

2015 Texas Dietetic Interns
Working Toward a Healthier Texas



Building a Better Future through WIC

This installment of the *Texas WIC News*, Working Towards a Healthier Texas, is dedicated to our WIC dietetic internship. In its 16th year now, the WIC Dietetic Internship (DI) plays an important role in fostering new professionals who continue to improve the health of our state. Our DI not only provides an internship unlike any other, we get to home-grow our own registered dietitians. This year WIC won the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Diversity Action Award, demonstrating that our dietetic internship has been successful in attracting, selecting, and training interns from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, thus increasing the diversity of registered dietitians in Texas. Read more about this amazing accomplishment on page 8. (If you are interested in applying for the WIC Dietetic Internship, you can learn more at our WIC website: <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/wichd/interns/intern-brochure.shtm>)

The internship would not be what it is without the commitment of the local agencies that continue to send great candidates to the program and the staff who pitch in to keep clinics operating smoothly while the interns are gone. It's safe to say that many of you continue to make this choice because you see the value that comes back to you. Much of the credit is due to Mary VanEck, who brought the DI to new heights under her direction. It was with bitter sweetness that we wished Mary farewell as she retired this August. Read about Mary's time at WIC and what her colleagues and students have to say on page 12.

In line with our theme, we also highlight some important observances for September in this issue. First, we discuss Infant Mortality Awareness in the RD Corner. In WIC, this is a public health issue that is near and dear to our hearts, as the lives and health of our infants are what drive the work we do every

day. Read about what you can do to further prevent infant mortalities in Texas on page 11.

We wrap up the issue by celebrating Fruits and Veggies — More Matters Month. We thought, what better way to share how to get in more fruits and vegetables than to ask the experts. Read all of the helpful and creative tips provided by many of our local agency staff (on pages 17-19) and for those of you interested in starting a garden at your home or agency, be sure to check out Fall Into Gardening on page 14.

While we are diverse in our lives, cultures, and jobs, we all contribute in making a healthier Texas. Thank you for inspiring our clients, each other, and our entire WIC community to build a better future each and every day.

From the Texas WIC Director

- Lindsay Rodgers, M.A., R.D., L.D.



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2015 Texas WIC Dietetic Interns

“Tools of the Trade”

by Ann Sullivan, M.P.H., R.D.N., L.D.
Texas WIC Dietetic
Internship Coordinator

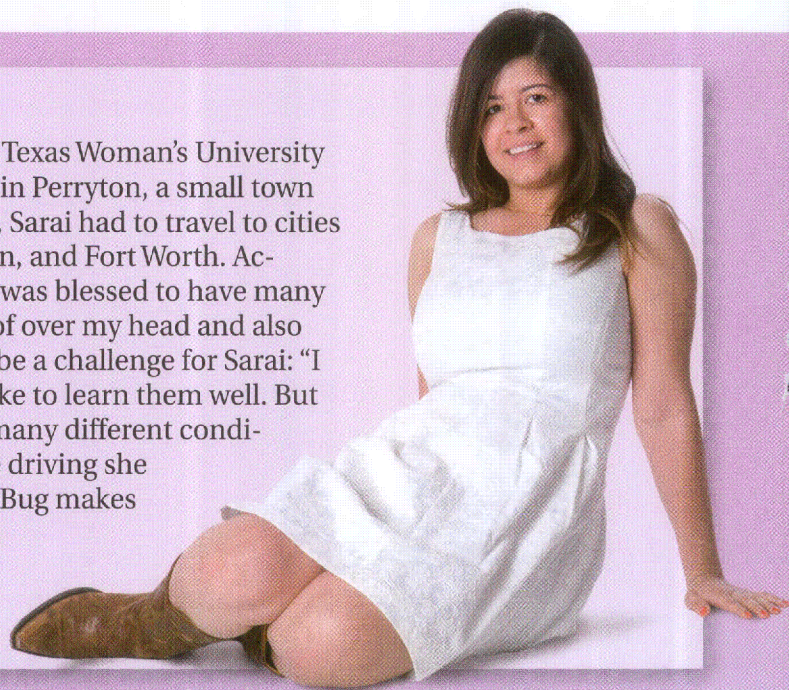
Being a Texas WIC dietetic intern is not easy. The 8-month supervised practice experience is intense, challenging, and hectic. The interns learn to assess critically ill patients, train foodservice staff, counsel high-risk participants, conduct community nutrition projects, and much more. By graduation, each intern has gained the skills of an entry-level registered dietitian.

What does it take to get through an internship? First, a strong knowledge base is essential, so academic achievement and WIC experience count. Also, having the right attitude and a willingness to learn helps each intern build on that knowledge and gain the skills he or she needs to become a registered dietitian.

But what about the day-to-day life of an intern? What kinds of tools do they need to survive? In the next few pages, you'll get to know each of the 2015 graduates, and see what they consider to be essential “tools of the trade.”

Sarai Kafie

Sarai earned her Bachelor's degree in Nutrition from Texas Woman's University and now works for Outreach Health Services (LA 76) in Perryton, a small town in the Panhandle. In order to complete her rotations, Sarai had to travel to cities across the state, including White Settlement, Houston, and Fort Worth. According to Sarai, “It worked out and it can be done. I was blessed to have many people who supported me and made sure I had a roof over my head and also made me feel at home.” Adapting to change used to be a challenge for Sarai: “I think I take my time learning new things because I like to learn them well. But during the internship, I changed and adapted to so many different conditions, I didn't have time to think about it! With all the driving she had to do, Sarai relied on having a good car. “My VW Bug makes me so happy! I practically lived out of it for the first 4 months.” Also, her smart phone was a necessity, and according to Sarai, “I never met a cup of coffee I didn't like!”



Keri Bui

Keri, who graduated from Texas A&M in 2011, works for Waco-McLennan County WIC (LA 22). Keri loved learning about different disease conditions, treatments, interventions, and surgical procedures. She said it was rewarding to advocate for her patients. “I felt like I was making a difference in their care and recovery.” Throughout her rotations, Keri counted on having her smart phone, her nutrition textbooks and resources, and her GPS. “My GPS helped me get to all my facilities on time. It put me at ease knowing that I would be able to find my way to different places. I simply can't imagine going through the internship without it!” Keri says that it was a privilege to learn from skilled preceptors in each of her rotations, and she added that she's “honored to have 10 new amazing friends through this experience.”



Kara Nemethy

In 2011, Kara came from Vermont to work in the Quality Management Branch at the state agency. Kara's favorite part of the internship was working in the Intensive Care Unit where she saw the crucial role dietitians play in the multidisciplinary approach to caring for acutely ill patients. "It gave me an opportunity to use my critical thinking skills in a way I never had before, and I found the challenge of determining interventions for such complex cases very intriguing." Kara made sure to always have her calculator and reusable water bottle with her each day, but also says a decent night's sleep was essential. "I tried to make this a priority, because I know that when I lack sleep, both my work and personal life suffer!" Kara says the internship was inspiring and she loved the camaraderie with her fellow interns, noting that, "Just a day or two into the first seminar, I knew I had made friendships that would last a lifetime."



