this WIC Wellness Challenge and as the coordinator I have a warm smile on my face each time I get to see the bulletin boards the staff has created. Most of the clinics have hung their mandalas on their doors to remind them to color so many sections each day. Several of the clinics played music at their clinic meetings and even watched funny videos that made them all laugh. In addition to the ‘Growing the 5 Seeds of Happiness’ challenge I also challenged each of the clinics to share with their co-workers one thing they are thankful for, for everyday in the month of November. I have also heard clients say how much they enjoy the motivational posters that have been placed at each of the clinics.”



Lamesa/Andrews Clinic

Growing the Seeds of Happiness

(Continued from page 5)

about it. Within the first hour of the bulletin board being posted, a sweet 8-year-old girl decided she wanted to add something. Her note read, "Happiness is... playing outside, because I love to play outside." Once her mom saw her daughter participating she took time to think about what made her happy. Her answer was "musica."

If we can encourage our WIC participants to share their happiness, the atmosphere in the clinic would be that much better. We are reminded that we have yet another challenge, and that is to share happiness with our WIC clients — whatever way you feel is best. You can create bulletin boards for them, post positive messages around the clinic, or simply spread the joy by wearing your happiness. And finally, don't allow the challenge to fade; instead, remember to find your daily dose of happiness, wherever that may be.

Resources

- Happiness and Health. Harvard School of Public Health Web site. <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/magazine/happiness-stress-heart-disease>. Published Winter 2011. Accessed December 18, 2015.
- Parks, Acacia. What is Happiness, Anyway? Happify Daily. <http://my.happify.com/hd/what-is-happiness-anyway>. Accessed December 23, 2015.



City of Dallas Lactation Care Center, Local Agency 07



Irving Clinic, Local Agency 07

Killeen Clinic, Local Agency 31



Enjoy the International Mediterranean Diet

by Kelley Reed, RD, LD
Nutrition Education Consultant

You may have heard about the Mediterranean diet, but have you heard that May is International Mediterranean Diet Month? That's right, a whole month dedicated in observance of a diet. This celebration began in 2009 when the nonprofit food and nutrition education organization, Oldways, created a month-long campaign to promote awareness of the many health benefits associated with eating the Mediterranean way.

The good news is that you don't have to travel to the Mediterranean region to enjoy the nutrient-rich foods that make up this style of eating. Mediterranean-inspired meals can be eaten anywhere in the world because the ingredients can be found at most grocery stores and markets.

A wealth of flavors for good health

The Mediterranean diet focuses primarily on the foundation of eating plant-based foods, such as fruits and vegetables, whole grains, legumes and nuts; healthy fats from olives, nuts, and fish; an abundance of whole grain breads, pastas, and cereals; and moderate intake of red wine consumed with meals.

With endless amounts of unprocessed foods that are chock-full of fiber, healthy fats, vitamins and minerals, it's no wonder doctors and dietitians highly recommend the Mediterranean diet. In fact, research has shown following the traditional Mediterranean diet can stabilize blood sugar, therefore lowering the risk of type 2 diabetes. Furthermore, the Mediterranean diet reduces blood pressure, LDL cholesterol, and triglycerides, resulting in a lowered risk of death from heart disease and stroke; along with protective properties to stave off cancer, and neurological diseases such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's.

Join the celebration!

There are many ways WIC can celebrate

the health benefits and flavors of Mediterranean-style cuisine. For starters, get your clients involved by hosting a cooking class that features a simple recipe families can sample. Take it one step further and host a Mediterranean-themed nutrition carnival with stations offering recipe samples and information on the host of health benefits. Consider preparing one of the following recipes to take to the next staff event. Your coworkers' taste buds will be so delighted that they'll surely be inspired to try a Mediterranean recipe at home.

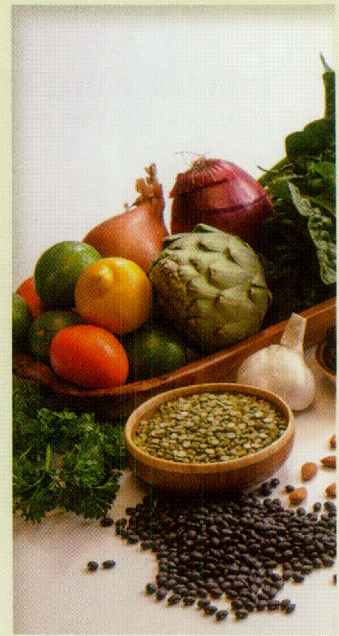
No matter what recipe you try in observance of International Mediterranean Diet Month, you can feel good knowing you dished up a healthy helping!

Article references:

- International Mediterranean Diet Month. Oldways. <http://oldwayspt.org/programs/mediterranean-foods-alliance/national-mediterranean-diet-month>. Accessed December 8, 2015.
- Mayo Clinic Staff. Mediterranean diet: A heart-healthy eating plan. The Mayo Clinic. <http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/mediterranean-diet/art-20047801>. Published June 14, 2013. Accessed December 8, 2015.
- Ramón Estruch, M.D., Ph.D., Emilio Ros, M.D., Ph.D., Jordi Salas-Salvadó, M.D., Ph.D., et al. Primary Prevention of Cardiovascular Disease with a Mediterranean Diet. *N Engl J Med*. 2013; 368:1279-1290. Doi: 10.1056/NEJMoa1200303

Recipes:

- <http://allrecipes.com/recipe/169583/mediterranean-quinoa-salad/?internalSource=search%20result&referringContentType=search%20results>.
- <http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/recipes/pasta-with-spinach-garbanzos-and-raisins/rcp-20049797>.



