

# MARWIC

T · I · M · E · S

MID-ATLANTIC REGION SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION PROGRAM FOR WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN

## PENNSYLVANIA'S BLUEPRINTS WIC FINDS A NEW OPPORTUNITY TO BREAK BARRIERS

By Chandra Dyne, Blueprints WIC Director, CLC

Blueprints WIC is now participating in a subaward from the Community Action Association of Pennsylvania to scale up an existing diaper distribution program. The diaper distribution program provides diapers, wipes, pull-ups and wrap around services to families. WIC participants who have children in size newborn through size 7 diapers and 2T through 5T pull-ups will receive an allotment at each WIC appointment, along with a pack of wipes. Upon initial distribution, participants can take an optional survey to collect additional data, which entitles them to an additional pack of wipes for their time.

At WIC appointments, each child in diapers will receive 50 diapers, and each child in pull-ups will receive 30 pull-ups. The packages come pre-wrapped from the Western Pennsylvania Diaper

*Continued on page 5*



Two happy WIC children receiving their diaper distribution

## GARRETT COUNTY HOSTS WIC COORDINATORS FROM ACROSS MARYLAND

By Diane Lee, Public Information Officer, Garrett County Health Department

Garrett County hosted the Annual WIC Association of Maryland Workshop October 18-20 at the WISP Lodge. Local agency WIC Coordinators gathered in McHenry, MD, to network, support, and learn from each other as WIC providers. Coordinators were invited to walk and experience nature at Deep Creek Lake State Park. Educational topics included in the workshop ranged from: Post Waivers/Pandemic - How's Staff & Clinic Doing, Serving Gender and Sexual Minority Community Members, and Motivate with Motivating Motivation. Annual elections for the Association were held along with the monthly State WIC Meeting. ■



*Pictured after the Annual WIC Association of Maryland Workshop are (sitting, left to right) Jose Luis Diaz (Montgomery Co.), Jacqueline Melton (Greater Baden – Prince George's Co.), Robin Henderson (Anne Arundel Co.), Joyneka Moals (Mid-Shore Counties), Jackee Hirsch (Washington Co.), and Nikolina Jorgenson (Harford/Cecil counties); (standing, left to right): Caroline Evans (Garrett Co.), Christine Fischer (Frederick Co.), Laura Henderson (Howard Co.), Christine Wright (State Deputy Director), Barbara Regan (Carroll Co.), Lindsay Cheslosky (Queen Anne's/Kent counties), Heather Sills (Charles/St. Mary's/Calvert counties), and Jennifer Wilson (State Director). Joining virtually were Maria Carunungan (State Nutritionist), Joann Smith (Baltimore City), Sherri Sabol (State Nutritionist), Saralyn Benson (Prince George's Co.), and Deborah D'Souza (Baltimore Co.)*

## SPRING 2024

■ Shenandoah Valley WIC Mobile Clinic gets a Facelift .....Page 2

■ Puerto Rico WIC Introduces EnSeña Project for Hearing-Impaired .....Page 5

■ Virginia WIC Expands Its Dietetic Internship Program .....Page 6

■ Maryland's Johns Hopkins WIC Hosts Baby Shower to Celebrate Breastfeeding .....Page 9

■ Pennsylvania's Adagio Health Encourages Kids in the Kitchen .....Page 11



## Celebrating 50 Years of WIC

Since the first clinic opened in 1974, WIC has improved the health and well-being of millions of pregnant women, infants, children, and families. In celebration of WIC's 50th anniversary, we invite you to share with MARWIC TIMES the stories and photographs of the celebrations that are planned for this momentous milestone. We plan to highlight these stories and photographs in upcoming issues of MARWIC TIMES. Submit stories to your state editor.





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## WEST VIRGINIA'S SHENANDOAH VALLEY WIC MOBILE CLINIC GETS A FACELIFT

By Mitch Greenbaum, MS, RDN, LD, Local Agency Director, Martinsburg, WV

More than two decades ago, Operation Adjustment Funding enabled Shenandoah Valley WIC in the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia, to design a mobile clinic that can reach the less populated counties of their agency.

Program accessibility, due to limited transportation, is a significant factor in rural states such as ours. We figured if we could get to where our clients were, we could serve them better.

There were many challenges that confronted us. We had to download our client files and then come back to the office to do an end-of-day to reconcile our vouchers. During the winter months the vehicle had to contend with our less-than-optimal country roads, which were treated with gravel and salt. It wasn't long when our clinic was relegated to special events such as Farmers Markets, community gardens and county youth fairs. The weather took its toll on the graphics of the vehicle which further limited its usefulness.