Seth Carr

Seth works for Local Agency 07 in Dallas. During the internship, Seth relied on high-tech gadgets like his smart phone and laptop, but also kept a pen and pocket notebook handy so he was always ready to take notes "on the fly." Seth, who got his Bachelor of Science from Stephen F. Austin State University, appreciates the dietitian's key role in the healthcare team. He found that, "The more communication that takes place between dietitians, nursing staff, physicians, and speech-language pathologists, the better the outcomes for everyone involved." Seth initially wondered if he would be able to keep up with the curriculum. He succeeded, noting that he "made an effort to avoid negative self-talk." In fact, his main advice for future WIC interns is to "stay positive no matter how difficult the circumstances may be."



Thu N Mai

Thu started working for the City of Dallas WIC Program (LA 07) in August 2010, soon after completing her Bachelor of Science in Dietetics and Institutional Administration at Texas Woman's University. Thu says that "during the internship, I learned that I should not be afraid to break out of my comfort zone so that I can achieve my goals. The internship gave me the confidence and motivation to push myself to be a better nutritionist every day." Thu has a sincere appreciation for the program, noting that during each rotation, she "obtained valuable feedback from preceptors who were willing to share their knowledge and experience and assist each intern." Thu's list of "must-haves" include a laptop for completing research and assignments, a reusable water bottle which saved money over plastic water bottles, and her GPS, which always helped her find her way!



Jacie Vasek

Jacie got her Bachelor of Science in Nutritional Sciences and Dietetics from Texas Tech University in December 2012, and then went to work for South Plains Community Action Association (LA 27) in Lubbock. According to Jacie, “the internship was the most challenging but rewarding experience of my life.” The thing that surprised her the most about the internship was seeing how much progress she made from the first day of a rotation to the last day of the rotation. “It seemed that right when you got comfortable with a specific job, you moved on to something else. I was always so excited to have the opportunity to learn more.” As for essential tools, Jacie says her smart phone was a great all-in-one device complete with an internet browser, GPS, a calculator, and email access. But her daily planner was just as important, helping her to stay organized and on top of all her assignments.



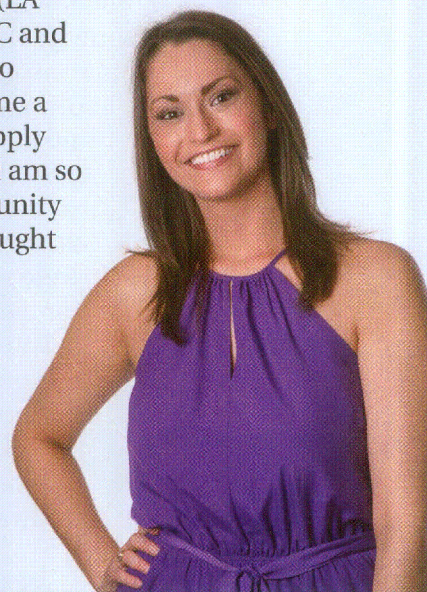
Mary Flesher

Mary got her Bachelor of Science in Dietetics and Institutional Administration from Texas Woman's University in December 2010 and now works for Outreach Health Services (LA 76) in Greenville and Commerce. Mary applied to the internship knowing it was the missing piece she needed to complete and complement her education. Mary always counted on having her laptop (which she backed up frequently), her reading glasses (necessary to use her laptop), and a hot pot for boiling water. “I spent a lot of time in hotels and used it for making a relaxing cup of tea in the evenings, not to mention oatmeal for breakfast!” During her rotations, Mary saw how the field of nutrition is constantly evolving and learned the importance of keeping up with the latest research. As Mary noted, “Learning is not something that ends when you complete the internship. It's an ongoing process.”



Jessica McKee

After completing her Bachelor of Science in Nutritional Science at Texas A&M University, Jessica wanted to get some nutrition-related experience so she applied and got a job with the WIC Program at the Brazos Valley Community Action Agency (LA 32) in Bryan. “I fell in love with WIC and what I do there, but I still wanted to complete an internship and become a registered dietitian. I decided to apply to the WIC Dietetic Internship and am so glad I did. It is such a great opportunity and I learned more than I ever thought I would.” Jessica says her laptop was a real necessity. “With all the research and assignments, my laptop was always with me.” Jessica also relied on a calendar, and her smart phone on a daily basis, noting that some of her preceptors used text as a form of communication during rotations.



Mariana Velly Miguel

Mariana earned her Bachelor of Science in Culinary Nutrition from Johnson & Wales University in Providence, and then began working at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (LA 17). For Mariana, the internship was one of the most

wonderful experiences of her life. She enjoyed meeting so many amazing people, and will always remember the seminar weeks in Austin with her fellow interns. "As a class, we developed a strong bond very quickly, and we were able to maintain those long-distance relationships during rotations." Mariana found that managing time was a key skill for the internship. "Time management is imperative in order to complete assignments while also giving your rotations 100 percent." Mariana always started her day with coffee, especially during her foodservice rotation when she had to leave at 6:00 a.m. each day. Also, music was important to Mariana. "I used it to focus on my assignments at the end of the day which kept me organized and ultimately more relaxed."



Sara Girouard

Sara, who works for Local Agency 07 in Dallas, got her Bachelor of Science in Nutrition and Foods from Texas State University in May 2011. Sara describes the internship as "transformative," noting that she learned just how much she was able to accomplish. "At first, the assignments and travel seemed overwhelming, but I felt that much more proud of myself for accomplishing my goals. I was concerned that providing medical nutrition therapy and nutrition support might be difficult because that wasn't something I did very often at WIC; however, the instruction and assistance from the internship directors and my preceptors made the transition manageable." Sara relied on having her laptop and calendar with her throughout the internship, but she also liked to keep a good book on hand. "When I got a little stressed out, I could take some time to relax with a good book and refocus."



Annamarie Garcia

After earning her Bachelor of Science at Sam Houston State in 2012, Annamarie started working for Bell County WIC (LA 31) in Temple. She applied to the internship knowing that she would maintain her salary during the 8-month program. "The internship is stressful, so not having to worry about the financial burden was a big factor for me." Also,

she liked knowing that she had a job at Bell County WIC waiting for her after she was done. As for essentials, Annamarie learned that Internet access is crucial. "The first few months, I had difficulty finding a good Internet provider out in the country where I live. I had to complete all my work at the public library, which was great, but their hours didn't always coordinate with my schedule." During her clinical rotation, Annamarie discovered her passion for preventive care and diabetes education. "The internship challenges you in so many ways you can't help but discover the type of person you are and what you are truly passionate about."



Texas WIC Dietetic Internship Gets Diversity Award

By Leslie Bagby, C.N.S.C., R.D., L.D.
 & Ann Sullivan, M.P.H., R.D.N., L.D.
 & Mary Van Eck, M.S., R.D.
 Texas WIC Dietetic Internship staff

Recently, the Texas WIC Dietetic Internship (DI) applied for, and was awarded, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (AND) Diversity Action Award. To apply for this award, the program needed to demonstrate the internship's past accomplishments in the area of minority participation. This article highlights some of the information submitted for the application.

Since 2000, the Texas WIC DI has graduated 110 interns, and approximately 95 percent of those are now registered dietitian nutritionists (RDN). Almost half are minorities, and many speak a second language. We are extremely proud that our program has contributed so profoundly to increasing the number of minority and bilingual RDNs in the WIC program, in Texas, and in the AND.