Check out the great Mediterranean recipes on the next page ⇒

Mediterranean Diet Recipes



Pasta with Spinach, Garbanzos and Raisins

Ingredients:

- 8 ounces farfalle (bow tie) pasta
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 4 garlic cloves, crushed
- ½ can (19 ounces) garbanzos, rinsed and drained
- ½ cup unsalted chicken broth
- ½ cup golden raisins
- 4 cups fresh spinach, chopped
- 2 tablespoons Parmesan cheese
- Cracked black peppercorns, to taste

Directions:

1. Fill a large pot $\frac{3}{4}$ full with water and bring to a boil. Add the pasta and cook until al dente (tender), 10 to 12 minutes, or according to the package directions. Drain the pasta thoroughly.
2. In a large skillet, heat the olive oil and garlic over medium heat. Add the garbanzos and chicken broth. Stir until warmed through. Add the raisins and spinach. Heat just until spinach is wilted, about 3 minutes. Don't overcook.
3. Divide the pasta among the plates. Top each serving with $\frac{1}{4}$ of the sauce, 1 teaspoon Parmesan cheese and peppercorns to taste. Serve immediately.

Mediterranean Quinoa Salad

Ingredients:

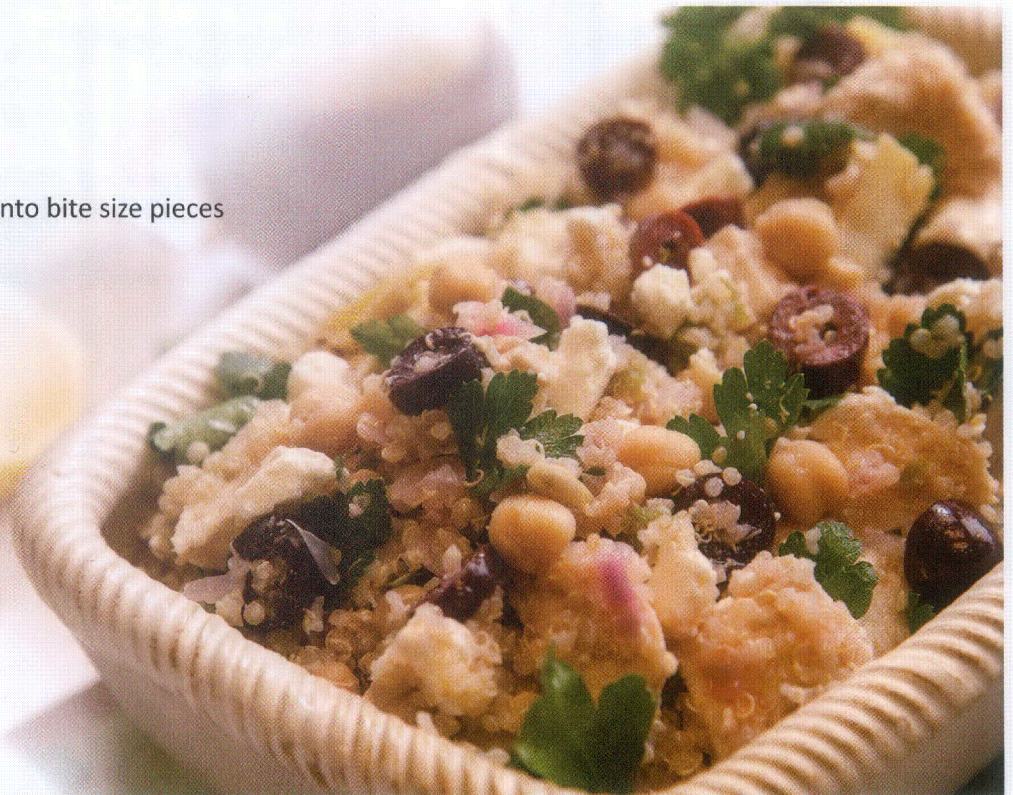
- 2 cups chicken broth
- 1 cup uncooked quinoa
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 2 large cooked chicken breasts - cut into bite size pieces
- 1 large onion, red or yellow, diced
- 1 large green bell pepper, diced
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- ½ cup chopped Kalamata olives
- ½ cup crumbled feta cheese
- ¼ cup chopped fresh parsley
- ½ can chickpeas, drained (or whole can if meat omitted)
- ½ can or 1 small jar of quartered artichoke hearts, drained
- Chives (optional)

Sauce:

- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup fresh lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup olive oil

Directions:

1. Bring the broth and garlic to a boil in a saucepan. Stir in the quinoa, reduce heat to medium-low, cover, and simmer until the quinoa is tender and the water has been absorbed, about 15 to 20 minutes. While the quinoa is cooking, sauté the onion and green bell pepper until translucent.
2. Gently stir the chicken, onion, bell pepper, olives, feta cheese, parsley, chickpeas, and artichokes into the quinoa. Combine the lemon juice, balsamic vinegar, and olive oil and drizzle over the mixture. Stir until evenly mixed. Serve warm or refrigerate and serve cold. Add fresh chopped chives on top for additional flavor.



WIC and TDA:

Connecting Families With the Benefits of the Summer Feeding Program and Farmers' Markets

by Angela Olige
Assistant Commissioner
Food and Nutrition
Texas Department of Agriculture

It seems fitting that the partnership between WIC and the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) shines brightest during the warm summer months. Just as the need for good nutrition among low-income children increases when school is out and the season's bounty sprouts quickly in Texas fields, our partnership is ripe for growth. With the start of another summer, WIC and TDA will continue exploring innovative new ways to meet the shared goal of feeding more young Texans in need through the federally funded and TDA-administered Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP).

Last year WIC and TDA worked together to connect families with the good nutrition available through SFSP and FMNP. Pilot programs demonstrated the enormous potential for collaboration and this year represents a pivotal milestone to build on our successes. More than ever, WIC offices will be vital in increasing awareness of these programs among clients and ensuring young Texans have access to the nutrition they need to succeed in the classroom and in life.