The WIC community as a whole and especially in the Mountaineer State don't give up easily. As we took advantage of the developing technological advances, by changing our software to Crossroads and eWIC at the same time, we began to see how the mobile may regain its viability.

Add NWA's Rebranding campaign, the formula recalls, and the pandemic, which brought on the emergency declaration and waivers, and you get opportunities to shape the new WIC Program. We're looking forward to seeing how our resurrected mobile can forge ahead in the next 50 years. ■



Shenandoah WIC's Mobile Clinic is rolling along



## DELAWARE WIC LAUNCHES DIGITAL FUN FOR THE HOLIDAYS

By Maria Shroyer, MS, RD, LDN

For the past few years, Delaware WIC has hosted a digital campaign called the 12 Days of WIC. Each day, participants and staff receive information and can enter to win a surprise. After a few years of the same theme, Director Joanne White thought the idea was getting stale and needed a change.

This year, the theme was reimagined. Previously, a door was opened to reveal a fact about nutrition or breastfeeding. This year, we focused on educating about our food package. The theme was changed from 12 doors to a carnival: the 12 Days of WIC Festival of Food. You may view the information each day by visiting [www.12daysofwic.com](http://www.12daysofwic.com). Find the arrow along the sides to scroll through the days.

Each day, a food package category was highlighted. Information was given, such as "milk and yogurt are a pair: if your child gets whole milk, you must choose whole fat yogurt."

This project was designed, created, and tracked by the marketing firm AB&C Creative of Wilmington, DE.

Our plan to change the theme to drive engagement was successful! This year, we had 12,628 participant entries to last year's 1140 participant entries. We hope along the way, participants got some recipe ideas, concepts around our food package, and enjoyed the festive theme of the campaign. ■



By JoAnna Hazard, MS, RD, CSO, LDN, Nutritionist

**H**ave you heard about the modernization efforts happening with the WIC Program? The USDA is investing in making WIC better and more accessible for eligible families.

Unsure as to what WIC modernization actually means? It's all about reaching more eligible families, keeping families in WIC until they are no longer eligible, encouraging families to use their food benefits, and promoting equity. In other words, they want to make it easier for families to get the nutrition and healthcare they need.

To achieve these goals, the USDA has come up with a plan to modernize both WIC and the WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP). They're focusing on connecting more eligible families to WIC and improving the services provided to support better maternal and child health outcomes. They also want to address disparities in program delivery, especially for underserved communities like immigrant, Tribal, and minority communities.

One of the exciting things happening is the use of technology. USDA is investing in technology at every step of the WIC journey, from applying for the program to interacting with staff, getting benefits, accessing nutrition education, and even shopping. The goal is to make the whole experience more convenient and user-friendly for families.

But it's not just about technology. They're also working on streamlining enrollment in WIC. They want to make it easier for eligible families to enroll by sharing data and referrals with other benefit programs like SNAP and Medicaid. This way, families who are already enrolled in those programs can easily access WIC as well.

To support these modernization efforts, the USDA has allocated funding for WIC state agencies to carry out planning and implementation projects. In fiscal year (FY) 22, FNS awarded states \$23.1m and in FY23 another \$100 million in funding for projects that enhance the WIC participant experience. This includes improving the WIC shopping experience, increasing participant enrollment, reducing administrative burden, and improving equity.

The good news is that these modernization projects are already underway. State agencies are working on implementing technology enhancements, such as text messaging, online applications, and improved websites and apps. They're also focusing on data matching and referral efforts to streamline enrollment and certification.

Overall, the aim of WIC modernization is to make it easier for families to access the benefits and services they need for a healthier future. By investing in technology and streamlining processes, the USDA is working towards a more inclusive and efficient WIC program.

Here is a summary of the 2023 WIC modernization projects by state:

#### **Delaware**

- Create a telehealth environment for staff and participants, including scheduling appointments, pre-population of forms, translation services, telephone, and video conferencing capabilities, and more.

#### **District of Columbia**

- Upgrade the HANDS 2.0 system by adding additional text messaging reminders, improving the Participant Portal online application, and adding online appointment scheduling.

#### **Maryland**

- Provide plain language and limited English proficiency (LEP) support, identify frequently requested languages, and translate materials accordingly.