Diversity of Texas WIC Dietetic Interns

During the last 6 years, 57 interns have graduated from the Texas WIC program. Of those, 46 percent have been from underrepresented groups (see Table 1). Approximately 50 percent of these interns were first-generation college students, and at least 50 percent spoke a second language. In addition, 9 percent of the internship graduates in the last 6 years were males.

Table 1. Texas WIC Dietetic Interns (2009 -2014)

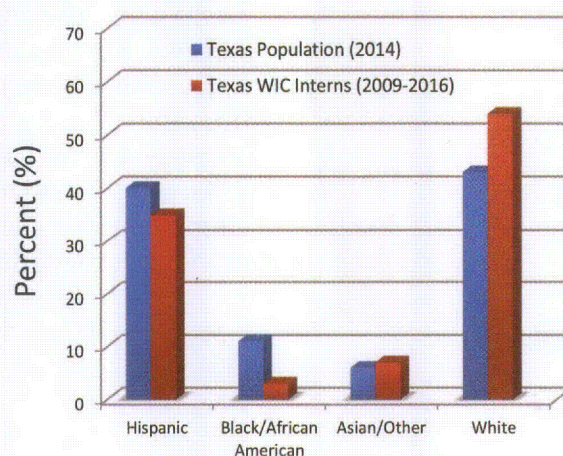
Year	White	Hispanic	Black/ African American	Asian/ Other
2009	4	2	-	2
2010	3	5	-	1
2011	8	3	-	-
2012	8	4	-	-
2013	5	4	-	-
2014	3	2	2	1
Totals	31 (54%)	20 (35%)	2 (3%)	4 (7%)

Total # of interns = 57 (2009 – 2014)

Diversity in the State of Texas

Based on 2014 data from the Texas Department of State Health Services, there were just over 27,000,000 people in Texas: 43 percent of the population was white, 40 percent was Hispanic, 11 percent was Black/African American and 6 percent was Asian/other. Figure 1 compares the diversity of the state's population to that of the Texas WIC DI. This is an important comparison that illustrates how the ethnic diversity of the Texas WIC DI largely mirrors the diversity within the state.

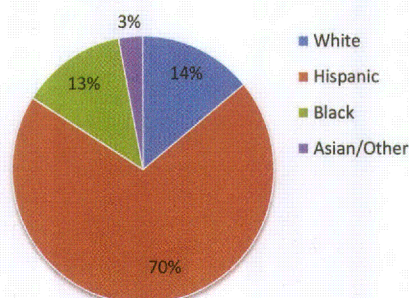
Figure 1. Diversity in the State of Texas



Diversity of Women, Infants, and Children who Participate in the Texas WIC Program

The Texas Department of State Health Services WIC program serves approximately 900,000 participants a month, 86 percent of which are members of a minority group (see Figure 2). In order to provide the best nutrition services to our participants, it is critical that dietitians are familiar with dietary patterns, food practices, traditions, and languages of the various populations they serve.

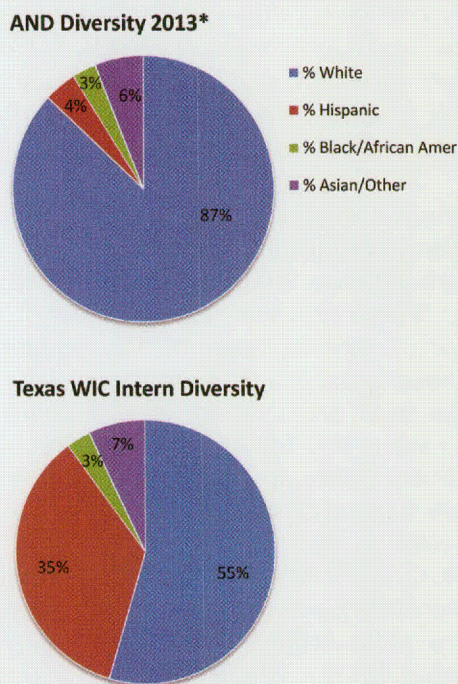
Figure 2. Diversity of Women, Infants, and Children in the Texas WIC program



Diversity of Registered Dietitians in the Academy

Based on the results of the 2013 AND Compensation and Benefits Survey, only 13 percent of AND members identified themselves as Hispanic or categories other than white. In keeping with AND's strategic plan, the Texas WIC DI is helping to increase AND's diversity by attracting interns from diverse backgrounds, as shown in Figure 2. As illustrated, approximately 45 percent of Texas WIC interns identify themselves as Hispanic or a category other than white.

Figure 3. Diversity within the Academy and Texas WIC Dietetic Internship



The Texas WIC Dietetic Internship Model

In order to apply for the TX WIC DI, an applicant must be a WIC employee in the state of Texas. If accepted, the intern maintains their job status and salary with their local WIC agency, although they are on leave during the 9-month internship. The interns are often able to stay in their communities to complete their supervised practice experiences. This unique aspect of the Texas WIC DI fosters their knowledge and experience with different cultural groups in their communities. After completing the internship, the graduates go back to their WIC local agencies to fulfill a 2-year commitment. They return to their WIC agencies as cul-

turally competent health professionals, where they are prepared to meet the nutrition and health needs of people in their communities.

As one intern noted, "If it weren't for the opportunity of this internship offering to keep your employment and salary... I would not have been able to afford to complete an internship. This opportunity was life changing and I am very grateful for it."

Intern Selection

During the applicant selection process, diversity is an important consideration. All of our applicants are current Texas WIC employees; therefore, our selection pool is highly diverse. When reviewing applicants, the committee considers the need of the intern's community for nutrition professionals. Applicants from WIC programs in underrepresented geographic regions of the state receive priority in order to help fill the community's need for culturally diverse professionals. In addition, the ability to speak another language is a consideration for selection, as there is a significant need for bilingual RDNs in many Texas communities.

Intern Involvement and Interaction

Our classes are small — up to 12 interns each year — and the interns typically form very close bonds. As the interns get to know each other through class discussions, projects, presentations, and social interaction, they are exposed to each other's backgrounds and cultural heritages. This increases the cultural sensitivity of each member of the class, and contributes to increased cultural competence in their work and community environments. According to one former intern, "I felt the diversity in our group was great. I learned a lot from the other students with regard to culture outside of the structured learning time because of the diversity."

Intern Assignments and Project

During their community nutrition seminar, the interns each prepare and present a cultural presentation, which advances their knowledge about many of the different cultures that the interns see in their WIC clinics. The interns have shared presentations on many different cultures including Bosnian, Somalian, Vietnamese, Chinese, Native American, African-American, and many others.

(continued on page 10)

Three years of WIC Dietetic Interns. From left to right: Class of 2012, Class of 2013, and Class of 2014. Lead by the Texas WIC Dietetic Internship staff — Ann Sullivan, Mary Van Eck, and Leslie Bagby — sitting front row center, class of 2013.