In 2015, several WIC offices in Houston and San Antonio operated as SFSP meal sites by partnering with local sponsors in a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) pilot program. Families visiting participating WIC clinics whose members were 18 years old and younger were able to receive an SFSP meal at no cost. The pilot program helped to streamline two vital USDA nutrition programs for the benefit of Texas families. Other WIC offices in these areas and throughout Texas assisted in connecting families with healthy summer meals by distributing important information about how to find an SFSP site. In 2016, TDA and WIC will continue these efforts to further the availability of meals during the summer.



In 2012, WIC and TDA partnered on FMNP to provide Texas families with vouchers to access fresh produce at participating farmers' markets. Last year saw the introduction of a pilot program that put benefits on an electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card at one Austin location.

The pilot tested the feasibility of loading the FMNP benefits onto the WIC client's existing WIC EBT card, allowing the WIC client to redeem the benefits electronically at the participating farmers' market pilot locations rather than relying on paper documentation to verify eligibility. Because WIC clinics provide face-to-face nutrition education, including information about shopping at farmers' markets, this process capitalizes on WIC's interaction with the client to determine their interest in shopping at a farmers' market. Both TDA and WIC will continue the pilot and the traditional FMNP voucher program in 2016.

Whether it is serving meals, teaching mothers about preparing fresh foods, or ensuring
(Continued on page 10)



Summer Feeding Program

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families know the easy ways to find nearby SFSP sites, WIC is a potent TDA partner for SFSP and FMNP. The WIC program offers a unique opportunity for raising awareness of the resources available through these programs. For instance, families served by WIC may not realize that any child 18 or younger is able to access the meals in SFSP for free or that many sites offer enriching activities for the children and serve various combinations of meals. Meals include breakfast, lunch, afternoon snacks, and dinner. WIC staff members can also provide the assurances and motivation some families may need to avail themselves of the fresh Texas produce only available at a local farmers' market.

Using their direct interaction, along with TDA resources and information, WIC offices are in a unique position to connect more families with the healthy meals and other benefits of SFSP and FMNP. TDA stands ready to support WIC in these efforts in a variety of ways. WIC staff members are encouraged to learn more at www.SquareMeals.org, and use the resources available there, and distribute the materials that can be provided directly to their offices.

WIC and TDA strive throughout the year to connect families with the nutritional resources they need. Working together represents infinite opportunities and possibilities for achieving healthy environments that encourage healthier children and healthier communities. As we continue exploring our potential for building a brighter future, using new tools and unparalleled innovation, the summer of 2016 will be a time for this unique partnership to truly shine in the great state of Texas.



Amazing Human Body 101: The Brain

How focusing attention on “the good” in life can shape our brain.

CONTRIBUTED BY WIC WELLNESS WORKS COORDINATOR DEBBIE LEHMAN, PHD, RD

Have you ever tried to drive outside the grooves on a well-worn dirt road? It's challenging. A similar phenomenon can happen in our brains. Neurons in our brains talk to each other via chemical pathways, and when the same pathway is used often, we form a groove. That means it makes it harder to think or react in a different way without conscious effort.

Research shows that when we repeat something new (such as meditation or learning a new language), we use a different portion of the brain in a focused way, and that new neural pathways might develop in your brain much like a new dirt road or walking trail. Our brain's ability to do this is called neuroplasticity. This re-routing of the brain requires conscious effort because we are going outside of or against a well-formed path. As you work to carve out a new route, you have to pay more attention to your actions. It feels off or unsteady at first and will take practice, reminders, and time.

Experts have found that if we focus our attention on what we resent or regret, we bathe continuously in negative brain chemistry (and get stuck in the road rut). In contrast, if we focus our attention on the things we are grateful for, even if small, we build up neural pathways in the brain that stimulate positive brain chemistry. With proper practice and focused attention, we can train our brains and grow positive states of mind such as happiness, gratitude, resilience, love, compassion, etc.

This isn't always easy. In today's society, we are constantly distracted by negative stimuli that grab our attention. In order for the positive feelings to stick and shape our brain, we have to focus attention on the good for a longer duration of time

(allowing it to sink in) and consciously keep our attention on gratitude.

Rick Hanson, Ph.D., a psychologist and founder of the Wellspring Institute for Neuroscience and Contemplative Wisdom, author, and member of the Greater Good Science Center's Advisory Board, recommends three steps that can help you train your brain on “the good” track.



1. Let a good fact become a good experience.

As you go through life and come across a good thing (flowers blooming, finishing another day at work, checking an item off the to-do list), stop and truly experience the moment. Let yourself feel good.

2. Really savor this positive experience. Feel the experience in your body for a moment longer than you would usually do.

3. As you sink into this experience, sense your intent that this experience is sinking into you.

Visualize the experience as something sinking into you. A golden light, soothing balm, jewel going into your treasure chest heart or anything you can take with you when the moment is gone.

An important health note: Not to say all moments are, or have to be, positive – we are created specially to feel a spectrum of emotions. However, if you

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Can You Help Happiness Happen More?

5 things in life that may be holding you back from being your happiest

CONTRIBUTED BY LISA CARRIGG, MS, TEXAS STATE DIETETIC INTERN

Most of us would agree we prefer to feel happy and content more than feeling grouchy. It seems we are on a continual journey for the pursuit of things to make us feel good. So why is it that some people seem happier than others?

We currently know that happiness is a mix of genetics (roughly 50 percent), circumstances beyond our control (roughly 10 percent), and about 40 percent depends on personal choices. Believe it or not, money can't buy happiness. Scientists have discovered that once basic human needs are met past a certain point, happiness does not increase with more money or material wealth. Relationships however, affect happiness differently.