#### **New Jersey**

- Implement one-way text messaging capabilities for alerts and appointment reminders.
- Evaluate third-party scheduling tools for integration into NJ's MIS and Participant Portal.
- Integrate with the State's Master Person Index (MPI) for data sharing with other programs.

#### **Pennsylvania:**

- Complete the development, testing, and implementation of the Family Portal (previously named Participant Portal).

#### **Puerto Rico**

- Implement mobile pay, including hiring a project manager, making enhancements to the integrated system, and developing or enhancing the mobile app for eWIC pay QR code.

#### **Virginia**

- Streamline the certification process by implementing a platform for personalized messaging, data analytics, and electronic documentation acceptance.
- Support hybrid services by allowing portions of WIC certification appointments to be completed prior to in-person visits.
- Implement a targeted outreach campaign, contractual and telecommunication services.

#### **West Virginia:**

- Procure digital nutrition and breastfeeding education materials for WIC appointments.
- Implement Operational Quality Improvement Initiatives for continued modernization.
- Implement the One Call Now system for text message appointment reminders and missed appointment notifications.
- Partner with WV University for data visualizations, including mapping of participants and authorized WIC vendors. ■

## EAST ORANGE, NJ WIC 2023 CALENDAR YEAR-END REVIEW

New Jersey's East Orange WIC Program had an eventful year in 2023! The year came with more remote services, improved clinic technology and a host of nutrition and breastfeeding events for the community. Activities included:

- **National Nutrition Month's Theme: Fuel for the Future**

In March 2023, staff made recipes and provided samples of meals focused on fiber for clients to try along with a display. The recipes showcased the diversity of cultural foods consumed by our clients and staff.



*WIC staff and clients enjoying an in-office painting event to celebrate World Breastfeeding Week*



*Vickie Nizin Breastfeeding Coordinator, IBCLC, holding 2023 USDA WIC Breastfeeding Award of Excellence - Gold Award with WIC staff members*

- **WIC Nutritionist Obtains RD Credential**

Did you know less than 3% of registered dietitians identify as Black/African American? The East Orange WIC Program celebrated one of our own for passing the grueling RD board exam which helps to increase that statistic and improve the diversity of dietitian/nutritionists. Increasing the diversity of the nutrition workforce will help reduce maternal and infant health disparities within the New Jersey communities. Congratulations to Marqueline Val, MS, RD, Bilingual Program Nutritionist, on a job well done.

- **Breastfeeding Gold Award**

In July, the East Orange WIC Program was awarded the prestigious USDA WIC Breastfeeding Award of Excellence - Gold Award for the first time. The honor recognizes programs that have provided exemplary breastfeeding promotion and support activities. What helped us receive this award is our top-notch peer counselor program with our two bilingual breastfeeding counselors (English, Spanish and Haitian Creole), our dedicated breastfeeding manager/IBCLC and all other office staff contributing to creating a comfortable breastfeeding environment for long-term lactation support. All staff are educated on the benefits of breastfeeding so that they can promote it in the clinic and participate in annual training. Congratulations to the East Orange WIC team!

- **World Breastfeeding Week August 1-7, 2023**

On August 8, part of the WIC clinic was transformed into an art studio. WIC moms and their children participated in our World Breastfeeding Week celebration by making breastfeeding art. The program was guided by local artist and breastfeeding mom Keshna Donia. WIC Bilingual Peer Counselor Ishmaine Saint-Florant gifted the participating mothers a long-stem red rose. Thanks to all who attended and donated services and gifts to make our WBW event a success!

- **National Farmers' Market Week – August 6-12, 2023**

The East Orange Farmers' Market, one of the few statewide approved markets, hosted state and federal officials to celebrate National Farmers' Market Week on August 8. The City of East Orange celebrated in a big way by highlighting the vital role farmers' markets play in our nation's food system. The event was held outside in front of city hall with speakers including representatives from the city council, USDA, the NJ State WIC office, and non-profit organizations involved in improving the local food system. The East Orange WIC Program Director, Chesney Blue, also participated and spoke about the benefits of increasing fruit and vegetable consumption and the importance of visiting farmers' markets in your local community. The WIC program also promoted their services and the farmers' market benefits with an outreach table at the event.