Diversity Award

(continued from page 9)

Another way our internship promotes diversity is through a major nutrition education project that the interns complete during their community rotation. Each intern chooses a target group in their home community for their Nutrition Education and Research Intervention Project (NERIP). Examples include programs on Indian reservations, community centers, domestic abuse and family shelters, churches, teen pregnancy centers, and senior and residential centers. Most audiences are low-income and underrepresented populations. Regardless of the target population they choose to work with, all of the interns learn a great deal about developing an educational program based on the behaviors, knowledge and attitudes of their target group. They learn the importance of being sensitive to people's needs regardless of their ethnicity, socio-economic status, language, food practices, literacy levels, weight status, and all the other factors that often serve as the basis of misunderstanding and prejudicial assumptions. So with this project, we feel like we help to increase the interns' cultural awareness and sensitivity.

By accepting and training a diverse group of interns and providing them with experiences and assignments that promote cultural competence, we are contributing to the diversity of RDNs and Academy members. The entire profession benefits because of the diversity in the Texas WIC Dietetic Internship.

The Future

The Texas WIC DI is now in its 16th year, and is an Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetic (ACEND) fully accredited program.

The Texas WIC program will continue to need RDNs to serve the caseload of almost a million people in Texas. The WIC Dietetic Internship

was established as a result of the need for high level nutrition professionals who are able to relate and speak to WIC participants. This need will continue to grow as the programs grows.

"I feel my internship class was a very diverse group combined of different races, ethnicity, cultures, and backgrounds. This allowed us to interact, work with, and learn about a variety of cultures. I think our class displayed true diversity." -TEXAS WIC DIETETIC INTERN.

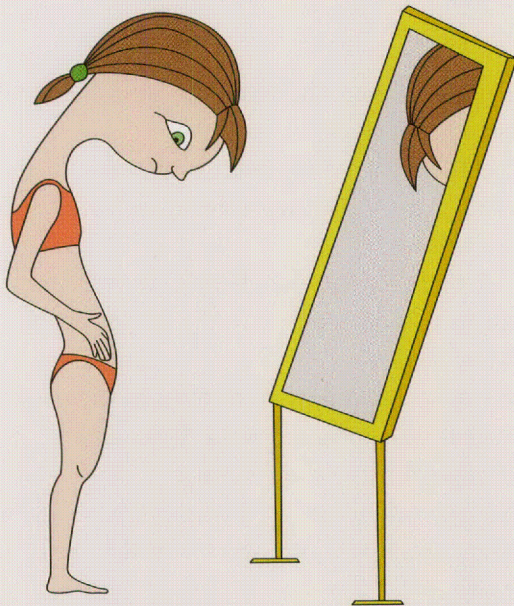
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Positive Body Image for You and Your Children

CONTRIBUTED BY JAYDA SEIBERT, TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY DIETETIC INTERN

How do you feel when you look in the mirror? Do you often compare your body to others around you? If your thoughts about your body aren't so kind, you are not alone (93 percent of women reportedly bash their own bodies). We could all benefit from listing five positive things about the way we look, rather than negative self-talk.



Oddly enough, you may see your body differently than someone next to you who is the exact same height and build. That's because society and the people around us can affect the way we feel about our bodies. It doesn't help that the media commonly displays a body type that is not realistic (or sometimes not even real) for most people. If you find yourself comparing your body to these images, it could leave you feeling disappointed in yourself. It's time we put a stop to this and love ourselves for who we are.

While it is normal to have negative thoughts from time to time, negative self-talk increases your risk of eating disorders, anxiety, and stress. Luckily, there are ways to improve the way you feel about your body, but you need to practice these to see change. It is possible to begin to love and appreciate positive things about yourself. You are more than just a number on a scale or a figure in the mirror.

In addition to listing positive traits you like about your body, set goals for health, not weight. A "healthy weight" can be defined as the natural weight the body adopts, given a healthy diet, and meaningful level of physical activity.

Try this self-body image activity:

1. Write down five things that you love about yourself that have nothing to do with your body.
2. Ask a friend to tell you five things that they like about you.
3. Write down five things that you love about the way you look.
4. Ask a friend to tell you five things that they like about the way you look.

Compare the list that you made to the list that your friend made. Would you have said the things that your friend listed about you? Do you think that you often overlook positive aspects about yourself?

Ways to create a more positive self-body image:

- Accept that most people are going to have

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Positive Body Image

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- things that they love about themselves and things that they do not love.
- Realize that you have a lot to offer. Focus on feeling well and nourishing the body you have been given.
 - Focus on your health, not on your weight. Taking steps to become healthy and strong have a greater impact on self-esteem than weight loss.
 - When you catch yourself saying something mean to yourself, say, “Stop,” or let it pass through you without giving it much thought.

Helping your child develop a positive body image:

Ideas about self-body image begin to form when we are children. Parents can positively or negatively influence how children view themselves. Children that have a negative body image are more likely to have anxiety and feelings of isolation. Children that have a positive body image feel more confident in their ability to succeed.

Here are some tips for helping your child form a positive body image:

- Be a role model. Try not to talk negatively about your body or other people’s bodies.
- Praise your child for their achievements. This will help them to understand the value in what they do, rather than focusing on what they look like.
- Use positive language. Focus on living a healthy lifestyle, eating well, and being physically active instead of talking about being too “fat” or too “thin.”
- Ask your child to list a few things they like about themselves.



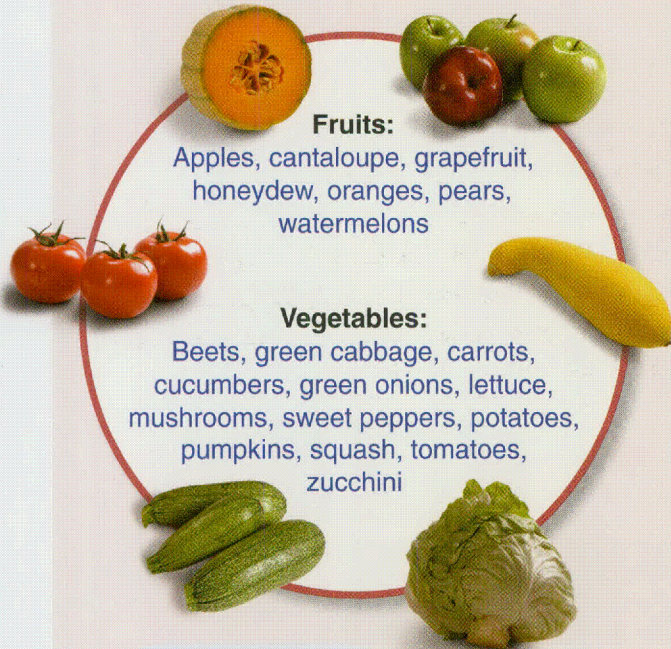
- Explain to your child that people come in all shapes and sizes.
- De-bunk the media. Discuss how the media often presents an image that does not exist in the real world.
- Celebrate famous people that are well known for their achievements in the world, not just for being attractive.
- Focus on nutritious foods for a healthy body, instead of calorie counting. Make small changes for the whole family.
- Set a standard that physical activity be included every day. It will help you feel better about your body.

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Texas Seasonal Produce



Fruits:

Apples, cantaloupe, grapefruit, honeydew, oranges, pears, watermelons

Vegetables:

Beets, green cabbage, carrots, cucumbers, green onions, lettuce, mushrooms, sweet peppers, potatoes, pumpkins, squash, tomatoes, zucchini

Mind Games



Hand/Foot Challenge

1. Stand up and circle one hand and one foot on the same side of your body, in the same direction (for 10 rotations).
2. Next switch directions and circle your hand and foot in the opposite direction (for 10 rotations).
3. Now, circle one hand in one direction and circle your foot on the same side in the opposite direction. Keep at it for 30 rotations. You can do it! Good job.