Small changes can have a large impact and practicing your own happiness helps contribute to the happiness of those around you. Check in on these 5 things in your life which could be helping or holding you back from being your happiest.

1. **Forming Positive Relationships**

Are your relationships with friends, family, co-workers, or classmates supportive ones? Can you make steps to walk away from, or change, any negative relationships? Surrounding yourself with people who tend to be happy actually helps you to be happier too. Look for people who express gratitude or thankfulness often, compliment others, speak positively most of the time, laugh often, or are affectionate.

2. **Encouraging Positive Emotions and Thoughts**

Comparison with others leads to unhappiness. We may not even realize how often we are doing it. If you are feeling unhappy, ask yourself why. Recognizing when you may be unhappy as the result of comparison with others is an important practice. Refocus instead. Make a list, even once a week, to remind yourself of the positive things

about you and your life or keep a gratitude journal which has been shown to increase happiness. Having a way of managing negative and stressful emotions will also help.

3. **Connecting with a Community**

Being involved with a community creates a sense of belonging and purpose and has been shown to be a key component of a happy life. This community can be anything from a sports team to a professional organization. Most importantly it is a group of people who support, share with, and in general look out for the well-being of each other. Technology can make us feel as though we are well connected, but some newer research suggests that our use of cell phones and other social media may be causing us to be less connected and less happy.

4. **Making Time for Strengths and Interests**

Happiness can increase when we discover our strengths and practice them. A strength could range from playing sports to a hobby. When we become truly good at something we can experience what scientists call flow. Flow is when we become lost in our activity because it has become so natural to us. People who experience flow more often report being happier.

5. **Finding Meaning and Purpose in Life**

Pay attention to what you are doing in life and why. Notice the difference you make through your actions and words, big or small. Who are you having an impact on and how? What truly matters to you? Taking time to think about and notice these things helps increase a sense of meaning and happiness.

Finally, realize that some unhappiness or uneasiness is a sign that we need to change something in our lives. If it's time for a change, identify actions that you have some control over. Don't forget to find time for yourself – time for

(continued on WWW — Insert D)

recipe

Chicken and Summer Vegetable Tostadas

Makes 4 servings

Ingredients

- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- 2 teaspoons canola oil
- 12 ounces chicken breast (cut into thin strips)
- 1 cup chopped onion (about 1)
- 1 cup corn kernels (about 2 ears)
- 1 cup chopped zucchini
- ½ cup salsa verde
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro, divided
- 4 (8-inch) fat-free flour tortillas or corn tortillas
- Cooking spray
- 3 ounces Monterey Jack cheese, shredded (about ¾ cup)

Preparation

1. Combine first 3 ingredients in a small bowl, stirring well. Heat oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Sprinkle the spice mixture evenly over chicken. Add chicken to pan; sauté for 3 minutes. Add onion, corn, and zucchini to pan; sauté for 2 minutes or until chicken is done. Stir in salsa and 2 tablespoons cilantro. Cook 2 minutes or until liquid almost evaporates, stirring frequently.
2. Preheat broiler.
3. Working with 2 tortillas at a time, arrange tortillas in a single layer on a baking sheet; lightly coat tortillas with cooking spray. Broil 3 minutes or until lightly browned. Spoon about ¾ cup chicken mixture in the center of each tortilla; sprinkle each serving with ¼ cup cheese. Broil an additional 2 minutes or until cheese melts. Repeat procedure with remaining tortillas, chicken mixture, and cheese. Sprinkle each serving with about ¾ teaspoon of remaining cilantro. Serve immediately.

Nutrition Information Per Serving:

371 calories, 11g total fat (5g saturated fat), 68mg cholesterol, 740mg sodium, 36g carbohydrate (4g dietary fiber), 31g protein

Source: *Cooking Light*, November 2012 http://www.cookinglight.com/food/quick-healthy/quick-easy-summer-recipes/chicken-summer-vegetable-tostadas_2



Texas Seasonal Produce



Fruits:

Apples, blackberries, blueberries, grapefruit, honeydew, peaches, watermelon



Vegetables:

Cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, cucumbers, green onions, lettuce, mushrooms, onions, sweet onions, field peas, sweet peppers, hot peppers, potatoes, squash, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, turnips, zucchini



Share your wellness success stories for a chance to be spotlighted in Texas WIC News and inspire other WIC staff! Contact your State Wellness Coordinator, Debbie Lehman, at Debbie.Lehman@dshs.state.tx.us or 1-512-341-4517.

Amazing Human Body 101: The Brain

(Continued from WWW — Insert A)

do experience prolonged suffering with excessive stress, depression, or anxiety, please talk with a doctor who can help.

Reference:

Hanson, R. How to trick your brain for happiness. Greater Good. The Science of a Meaningful Life Web site. http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_to_trick_your_brain_for_happiness. Updated September 26, 2011. Accessed December 2, 2015.

Can You Help Happiness Happen More?

(Continued from WWW — Insert B)

recharging and doing activities you enjoy – that can work magic on your mood.

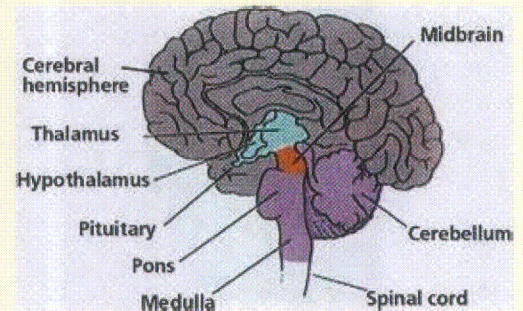
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Mind Games

Some key players in the brain and nervous system are labeled below. Match each with its major function.