- **Black Breastfeeding Week – August 2023**

Black Breastfeeding Week #BBW23, was celebrated during the last week of August, with a focus on perinatal dental care for our WIC mothers. Almost 80% of East Orange WIC clientele identify as Black/African American. Activities intended to strengthen community relationships and offer more referrals. Messages focused on the relationship between good oral health, and overall maternal and infant health. WIC partnered with KinderSmile Foundation, a local Bloomfield, NJ non-profit provider of dental services for low-income families, and families with no or inadequate dental insurance coverage. KinderSmile Foundation's Perinatal Health and Wellness Program empowers uninsured mothers, from pregnancy and up to 3 years postpartum, with informative, personal, and culturally sensitive training about the importance of oral health and its impact on the developing fetus and young children. When the training program is completed, moms are rewarded with a full year of free dental care to restore their smiles. WIC families had the opportunity to sign up for the program during this event.

- **Chief Nutritionist Celebrates 30 Years – November 2023**

Chief Nutritionist Olufunke Odedele, MS, celebrated 30 years of service to the East Orange WIC Program in November. Staff celebrated this major accomplishment with cake and other festivities. Her leadership and dedication to the program is much appreciated by the organization. Thank you for everything you're doing for the East Orange WIC participants. We are grateful that you are part of the team. Congratulations!

- **Strengthening Our Partnership with Nurture NJ**

The East Orange WIC Program continues our partnership with the First Lady of NJ Tammy Murphy's office. A vertical banner in the clinic promotes the program's resources to WIC families. Nurture NJ, a statewide awareness campaign committed to reducing maternal and infant mortality, launched a new resource website, Connecting NJ, to further reach NJ residents. Connecting NJ is a county-based, single point-of-entry system that simplifies and streamlines the referral process for obstetrical and prenatal care and community agencies in New Jersey. Learn more at <https://www.nj.gov/connectingnj>.

- **WIC looks forward to celebrating 50 years of service**

The City of East Orange was one of the first six WIC programs established in the state of NJ and looks forward to continuing to provide service to all towns of Essex County with a focus on East Orange, Orange, Montclair, Bloomfield, Belleville, West Orange, The Caldwelles, Livingston, Nutley, and Verona areas. ■

## 35 YEARS OF LOYAL SERVICE AND THRIVING AT PENNSYLVANIA'S CHESTER COUNTY WIC

By Kelsey Rudinski, Outreach and Customer Service Coordinator, Chester County WIC Program

It is with great pleasure that Pennsylvania's Chester County WIC Program recognizes Yolanda "Yoly" Diaz for 35 years of service! As the WIC Program is celebrating 50 years of operation in 2024, Yoly is celebrating working in the program for 35 of those years.

Yoly works for the program as a bilingual Clinical Coordinator throughout Chester County. She has seen the program through many changes over the years. From handwriting paper checks, to implementing the new electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards. From the Food Pyramid to MyPlate, and everything in between. She has also seen families through many life changes – women becoming moms for the first time, and those children now becoming moms themselves.

Her co-workers describe Yoly as the "OG" and an innovator, always looking for the best and most efficient way to get things done.

"Yoly is a valuable asset to our Chester County WIC Program and it's truly an honor to work alongside her. Yoly was my trainer when I was cross-trained with clerking duties as a Nutritionist and taught me how to print checks, complete clinic profiles, and schedule appointments. Yolanda's meticulous handwriting and her trusty pen leave a mark on the charts she creates," said Alison Swaim, WIC Program Director. "Moreover, she consistently displays a pleasant demeanor when interacting with participants and colleagues, showing sensitivity, compassion, and respect for their needs and capabilities."

"Yoly and I were partners for the week in Harrisburg during PENN roll-out training. We have had many laughs in Phoenixville with the glitches in setting up our remote equipment and something that we still refer to as the "volcano mess," to being together as the West Chester clinic staff during the pandemic," said Jennifer Romanelli, Breastfeeding and Retail Store Coordinator. "Yoly was our WIC Local Agency support staff that worked on Retail Store check reissuances and was my go-to person for help seven years ago when I became the Retail Store Coordinator."

Yoly is a wealth of knowledge, and we are so lucky that she is part of our team! ■



Yolanda Diaz, sometime in the '90s

## PUERTO RICO WIC INTRODUCES ENSEÑA PROJECT FOR HEARING-IMPAIRED

By Lourdes Roman, Puerto Rico WIC Program

To offer more and better services to our participants, the Puerto Rico WIC Program has developed a new project that guarantees and directly benefits the hearing-impaired community. As a result of different meetings and exchanges of ideas, the WIC EnSeña project was created, with the intention to directly impact the deaf applicants/participants.

The project consists of remote access to a sign language interpreter who simultaneously participates with the clinic staff in the applicant's/participant's nutrition assessment interview. The clinics have a logo that indicates the availability of this service, which is provided by using a tablet with exclusive access to communicate with interpreters.