Find more Brainercise exercises at www.GoNoodle.com

recipe

Rotisserie Chicken and Vegetable Enchiladas

CONTRIBUTED BY DEBBIE LEHMAN, PhD, RD, LD

NUTRITION EDUCATION CONSULTANT

Makes 12 servings

Ingredients

- 1 pre-cooked rotisserie chicken or rotisserie chicken breasts, shredded
- 1 Tbsp canola oil
- 1 medium yellow onion, diced
- 2 poblano peppers, diced
- 1 serrano pepper, finely diced
- 2-3 garlic cloves, minced
- ½ tsp chili powder
- ⅛ tsp black pepper
- Salt, to taste
- 12 corn tortillas (white corn and flour blend also work well)
- 1 jar (16 oz) tomatillo sauce or green salsa
- 3 ounces Monterey jack cheese (half of a 6 oz package)

Preparation

Heat oil in skillet and saute the diced onion, poblano and serrano peppers, and garlic until softened. Add chili powder, pepper, and salt and stir. Add shredded chicken and mix to combine. Remove from heat.

Fill each tortilla with ¼ cup of chicken/vegetable mixture, roll, and place in a casserole dish. Repeat for all 12 tortillas. Top with tomatillo sauce and a light sprinkling of Monterey jack cheese. Cook at 375 degrees for 15-20 minutes or until edges and cheese begin to brown.

Nutrition Information Per Serving (1 enchilada):

260 calories, 13 g total fat, 4 g saturated fat, 98 mg cholesterol, 776 mg sodium, 15 g carbohydrate (3 g dietary fiber, 2 g sugar), 23 g protein

*Note: To lower sodium content, do not add salt and use a lower sodium tomatillo sauce. To lower fat content, reduce the amount of cheese used.



GoNoodle: Free Interactive Videos, Indoor Recess, and Brain Breaks that Could be Played at WIC

CONTRIBUTED BY DEBBIE LEHMAN, PHD, RD, LD, NUTRITION EDUCATION CONSULTANT

Elementary schools have taken another step towards improving physical activity and focus in today's young children. GoNoodle interactive videos started as a way to release energy on rainy days without recess and have turned in to a favorite activity for teachers and their students. In fact, when my first grade daughter came home singing and dancing to "Kitty High Five" and "Pop See Ko," I had to ask, "What in the world are you talking about?!" She said, "GoNoodle, mom! We do these activities at school when we can't go outside for recess; they're so much fun! Can you do it?"

What a perfect idea for adults too. Why do kids get to have all the fun? We need these exercise and brain breaks just as much as children. GoNoodle provides free access to short, instructor led, indoor activity breaks that release tension, enhance focus, and increase physical activity. Zumba, dance, indoor recess, breathing, and stretching – if you can handle a little kid silliness, GoNoodle has some great ways

to get active and have fun doing so. The videos are free after you create a login and password. You'll need internet connectivity and a computer or television screen for viewing too. The website has interactive videos in a variety of categories.

www.gonoodle.com



"We LOVE GoNoodle in my first grade class! It really helps us get moving and improve our moods. Thanks for proving an amazing free classroom resource like this." – KELLI W. 1ST GRADE TEACHER

Positive Body Image

(continued from page WWW — Insert B)

important part of a growing girl's self-esteem. Understand what you can do to help your daughter feel comfortable with her body. Last accessed April 21, 2015 at <http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-body-image/ART-20044668?p=1>

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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 512-341-4517.

September is Infant Mortality Awareness Month

by Matt Harrington M.S., R.D.
Nutrition Education Coordinator

The death of an infant before their first birthday is defined as infant mortality. Sadly, more than 2,000 Texas infants die every year — a loss that takes a serious toll on the health and well-being of families.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the top five leading causes of infant mortality in the United States in 2011 were

- Serious birth defect
- Born too small or before 37 weeks gestation
- Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)
- Maternal complications of pregnancy
- Victims of injuries

Fortunately, most babies in Texas grow and thrive. In fact, the infant mortality rate (IMR)* in Texas has been consistently below the national rate for the past ten years. And in 2011, Texas exceeded the Healthy People 2020 target of 6.0 deaths per 1,000 live births.

What can WIC do?

WIC staff are in an ideal position to speak with clients about effective steps that have been shown to promote healthy pregnancies and families. These steps include:

- Getting early prenatal care. Women who see their healthcare provider early and regularly have healthier pregnancies. Potential problems such as high blood pressure and diabetes can be properly managed when detected early.
- Achieving a healthy weight before becoming pregnant. Women who start their pregnancy at a normal weight (BMI between 18.5 – 24.9) are less likely to have complications like gestational diabetes or deliver by Cesarean section.
- Getting enough folic acid BEFORE pregnancy. Women who consume at least 400 mcg of folic acid can help prevent major birth defects such as spina bifida. WIC offers nutritious foods, like leafy green vegetables, beans, whole grain bread, and cereals that are high in folic acid.
- Avoiding alcohol before and during

pregnancy. There is no known safe amount of alcohol use during pregnancy or while trying to get pregnant. There is also no safe time during pregnancy to drink. Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause miscarriage, stillbirth, and a range of lifelong physical, behavioral, and intellectual disabilities.

- Avoiding cigarettes and tobacco. Women who smoke are more likely to deliver a baby born too early or to have a low birth weight baby. Smoking during and after pregnancy is a risk factor of SIDS.
- Promoting safe sleep practices to reduce the risk of SIDS and sleep-related deaths by:
 - Placing a baby on his back every time
 - Room-sharing but not bed-sharing
 - Keeping soft objects and loose bedding out of the crib
- Getting an age-appropriate child safety seat. When installed and used correctly, child safety seats can prevent injuries and save lives.

September is Infant Mortality Awareness Month. It is a good time for staff to review their list of community referrals to ensure that it is up-to-date. From early prenatal care to infant and child check-ups, referrals to our partners in health are a vital part of the WIC mission.

*The infant mortality rate (IMR) is the number of infants who died in a given year divided by the number of live births in that same year. This number is then multiplied by 1,000 to calculate the IMR. All of the births included in this rate are restricted to women who listed Texas as their state of residence.

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There's Something about

Mary



Mary Van Eck retired in August 2015. Her friends, co-workers, and former interns agree there is much to say about how Mary made a difference in their lives!