- | | |
|------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Cerebral hemisphere | 5. Pons |
| 2. Thalamus | 6. Medulla |
| 3. Hypothalamus | 7. Midbrain |
| 4. Pituitary | 8. Cerebellum |
| | 9. Spinal cord |
-
- A. The large group of nerves which runs through the center of the spine and carries messages between the brain and the rest of the body.
 - B. A small organ in the brain that produces hormones and influences growth and development.
 - C. Links the nervous system to the endocrine system via the pituitary gland.
 - D. Either of the two lateral halves of the cerebrum – the front part of the brain where conscious mental thoughts are generated.
 - E. Contains the centers controlling vital involuntary functions.
 - F. Body temperature regulation, sleep/wake cycles, vision, hearing, and motor control.
 - G. Connects the upper and lower parts of the brain relaying their messages back and forth, like a bridge.
 - H. Relays sensory and motor information to and from the cerebral cortex.
 - I. The back part of the brain that controls balance and the use of muscles.

Key:

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Cerebral hemisphere - D | Pons - G |
| Thalamus - H | Pituitary - B |
| Hypothalamus - C | Spinal cord - A |
| Midbrain - F | Cerebellum - I |
| Medulla - E | |

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Celebrating Our Influences

May and June are when we formally celebrate the people who raised us, taught us, and ultimately molded us into who we are. We asked you to tell us about the ones you want to honor and how they shaped you into being happy and healthy.

Marisha Garcia-Hare, IBCLC

Local Agency 27



My mother always liked our plates to be colorful. We had a meat, green vegetable, orange or red vegetable or side, and a yellow side, (usually a starch like potatoes, rice, or corn). In our salad, she'd have purple cabbage, carrots, tomatoes, cucumbers, or avocados when the season was right and they were on sale. As a kid, I thought it was pretty, but now I realize it was a pretty balanced plate of food! Additionally, I saw my mother breastfeed my siblings and heard her and my grandmothers talk about how important it is. (I want to pass on the importance of breastfeeding to my children.)



Marisha's kids, Bella, Tristan, and Kellan, breastfeeding their babies.



Nancy Fish

WIC Clinic Manager & Nutritionist
Local Agency 27

I come from a family of five. My dad was a farmer/rancher and my mom was a stay-at-home mom until I was a junior in high school. My parents were born and raised in the depression so food was never wasted and we rarely ate out. Mom cooked all three meals. We ate what was offered and leftovers were used for the next meal. As a family we would always pray before each meal and eat together. My mom taught us to include each food group at mealtime and that mealtime is family time.

Nikki Morrow, IBCLC

Assistant WIC Director
Local Agency 31

Growing up, I spent a lot of time in the kitchen with my Uncle Mike. He loved to cook for me and my sister and loved even more when we would help. He always made cooking look easy and you could tell how much love and passion went into his favorite recipes. He discussed the importance of quality ingredients or which chefs and cookbooks were the best. I know now how significantly that impacted me. I thoroughly enjoy cooking, trying new and exotic foods, reading cookbooks, appreciating fresh ingredients, and including my children in the kitchen to help make special family loved recipes. I have many stained and faded recipe cards and cookbooks from him which wonderfully hold some of my most cherished memories.

Debbie Lehman, PhD, RD

Nutrition Evaluation Consultant
WIC State Office

I'll never forget being a very little girl and snuggling my dad as hard as possible. He'd pick me up off the ground, and I'd wrap my legs around his waist and arms around his neck and squeeze as tight as I could squeeze. I may have outgrown those hugs, but I never have forgotten them. Now I share those hugs with my young daughter. Those are the memories for which we live. I love you dad.

Bianca Bangor, BFPC, MCAH

Local Agency 01



Bianca's two children and her dad.

My parents taught me that everyone has their own love language and you just have to learn how to understand it. I want to pass down the same concept to my children, and make sure they understand that family is the most important thing in life.

Paula Fernandez

WIC Clinic Manager & WCS
Local Agency 27

My parents have always taught us to be thankful for what we have. Even though we did not possess worldly or material things we were "rich" in love and I try to convey that message to my girls. Growing up we ate whatever mom prepared, at the dinner table as a family.

Mary Lopez

WIC Nutritionist Assistant
Local Agency 27

I raised four children and I taught them to always respect their elders and to be there for each other as a family. As a mother, I always made sure my children were well taken care of and I fed them a variety of protein and vegetables. (I have also shown my thirteen grandchildren and great grandson to be happy and to have God in their lives.)

Juanita Villalobos

WIC Clinic Manager and WCS
Local Agency 27

I come from a humble family of five. My parents instilled and passed down several life lessons. I was raised to be a hard worker. We were migrant workers and this past summer my children worked hoeing cotton. I couldn't be more proud. Meal time at the table as a family was a must. This made for some funny, yet cherished memories such as the clumsy child who always spilled the milk, Kool-Aid, or water. As a special treat after church, my parents always took us to the park to play or have picnics. Once I became a mom I always took my children to the park to play and now my daughter does the same.

Jacie Slocum, RD, LD

Local Agency 27

Growing up, dinner time was family time; every night we would turn off the TV and put away our phones before sitting down at the table to discuss our days and laugh with each other. It was always important to my parents that my brothers and I help in the kitchen and learn how to cook at a young age. For as long as I can remember, my dad had a huge garden and taught us how to prepare the different types of produce. I believe all of my time in the kitchen growing up was a major part of why I became a registered dietitian and I hope to impact my children's lives the same way!

David Raymond

Manager, Quality Management Branch
WIC State Office

My mother is a great cook, and usually made lots of great meals for us each day. These meals never had the goal of being low calorie, or low fat. However, she always made sure they were "balanced." She would always tell us as she was serving the food groups that were represented in each meal. "Having a balanced meal, was the best way to a healthy future."