All the interpreters who are part of this project are duly certified and licensed to carry out this task. The service hours are 8:00am-4:00pm, Monday through Friday. If the service is requested outside the established hours, an appointment is coordinated with the Civil Rights Division. Additionally, if the intervention of an interpreter for a nutrition and breastfeeding class is needed, it will also be coordinated by the Civil Rights Division.

The EnSeña WIC project relies on the collaboration and willingness of WIC staff to make it a success. Together we create a better and enhanced customer service for our participants. ■



## PA's Blueprints WIC Finds a New Opportunity to Break Barriers continued from page 1

Bank, with a slip stating the size and amount. This makes distribution easy for WIC staff. Distribution began in January 2024 and will continue through September 2025.

In 2023, Blueprints applied for an external grant to provide diapers to children starting at their first birthday and ending at their two-year recertification appointment. This group of children were targeted, due to the steep decline in WIC participation after turning one. After analyzing the data, the one-year retention rate increased by 12.1% during the year of the diaper initiative. This led staff to seek out other opportunities to continue the initiative and provide diapers to as many WIC families as possible. Now that the deliveries are rolling in, word is spreading to families who have left the WIC program. Referrals from Head Start, Early Head Start and Pre-K programs have comments such as "Family is in need of WIC and Pull-ups!" This is an exciting opportunity to wrap needed services around WIC families. ■

## DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA WIC PROGRAM OFFERS NEW NUTRITION EDUCATION RESOURCES FOR STAFF AND PARTICIPANTS

By Melissa Seyoum, RDN

The DC WIC Program has expanded its nutrition education resources for both staff and participants. New to the program include the following:

- **Online Nutrition Education (ONE) by Nutrition Matters**

The DC WIC ONE platform rolled out in February 2024.

The platform allows staff to use visual reinforcements when providing nutrition education. Staff have the option of sending these resources to a participant via email or to their ONE account. The ONE platform also allows a participant to complete self-paced nutrition education lessons, which are available in English and Spanish.

- **“The Monthly Fuel” Newsletter**

The State Agency sends out a monthly newsletter to staff that highlights program projects, emerging research related to nutrition and breastfeeding, and spotlights a free CEU opportunity.

- **Dcwic.org “Nutrition Education” page**

The newly relaunched nutrition education page comes complete with a fresh look and updated resources for participants to access current and trusted nutrition education resources. ■



## PENNSYLVANIA WIC DIETETIC INTERNSHIP GRADUATION CEREMONY

On December 15, 2023, PA WIC celebrated the graduation of 12 more PA WIC staff through the ACEND Accredited Dietetic Internship Program. Throughout the program, dietetic interns develop the necessary competence in various areas and populations providing dietetic services. Professional development is attained through self-assessment and preceptor evaluation to provide self-development to improve skills and knowledge. The remote supervised practice program prepares dietetic interns for the CDR credentialing examination to become Registered Dietitian Nutritionist. Special approval for this class was sought and approved in to accomplish eligibility for Registration prior to the graduate degree mandate which went into effect on January 1, 2024. ■

*Congrats to the following Pennsylvania WIC ACEND Graduates:*

*Filomena Ahlefeld, The Foundation of Delaware County • MaryEllen Canouse, N.O.R.T.H., Inc. • Lauren Diaz-Cruz, PA WIC State Agency • Chandra Dyne, Blueprints • Heather Finnell, Allegheny County Health Department • Samyra Graham, N.O.R.T.H., Inc. • Whitney Martin, Hamilton Health Center, Inc. • Melissa Mobley, Broad Top Area Medical Center • Sabina Rahman Garcia, N.O.R.T.H., Inc. • Denise Sobolewski, N.O.R.T.H. Inc. • Angela Sumner, Bi-County WIC Program • Payton Weit, Hamilton Health Center, Inc.*



## VIRGINIA WIC EXPANDS ITS DIETETIC INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

By Kailyn Stanley, MPH, RDN, CBS

The Virginia/Maryland/DC WIC Dietetic Internship Program, formerly the VA/MD WIC Dietetic Internship, was granted approval in May 1991 as an Approved Pre-professional Practice Program. The first class began in September 1991. In July 1998, the program became a Developmentally Accredited Dietetic Internship, with a community emphasis. In 2008, permission was granted to add Maryland WIC employees to the pool of potential applicants for the dietetic internship program. In 2023, permission was granted to add Washington, DC WIC employees to the internship.