“Dedicated, Hard-Working, and Energetic”

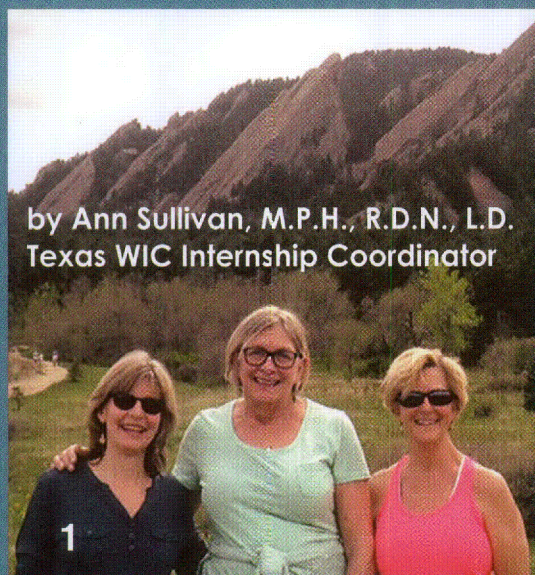
In 1995, Mary accepted a nutritionist position at the state agency after working at Local Agency 01 in Austin. At the state office, she worked with a team of nutritionists in a set of cubicles fondly known as “the quad.” Working in close quarters, they became a tight group, both personally and professionally. Roxanne Robison recalled how she and Mary became fast friends. “We would take turns answering pager calls for formula approval; we had 30 to 40 calls each day!” Mary was just as busy on the weekends, too. “She would come in on Monday mornings and I would hear about her in-line skating adventures or how a rattlesnake had bitten her dog!”

“Supportive, Motivational, and a Great Leader”

In 1996, Mary became the nutrition education coordinator at the state office, where she expertly managed the nutrition education section, as well as breastfeeding promotion and outreach activities. Rachel Edwards remembered how Mary inspired her to think outside the box and stand up for what she thought was right. “Mary was a huge support, both as a supervisor and a level-headed friend.” Amanda Hovis loved Mary’s management style, noting “her innovative ideas and her ability to lead also allowed for people to be self-directed.” Shellie Shores summed it up, saying that “Mary was appreciative, realistic, and always supported her staff. She was easily the best boss I ever had!”

“Innovative, Smart, Encouraging, and Caring”

In 2009, Mary took on the job of Internship Director for the Texas WIC Dietetic Internship (DI) where she guided WIC interns through their supervised practice experiences and prepared them to become registered dietitians (RD). Leslie Bagby, one of the program’s coordinators, explained how Mary “jumped in and made innovative changes that reflected new technology and a new generation of interns. Her great leadership style and knowledge of Texas WIC made an incredible package!” Leslie remarked on Mary’s fearless way of trying something new. “I learned from Mary to be bold and try out new ideas. If it doesn’t work, make some changes, but don’t stand still.” Mary was also



by Ann Sullivan, M.P.H., R.D.N., L.D.
Texas WIC Internship Coordinator

Photo 1: (left to right): Ann Sullivan, Mary Van Eck and Leslie Bagby on a breathtaking hike near Boulder, Colorado (May, 2015).

Photo 2: (left to right): Mary Van Eck, Shellie Shores, Monica Elizondo and Selena Martinez on a lunch break during a 2002 American Diabetes Association Tour de Cure cycling event.

Photo 3: (left to right): Leslie Bagby and Mary Van Eck at Nutrition Day at the Texas Capitol, 2010.

Photo 4: The Texas WIC Nutrition Education Section, 2004 (Back row, left to right): Mary Van Eck, Amanda Hovis, Elaine Goodson, Shellie Shores, and Delores Preece. (Front row, left to right): Lynn Wild, Tracy Erickson, and Amy Culp.



incredibly smart in the way she managed the internship. She knew the policies, the people, and the possibilities, and she was always finding ways to make the internship better.

Mary's former interns are especially grateful for her constant encouragement. She inspired them to do their best and make the most of their experiences. Jacie Vasek (class of 2015) attributes much of her success to Mary's coaching. "Mary was instrumental in guiding me along the right path toward completion of the WIC Dietetic Internship." Mariana Jaramillo (class of 2014) agreed. "Her wonderful personality shined through her kind words of encouragement that made me push myself to work and study harder." Kara Nemethy (class of 2015) noted that "it was important to have a director with not only experience and knowledge, but also compassion, empathy, and a willingness to advocate for the interns. Mary possesses all of these qualities." According to Mariana Miguel (class of 2015), Mary "worked hard to provide each of us with the memorable experiences that will define our careers." And, as Adriana Archer (class of 2013) explained, "If it weren't for her commitment to make the WIC DI possible and successful, I would not be an RD today and my life would be very different."

More Words About Mary

When we asked people to describe Mary, "warm-hearted" and "compassionate" came up a lot. As Leslie Bagby noted, "she gives an extra measure of love and concern when someone is hurting, whether it is an intern, family or friend." Indeed, Mary helped many people through challenging situations with her kindness and consideration.

"Balanced" is another word to describe Mary. She knows how to balance her work life and

personal life, and Mary promoted this sense of balance when she was at WIC. According to Amy Culp, "Mary inspired me to be a working mom. She did a great job modeling how to balance having a family and a career."

"Free-spirited" and "fun" were also on the list. As Shellie Shores explained, "travelling with Mary was always a blast. We used to say that Mary thought the per diem was just a starting point for what to spend on food!" Likewise, on a recent work trip to Denver, Mary made sure to squeeze in a high-altitude hike in Boulder before the conference started.

Several people also noted Mary's passion for food and cooking. Mary has always cherished her Sunday dinners with her four kids, who are now grown and cooking quite a bit themselves. And Mary's amazing culinary creations were always the highlight of the weekly internship meetings (also known as the weekly "picnics"). Even Mary's most recent volunteer time with Keep Austin Fed reflects her compassion and interest in making sure hungry people get the food they need.

Of course, "funny and witty" were high on the list. Even when things are stressful, Mary seems to keep everyone laughing and smiling with her vibrant personality and her very honest and humble sense of humor. As Leslie Bagby said, "She can laugh at herself and enjoy life!"

Tracy Erikson summed things up pretty well: "Mary has always been one of our greatest leaders in Texas WIC and is a beautiful person inside and out. I will miss her expertise, compassion, humor, smile, soul, laughter, and hugs."

Mary, we hope you are enjoying every moment of your retirement!

Fall Into Gardening



by Joseph M. de Leon
Online Content Administrator

Growing plants promotes wellbeing. Bending, digging, and lifting strengthens muscles and increases flexibility. Plants naturally calm active minds and improve the environment. Growing and harvesting the fruits of those labors is not only rewarding, but can also help save money while contributing to a healthy diet.

This quick-start gardening guide will help you get started right now, even if you don't have a yard! It's a good time to prepare spring garden beds, but lots of plants will grow in autumn.

Getting started

The best way to get started is to simply do it! You can plant seeds, buy seedlings from the garden store, or trade with neighbors who have extra plants. Make sure to read the directions on the seed packet or look up growing tips online (see "Gardening Resources" on page 16).

One quick way to get started is to grow plants in pots — especially if you have limited space. A 12-inch pot will be enough to grow most garden veggies, but some plants will need more room, especially rooting crops like potatoes or tall plants like corn. One disadvantage of pots is that they require more watering. Adding a thick layer of mulch will help reduce evaporation.

The traditional way to garden is directly in the ground. Planting directly in the ground uses less water, and it's easier to water compared to individual pots. It's also quicker and cheaper to get started — no need to buy soil or pots, simply clear the ground, till the soil, and add a layer of mulch.

A great compromise is planting in raised beds. Not only can it reduce soil compaction caused by foot traffic, but raised beds promote good drainage and make it easier to work with the soil.

Top three things to consider

Soil, light, and location are probably the most important factors, other than the actual plants. If one of these is out of balance, gardening can be frustrating.