Shirley Ellis, MS, RD

Nutrition Education Branch Manager
WIC State Office

One of my dad's favorite sayings was "always hold your head up high." My siblings and I heard this often as we faced both trials and celebrations. I've passed this sentiment down to my daughter. Often it is a simple reminder to her of "Alyssa, what Papa say about this?" Her response, "Always hold your head up high."

Maria Cavazos

WIC Clinic Manager & WCS
Local Agency 27

Coming from a family of eight children, my wonderful parents showed us to love, respect, and support one another. We were taught to always have God in our lives and to make good choices. They showed us to eat what was on the table and if you didn't like it, then you didn't eat. We were not given sodas, instead our parents pushed water. Back in our times my father had a garden that we all helped out with that allowed us to like our fruits and vegetables. Happiness was spending time together and loving each other!

Tiffany Rice, MHA

WIC Director
Local Agency 11

My parents taught us to always put God first and everything else will follow! My husband and I teach our two girls this fundamental necessity for the fruits of life!



Our two girls, Kendyll and Kensley.

Jessica Leyendecker, MPH

Engagement Specialist
WIC State Office

My mother passed down the importance of family meals. I have strong memories of my mother cooking meals from scratch. We even joked that our house was a restaurant called "KC's Kitchen" for Karen Carter. Everyone, friends included, enjoyed Sunday dinner at KC's Kitchen! Frequently eating together at the dinner table is something my husband and I already share and I hope to keep this tradition in the family.

Judy Harden

Associate Director
Local Agency 27

I don't remember my parents or grandparents ever saying a WORD about how to live a healthy, happy life, but I learned by watching. My memories of all of them are all about laughter. When the family got together we didn't talk about politics or religion, nor did we gossip about other people. We all sat around telling goofy stories about the dumb mistakes we'd made since we'd last seen each other and we'd all laugh uproariously at the newest antics. I learned to roll with the punches, laugh at my own stupidity, and adapt. As I've lost each of them over the years, I've also learned that laughing is better than crying; you can find the humor in anything, and joy always overcomes sorrow.

Alexa Neal

WIC BF Peer Counselor
Local Agency 27

My parents always taught us about how to stay healthy and active. My mom cooked our meals at home, and looked for new healthy recipes, so we could try something different. She taught us to value our family time, which usually happened at the kitchen table. I wish to show my children how special it is to have a fun-filled and healthy, happy family!

Frida Edwards

WIC BF Peer Counselor
Local Agency 27

My mother taught me how to prep food when I was 10 years old. Now, every time I cook, I freeze half the meal for a busy night. Every time I buy fresh produce, I spend an hour chopping it all up and freezing portions of it for an easy stir fry or something for the kids.

Tiffany Quevedo, RD, LD

Associate Director
Local Agency 27

My mom has always been my inspiration. She was a single mom and always worked hard to get me through college. She has always been my support system. While growing up, eating healthy meals was a regular part of our routine. We always had fresh vegetables as a side with our meal.

Noemi Hernandez, MBA, RD, LD, IBCLC

Quality Assurance Coordinator
WIC State Office



My parents, Oscar and Silvia.

My parents have always taught my brother and me, that to maintain health and happiness: you need to pray, help others, live within your means and be thankful. These teachings have stuck with me and have carried into my life during times of success and hardship. Now, I am passing those same teachings to my child: pray, help others, live within your means, and be thankful.

Veronica Hendrix, LVN, IBCLC, RLC

Texas Ten Step Program Coordinator
WIC State Office

I'm grateful for two incredible fathers in my life; my own and my husband. I miss my daddy dearly, but am thankful that God gave me another man in my life that loves me just as much. Happy Father's Day to you both!

My spouse, Travis Hendrix, and my dad, the late Tony Gonzales.



M. Lourdes Delacruz

Training Coordinator
Local Agency 07

My grandmother taught me to eat foods that come from nature; she grew her own vegetables, made her own tortillas, gathered her own eggs and killed her own pigs. She also



Margarita and Cayetano Hernandez, my role models.

told me the secret to a happy marriage was not to look for riches but to find true love. I've been happily married to the love of my life for 18 years. I feel blessed to have my two teenage boys and my husband by my side. That to me is my true happiness.

Amanda Hovis, MPH

Director, Nutrition Education and Clinic Services
WIC State Office

Here is a health/nutrition tip from my mom: "No cereal where sugar is one of the first three ingredients." This taught me to read labels from a very young age and is definitely one I refer back to.

Linda Zeccola, RN, IBCLC

Breastfeeding Training Specialist
WIC State Office

My parents were models of leading healthy lives. They walked the talk when it came to avoiding drinking, smoking, and overindulging. Additionally, my mom stressed the importance of well-balanced meals and daily exposure to fresh air and sunshine.

Lorise Grimball

Team Lead-PPMS
WIC State Office

I was raised on fresh vegetables from the gardens my parents grew. My mother canned what we couldn't eat so we had vegetables year round. She always made sure she served the foods and portions recommended on the food pyramid. Gardening taught us that hard work was rewarded with good health and happiness.

Sandra Bickley

CA/Clinic Supervisor
Local Agency 03

My father, a rural doctor, was a great proponent of one of the biggest success stories of modern medicine: immunizations. His dedicated efforts, promoting and providing all of the newly discovered vaccinations, 1950's and '60's, led to a town full of healthy, happy children and adults, evidenced by my own 67 years of good health.

Alma Carrasco

WIC Clinic Manager & WCS
Local Agency 27

Growing up, my parents took us to work in the fields from early in the morning until late in the evening. We would help with hoeing, cutting milo, picking and transplanting onions, and picking melons. I can remember lunch tasting so good, my parents would pack us hard boiled eggs and burritos and sometimes we even got ice cream. My mom, is one of the hardest working people I know and is very active, she taught us that hard work and dedication will get you far in life. Every Sunday after church, we ate lunch together and spent the afternoon together as a family having fun, as we still do with our kids today.