Soil is literally the foundation of a successful garden. It provides an anchor for roots, a way to take up water, insulates roots from extreme cold or heat, and delivers nutrition. Good soil drains well, is nice and fluffy, and has lots of organic matter — plant and animal waste like decomposed leaves or rotted manure.

When plants get enough water and nutrients from their roots, it's moved up the stem to leaves, where sunlight converts those raw materials into energy to grow and produce flowers, fruit, and seeds. All plants need some light, but some need more than others. Since the sun changes angles throughout the year, make sure

to compare where sun and shade changes from season to season (see the "Low Light" section).

Before you pick a garden spot, there's more to think about than soil and light. Keep away from septic systems, tree roots, or underground utilities. Avoid steep slopes unless you install terraces, or soil can wash away. Also avoid low spots that pool when it rains or plants can drown (if you have these problems, see "Other Ways to Garden" on page 16).

No matter what obstacles you face, you will always have one thing on your side — life will find a way. Some plants will grow, even if your favorites do not. Gardening takes time, patience, and hard work, but the payoff isn't measured only in the number of pounds you produce. Solving problems, spending time with family, and feeding your mind and body are worth more than all the carrots in the world.

What to plant in autumn (September and October)

The last spring harvest happens when autumn begins. Planting a fall garden can give you an extra harvest before the end of the year and can give your spring garden a jump start. Be sure to check your local extension office for best times to plant and which varieties do best in your area. For a list of AgriLife Extension County Offices, visit <http://counties.agrilife.org>.

Crop	Growing and harvesting tips	When to harvest
Bok Choy	Easily survives frost; 2 crops, in fall and spring, but harvest before warm weather sets in	About 45 days after planting
Broccoli	Thrives in cool weather; harvest side shoots after the main heads are harvested	About 90 days after planting
Carrots	Can tolerate frost; carrot greens are rich in nutrition and make an excellent soup	About 75 days after planting; sooner for baby carrots
Chard	Grows well in warm or cool weather; harvest when leaves reach a foot tall for best flavor	About 40 days after planting; sooner for baby greens
Garlic	Can tolerate frost; very slow grower, plant in fall and harvest when leaves turn yellow	Harvest fall plants in summer; sooner for garlic, chives
Kale	Easily survives frost; pick outside leaves, avoid picking the top bud to keep plant growing	About 50 days after planting; sooner for baby greens
Lettuce	Plant new crop every 3 weeks for lettuce all season; cut the plant to the ground to harvest	About 40 days after planting; sooner for baby greens
Radish	Can tolerate frost; radish greens are rich in nutrition and make an excellent soup	About 30 days after planting; sooner for baby greens
Spinach	Very cold hardy; pick outside leaves, avoid picking the top bud to keep plant growing	About 40 days after planting; sooner for baby greens

SOURCE: OLD FARMER'S ALMANAC

Other ways to garden



Not everyone has a yard, good soil, or the best light for gardening. Here are a few alternatives to the traditional garden.

Limited space

For those who live in apartments or have a small yard, there are still ways to garden.

Grow up — Tomatoes, cucumbers, and beans naturally grow on vines. Putting them in wire cages or along a trellis saves space. Attaching pots to a wall makes the most of unused areas.

Contain it — Make your own pots out of discarded kitty litter buckets by drilling holes in the bottom. Many restaurants often throw away 5-gallon buckets used for mayo or sauces.

Tighten up — Many plants are available in compact versions, often called “determinate” or “bush” varieties. Examples include container lettuce and bush beans.

Mix it up — Planting crops together saves space. For example, plant carrots and lettuce between onions because they grow at different heights and depths.

Get creative — Combine these ideas and include reused material. Stacked pots become a vertical container garden. Transform discarded pallets into trellises or grow trays.

Low light

The general rule of thumb is plants that flower and make fruit, like tomatoes, squash, and peppers, need at least 6 hours of direct sun daily, and more light is better. If you plan to eat the root, like carrots, or just the leaves, like mint or lettuce, then 5 hours of sun or less is OK. Keep in mind that almost all plants will grow faster the more sun they get, so shaded plants can take a long time before they are ready to eat.



Hours of sunlight	Crop	Growing tips
2 hours or dappled shade	Mesclun salad mix	Cut to the ground when ready for at least 3 harvests
2 hours	Asian greens like bok choy	Goes to seed early when warm, prefers cooler temperatures
3 hours	Chives, cilantro, mint, oregano, parsley	Some herbs need full sun, but these grow OK in shade
3-4 hours	Spinach, lettuce, baby mustard greens, baby chard, arugula	Goes to seed early in full sun, prefers cooler temperatures
4-5 hours	Carrots, radish, beets, potatoes	OK in partial shade, but grow faster with more sun
5 hours	Beans, peas	Will grow faster in more sun, try bush varieties

Gardening Resources

Aggie Horticulture

Factsheets, guides, and databases to serve students, producers, professionals, and gardeners of Texas

<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/>

The Old Farmer’s Almanac

Useful and often humorous resource for those who grow food, published every September since 1792

<http://www.almanac.com/>

Local Agency Tips for Getting More Fruits and Vegetables in the Diet!



Local Agency 26

CONTRIBUTED BY ROSANA S. MORAES MS, RDN, LD, NUTRITIONIST CONSULTANT

I like offering quick nutritious snacks at meetings. Fresh fruit is always enjoyed, and with just a few preparation tricks, I make it look like a lot of effort has gone into planning. I often peel some clementines, break them unevenly, arrange them on a plate and they are ready to serve. I may add some grapes. When time permits, I peel and slice some oranges, arrange them on a plate, then sprinkle them with blueberries or raisins. Another easy snack is sliced unpeeled apples, mixed in a bowl with lime or orange juice to prevent the apples from getting dark, then arrange them like a flower on a plate and fill in the center with raisins, dried cherries, or blueberries. The nicer the presentation, the faster the plate is emptied! For an additional treat and added nutritional benefit, a bowl of flavored yogurt placed in the middle of the plate can serve as a fruit dip.

Local Agency 17

CONTRIBUTED BY KAREN GIBSON, WIC DIRECTOR

A recipe can be used as a “guide” on how to make a dish. Substitutions and adjustments to ingredients can be made to your liking. To increase my vegetable intake, I often “go heavy” on the amount of the vegetable(s) called for in the recipe. For example, a whole chopped pepper, instead of the ¼ cup called for in the recipe, usually is a good addition. Same goes for the minor players in a dish: onion, garlic, cilantro, etc. They all provide nutrients and as long as they are all increased together, then the ratio in the recipe stays the same. If I am making a casserole which emphasizes the meat as the main ingredient, then I might choose another ingredient in the recipe (tomatoes or broccoli) and “go heavy” on the amount added so that the focus of the casserole is now equal amounts of meat and vegetable. Such minor adjustments to a recipe take no extra time in preparation and might even be a bit cheaper by reducing the amount of meat needed.



A handful of blueberries in cornbread makes a great breakfast or snack food.

Local Agency 01

CONTRIBUTED BY MAR Y SOL C. MILLER, WIC NUTRITIONIST

I hate throwing away the pulp after juicing. Instead of composting it, I save it and freeze it. Then when my nieces and nephews come over and want sweets, I thaw my pulp, throw it in my blender (in case it's still too chunky), and incorporate it into a cake or cupcake recipe. I put frosting on it and they're none the wiser. They love them and unknowingly, they're also eating kale, carrot, apple and whatever else I happened to juice that day.



Local Agency 59

CONTRIBUTED BY ROZIO ALEMAN, MDS, RDN

I've noticed that by the time 4 p.m. comes along so does my need to have a snack. Planning ahead and preparing individual servings of fruits and veggies to have in the fridge for when a snack craving strikes, as well as when I am on the run, is a great way to eat more fruits and veggies every day.



WIC staff sharing fruit snacks. Left to right: Elizabeth Perez, WCS/PC; Rozio Aleman, MDS, RDN; and Yvonne Glaser, PC.



From left to right: Karen Svetz, Florence Dontoh, Sandra Garcia, Sandra Miera, Loren Jiles, Lacy Higginbotham, and Georgia Clark.

Local Agency 07

CONTRIBUTED BY KAREN SVETZ, PUBLIC HEALTH NUTRITIONIST

At our “Salad Blast Friday” each staff member brought something healthy to put on or in a salad, and we shared it family style. We were each instructed to try something we do not normally eat with our salad. There were walnuts, sunflower seeds, dried cranberries, pickles, apples, oranges, cheese, jalapeño peppers, red and green peppers, spinach, along with old time favorites such as tomatoes, and several types of lettuce, plus shredded chicken, topped with homemade ranch dressing. Dessert was an awesome fruit salad. What a blast!

Local Agency 20

CONTRIBUTED BY SONIA GARCIA, WCS

I would like to start by saying that I have been employed with WIC for 20 years and recently started practicing what I preached! I love to look at nutrition labels now and find ways to improve on eating healthier.

I try to incorporate veggies or fruits by substituting them into things my family already enjoys. For example they love oatmeal cookies, and I recently found a sugar free recipe to try. It substitutes bananas and unsweetened applesauce for sugar. They are so yummy!



I also encourage parents to “hide” veggies or fruits in recipes. For example, kids like spaghetti, so adding shredded carrots to the sauce is a yummy way to incorporate veggies. Parents tell me their kids never notice.

Local Agency 31

CONTRIBUTED BY LORETTA GRISHAM, WIC DIRECTOR; NIKKI MORROW, IBCLC, NUTRITION EDUCATION COORDINATOR & ASSISTANT DIRECTOR; AND AMBER OLTMANN, RD, BREASTFEEDING COORDINATOR

Often working and having an active family keeps us too busy, and thus struggling to find time to eat healthy! We juggle work and family schedules, which include soccer, T-ball practices, gymnastics, and other personal commitments. Making a menu in advance for the week’s dinners helps us stay on track with a healthy eating routine for our families and assures that we include fruits and vegetables with each meal. We allow easy adjustments and substitutions while keeping in mind that during the evening we may not have as much time to prepare certain meals.



Left to right: Amber Oltmann, Nikki Morrow, and Loretta Grisham.

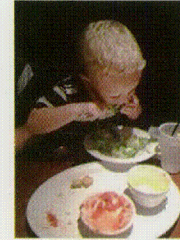
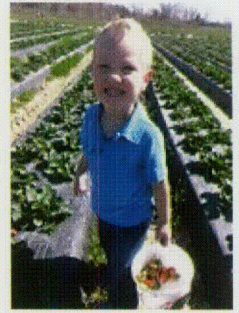
We also try to encourage each other to stay on track with healthy eating and increased fruits and vegetables by drinking smoothies throughout the day. Smoothies help us limit snacking on foods that are less healthy. Our favorite smoothie includes a blend of cucumber, kale, honeydew melon, lime juice, pear juice, and fresh mint. While we have our favorite recipes, we find using fruits and vegetables you have at home that are in season or on sale work the best.

Local Agency 46

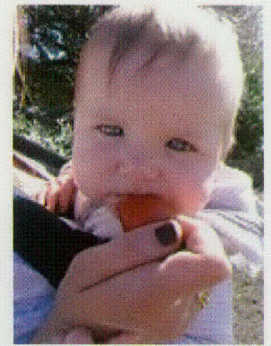
CONTRIBUTED BY KIM COLLINS, NUTRITIONIST

Getting my boys (Luke, 3½ years old, and Seth, 9 months old) to eat more fruits and veggies:

1. Show them where your food comes from! We take trips to a local farm called Froberg's Farm, where we can participate in strawberry picking. The kids get really involved and love eating the strawberries after an afternoon of picking. Froberg's also sells other fresh produce. I let Luke pick some fruits and veggies to take home with us.
2. Let them help in the kitchen! I let my son help shred cheese, wash fruits and vegetables, and for special occasions, dip fruits in a little chocolate. Letting kids help in the kitchen gets them excited about eating the food at meal time.
3. My oldest son wouldn't eat veggies for a long time. I kept putting them on his plate. Whatever we were eating for dinner; the same would go on his plate. At some point, I can't even remember when, he started eating veggies. Just keep offering fruits and vegetables because you never know when a child will try something new!
4. Put them in a fun container! I have cute, small plastic colorful containers (from the dollar store) that I put fruits and veggies in. Sometimes a different presentation can make it appealing to kids. You can also try filling an ice cube tray of colorful fruits and veggies.
5. Eat together as a family! Sit down family meals are very important. When children see parents eating healthy foods it encourages them to do the same.
6. Prepare food ahead of time. As soon as I get home from the grocery store I wash and cut the fruits and vegetables we are going to use that week. I keep them up front in the refrigerator so when you open the refrigerator, you only have healthy options to choose from.
7. Offer dips with veggies. My son loves eating carrots with hummus. On days when his little tummy isn't satisfied I set carrots on the countertop and he knows that means he can have as many as he wants.



Above and left: Luke picking and eating fruits and veggies. Below: Seth getting a taste, also.



Local Agency 76

CONTRIBUTED BY KELLIE KINSEY, LVN, WIC ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Presentation, availability, and ready-to-eat sizes help me increase my children's consumption of vegetables. I do not wait for my children to become hungry and ask for a snack; once their blood sugar drops they want to eat high-carb junk and reject vegetables. Children love bright colors. Small brightly colored trays with individual dividers are perfect for a kid-size snack tray. A couple of hours following a meal I might prepare a snack tray with crackers, diced cheese, and thinly sliced vegetables with a small amount of ranch dressing. I often see parents offer the thumb

sized carrots to children, these are difficult to chew and a child will only eat a few. I found that mounds of freshly peeled carrots, cut in thin slices, would disappear as would most vegetables if they are easy to eat. In the summer I might serve frozen peas straight from the freezer, or rinse and serve canned green beans.



On weekends, when I am home with my girls, I can get them to consume a lot of vegetables just by having the vegetables displayed in a friendly design. I also use this on my WIC staff. I had a CSA that didn't believe in eating vegetables. I made a vegetable tray and left it out in the front office. The CSA took bites of something green and exclaimed that it tasted like a 'tree.' Apparently all green foods tasted like trees to her. Before long she was eating the vegetables with us without a 'tree' comment. A few months down the road she arrived at work so excited to tell us that she had purchased a vegetable tray for her family to snack on that weekend! We eat what we see, even if it tastes like a 'tree.'



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PERIODICALS

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