Katie Coyne, MS, IBCLC

Breastfeeding Training Specialist
WIC State Office

My dad played a huge role not only in raising me but teaching me how to create a happy environment. Kindness toward others makes the world a happier place but also feeds your soul. His demeanor is a living example of how to speak to others using gracious words—I've never met a person who doesn't like being around my dad. I only hope to be half the example he was to my children!



Katie and her dad.

Joefina Burrola

WIC Clerk and BFPC
Local Agency 27

My mother used to freshly prepare our meals instead of buying processed meals. That way she would know exactly what we were eating and that it was healthy. Also she taught us that if we wanted something in life we had to work hard for it.

Parent to Parent Support —



A Lifeline for Families

By Mary Jo Miller, MS
NICU Network
Coordinator,
Texas Parent to Parent

"I was still in the initial shock phase of being told not only that my new baby had a disability, but one that was usually fatal at birth or shortly thereafter, so I just thanked the social worker and filed the brochure away in my suitcase.

"The day after I went home from the hospital, without my newborn baby, I looked for the brochure, read it, and picked up the phone.

"The parent (Mom) who answered the phone listened as I told her about our newborn son, still in the hospital. I told her of the aching, lonely, empty feeling I had and she listened, then supported and comforted me. Later, my husband and I met other people who actually understood what we were feeling, experiencing, because they were living it too."

What is Parent to Parent Support?

Parent to Parent USA defines parent-to-parent support as the intentional connection between a trained support parent and a parent seeking information, resources, guidance, and comfort. Connecting parents has proven effective in

helping families cope with their day-to-day lives, connect with community resources, and navigate the school and health care system. Support is provided by telephone, internet, in person, or through a group.

Finding Parent Support in Texas

Texas Parent to Parent (TxP2P) provides a wide range of services to families of children with disabilities, chronic illness, and other special health care needs. TxP2P is based in Austin and serves families across the state. A network of peer mentors and connections with other parent organizations makes this possible.

TxP2P offers support, information, and education to families of children whose ages span from birth to adulthood. TxP2P services are also available in Spanish. Staff, mostly parents of children with disabilities, have knowledge about life in the Neonatal

Intensive Care Unit (NICU), medical diagnoses, health conditions, school systems, state and federal programs and legislation, advocacy, and communicating with professionals. A program called Transition to Adulthood has been developed to help families plan for life after high school graduation for a child with special needs.

Recognizing the Need for a Parent Support Referral

Nina Norouzi, clinical supervisor, has worked for the Dallas WIC program for seven years and her philosophy of working with moms and caregivers is to be an active and reflective listener. When you use active listening it validates a mom's concerns, shows empathy and builds the relationship. Nina recommends being observant and asking questions based on hints or comments parents make, even when the situation is emotional or difficult.

"As professionals we need to use all of our senses when communicating with a client, picking up cues indicating specific conditions," offers Norouzi. How the mom is handling the child's behavior, for example, being impatient or edgy might indicate she is under stress.

Norouzi points out that some people are open to talk about their problems, concerns, and needs in order to seek help. Others aren't but, as professionals, we need to reach both.

She suggests some initial questions to help open up a conversation:

- How are you doing?
- How are you feeling today?
- Are you ok?

If the child has a disability, a chronic health issue, or medical condition, find an opportunity to ask "Have you talked with other moms?" If you find a mom has not connected with other parents ask: "Have you thought about talking with another mom who has a baby with (fill in here)? Talking with another mom might be a comfort to you. You can ask questions, share information and find out how someone else has handled concerns."

Benefits of Parent Support

Parents identify these benefits of connecting with others:

- Comforts, brings knowledge you are not alone.
- Solves problems and exchanges ideas.
- Identifies helpful resource information.
- Empowers you to be confident and to advocate for your child.
- Brings hope for the future.

Texas Bilingual Websites for Parents and Professionals

Navigate Life Texas was created by a task force that is part of the Texas Health and Human Services Commission. The site provides comprehensive and accurate information about services for children of all ages with disabilities. It was "designed by parents, for parents," but can also help caregivers, clinicians, professionals, and support groups.

Many families turn to the internet when they first receive the news their child has a disability. Region 13 Education Service Center and TxP2P collaborated to develop Parent Companion First Five Years for parents of young children to find comfort, help, and inspiration when they need it.

Both websites feature video interview clips from families talking about their experiences.

How to Refer a Family to TxP2P <http://txp2p.org/index.html>:

- Give a parent the TxP2P phone number-1-866-896-6001 (toll free)
- Help parents fill out the electronic registration form to request a match with a peer mentor (or become a volunteer): <http://www.txp2p.org/volunteer/matchorvolunteerform.html>.
- Parents (and professionals) can register with TxP2P and receive the quarterly newsletter, information about the annual and regional conferences, and resources: <http://txp2p.org/contactus/parentfamilymaillist.html>.

Services Available from TxP2P

- Match parents to trained Peer Parent Mentors (who have a child with similar disabilities or issues).
- Help families find a parent support group in their area.
- Connect to listservs by topic and geographic location and an Advocacy Network.
- Bring parents together for annual statewide and regional conferences.
- Answer questions on the phone or electronically.
- Offer NICU Network, Pathways to Adulthood, and Medical Education Programs.
- Distribute a quarterly newsletter.

More Information and Resources

- Texas Parent to Parent Website – <http://txp2p.org/index.html>.
- Navigate Life Texas – <https://www.navigatelifetexas.org/en>.
- Parent Companion – First Five Years – <http://www.parentcompanion.org/>.
- Parent to Parent USA – <http://www.p2pusa.org/p2pusa/sitepages/p2p-home.aspx>.
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WIC Innovation Centers: Paving the Future of WIC

by Kaylene Thompson, RD, LD
Training Strategist

There's no doubt that the clients who walk into our WIC clinics today are different than the families we have served in decades past. Rapid changes in family structure, technology, and the millennial way of life have changed the lifestyles and preferences of our participants. Staff in clinics throughout the state are trying to figure out how to best impact the families coming into the clinic with less time and more stress. WIC staff desire to make a true lasting impression to keep people coming back, and to see real behavior change. WIC Innovation Centers are on an exciting new journey that will influence the future of WIC by changing the way nutrition education and health messages are delivered. WIC Innovation Centers are a place where staff is encouraged to "think outside the box" with a focus on unique and innovative practices related to behavior change, health, nutrition education, and retention.

A New Journey for Texas WIC

The WIC Innovation Centers project is a special funding opportunity announced in October 2015. Interested WIC local agencies that met minimum qualifications were encouraged to apply through an online application process. Local agencies had to demonstrate a history of innovative practices related to retention, health, behavior change, and also submit a proposal for what kind of activities they would hope to incorporate, if selected. The opportunity was limited to three clinics. Although challenging for the reviewing panel to narrow down the applicants, three sites have been selected to serve as WIC Innovation Centers. Congratulations to Local Agencies 7, 10, and 32!

An Inside Look at the WIC Innovation Centers

Some of the nutrition education approaches you can expect to see at the Innovation Centers include:

- An emotion-based approach called Heart Buttons, which use projective techniques and tools to trigger emotional drivers for behavior

change. This method was developed with Pam McCarthy and Chickasaw Nation WIC.

- Power of Influence principles.
- Creative classroom techniques, including parent-child support groups, child friendly activities, physical activity, hands-on components, and/or cooking demonstrations.
- Telecommunication health and nutrition support provided through web cam, phone, e-mail, or text messaging.
- Other special projects related to health and behavior change proposed by the local agency and approved by the state agency.

Each WIC Innovation Center has a designated innovation lead responsible for providing training, support, and evaluation on innovative concepts for clinic staff. The innovation lead is critical for keeping the excitement high and skills sharp for the center staff, and is the key point of contact with the state agency.

The approaches implemented at the WIC Innovation Centers will also go through an evaluation component. By evaluating the effectiveness of the tools these clinics implement, the Texas WIC program will be more equipped to determine what works best and what doesn't, for both clients and staff. The goal is to implement successful techniques throughout the state.

What's even more exciting is once the program is established, the Innovation Centers will provide observation opportunities, training, and support for other agencies interested in implementing new ideas. Keep an eye out for the chance to visit an Innovation Center to learn best practices in the future.

The Future is Bright

The WIC Innovation Centers are the opportunity to try new ideas and reinvent the way we provide nutrition messages to clients. With the creativity and dedication of the WIC Innovation Centers, WIC will leave a lasting impact on the health and well-being of thousands of families.

The selected WIC Innovation Centers are diverse and creative, with representation from rural to urban, small and large clinics alike. Here are a few highlights of each of the selected sites.

Local Agency 7 – City of Dallas

- Innovation Center: Site #25 in Dallas
- Average Site Participation: 8,000
- Innovation Lead: Alli Borrego
- The City of Dallas WIC program has a longstanding history of early adaptation and innovation, with a strong collaboration with community partners. Serving a large and diverse client base, LA 7 is excited to develop a series of “Mom and Me” classes and support groups, cooking demonstrations, enhanced Baby Behavior training and development, and collaboration for the launch of a new farmers’ market in a food desert environment.
- *“LA07 is excited to have an Innovation Center – especially one located in our largest South Dallas neighborhood clinic. The southern sector lacks many of the resources and services available to other communities in Dallas County. Our staff is very enthusiastic about piloting new initiatives and special projects.”* — Darlene Irwin, City of Dallas WIC Program Manager



City of Dallas Innovation Center staff gathered at Site 25.

Local Agency 10 – Grayson County Health Department

- Innovation Center: Site #1 in Sherman
- Average Site Participation: 2,100
- Innovation Lead: Stephanie Sawyer
- Grayson County has demonstrated a strong background of creative and innovative approaches and prides themselves on having a staff who lead as “balcony” people. They look forward to developing outreach tools to coordinate more with community partners, improving transit services, developing marketing DVDs and tools for nutrition education, and taking Power of Influence to the next level.
- *“Although we are small, we are mighty! Grayson County itself offers some unique characteristics. We are in a rural setting with a close urban influence. There are 17 cities within our county... Our goal is to make it hard for our clients and potential clients to say ‘NO’ to being part of the Grayson County WIC family.”* – Amanda Brogdon, WIC Director



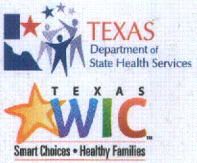
Grayson County Innovation Center staff prepare for their Breastfeeding Awareness Walk.

Local Agency 32 – Brazos Valley Community Action Agency

- Innovation Center: Site #1 in Bryan
- Average Site Participation: 5,000
- Innovation Lead: Jessica McKee
- Brazos Valley has implemented many unique principles over the last several years, consistently striving to improve services. Local Agency 32 is excited to expand its Peer Dad and family programs, provide research-based activities for teen moms and single parents, parent-child activities, and enhanced community outreach and collaboration.
- *“We hope to make raising a healthy family something that involves everyone. We have the desire to try new things that may have a greater impact on health and behavior change, as well as make nutrition education more effective. Our hope is to be seen as a resource that participants can always come to, and we believe that doing so requires us to always grow, change, and develop as a WIC project.”* – Leslie Hibbs, WIC Director



Brazos Valley Innovation Center staff during their Power of Influence training.



WIC, Nutrition Services Section
Department of State Health Services
P.O. Box 149347
Austin, TX 78714-9347

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