June 2024 will be the first application process DC WIC employees will be eligible to apply. The program is fully accredited by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND) and able to host eight interns per cohort. The program is thrilled to share this opportunity with DC WIC employees. ■



## MARYLAND'S HOWARD COUNTY WIC PARTICIPATES IN POP UP FARMERS' MARKETS

By Ernest Le, Maryland WIC Program Analyst, and Laura Henderson, Howard County WIC Coordinator

To promote fresh fruits and vegetables, Maryland's Howard County WIC agency set up a series of pop-up farmers' markets throughout the county. During the months of July and August, we partnered with Stoecker Farms, who came to sell local, organic produce. Stoecker accepted all forms of payment which our participants appreciated because it meant that they could use their WIC FMNP, WIC CVB, and SNAP benefits.



Rebecca from Stoecker Farms assisting a customer



Laura Henderson from Howard County WIC



Sonya Lloyd from the Health Department

These pop-ups were open to the local community, as well as to Howard County Health Department staff. One of our August events also coincided with our event for Breastfeeding Month, and we were able to use the crossover to promote both events to the public. Over 50 people came to visit the stand each day, which we consider to be a great success. Based on this experience, we plan to offer more pop-up events in the summer of 2024 and extend the season into October. Our participants really enjoyed the opportunity to get fresh produce and receive services. ■

## CELEBRATING NEW BEGINNINGS AT VALLEY HEALTH (WV) WIC'S CABELL COUNTY BABY SHOWER

By Ginny Conner, MS, Valley Health WIC Outreach Liaison

In November of 2023, West Virginia's Valley Health WIC attended the highly anticipated Cabell Community Baby Shower. Forty first-time moms took part in this event. Community partners helped create an enriching experience, providing many valuable resources and guidance to support these new mothers.

Speakers touched on the essentials of breastfeeding, insights into the labor process, safety tips for babies, and navigating the complexities of postpartum depression. The expert talks were not only informative but also comforting, offering reassurance and guidance to the eager mothers-to-be.

Moms were also able to interact with one another while having lunch, playing games, talking to different community resources, and receiving door prizes. WIC was able to provide insights into breastfeeding counseling services and extended invitations to visit staff after the birth of their babies.

The event was a hit and left moms with hearts full of support, knowledge, camaraderie, and gratitude! ■



A lucky mom-to-be won this basket of goodies

## PENNSYLVANIA'S ERIE WIC POSTPARTUM MOMS OFFERED YOGA CLASSES

Pennsylvania's UNFHCC Erie WIC, partnering with yogaErie, is excited to announce a postpartum yoga class opportunity for breastfeeding moms. This yoga class experience is all part of a grant Erie WIC received from PA First Foods, an organization that is "committed to partnerships that impact and increase initiation and duration rates of breastfeeding at the local and county level through community outreach and other services."



*Emilie, an instructor with yogaErie*



*Each participant receives a yoga mat*

"This postnatal class is about getting grounded in yourself again, feeling strong in your body, and to get back in touch with your vital energy, core strength, and inner balance," said Emilie of yogaErie.

This project was initiated by Laura Corwin, RDN, LDN, CLC, who is the Breastfeeding Coordinator at UNFHCC Erie WIC. "The Erie WIC Program is committed to partnerships that will help women have a wonderful breastfeeding experience," said Laura.

WIC is excited to provide moms this low-intensity yoga session that offers techniques for calmness and mindfulness which are essential in breastfeeding. If women learn these techniques it can help them in their breastfeeding journey.

Clients of WIC who participate will be given the initial class courtesy of yogaErie as part this partnership. The studio recently launched this weekly postpartum class on Sundays at 9:30am. In addition to this first class, WIC clients will be provided with a yoga mat and additional classes courtesy of PA First Foods. ■

## WEST VIRGINIA'S MID OHIO VALLEY WIC REVIVES BULLETIN BOARD DINOSAURS

In the age of the instant gratification found in small snippets of entertainment on social media, the bulletin board is now somewhat of a dinosaur. Why use a bulletin board? When is the last time a bulletin board held your interest or caused you to reflect on the message(s) being presented? Elementary School? Middle School? What drew your curiosity then?

We now have information at our fingertips. With the blink of an eye, we have answers to our questions and access to keywords which give us options if our first search is not exactly what we are looking for. The problem? Accuracy. Accuracy as to whether the information has been updated, if the information is correct to begin with, and/or if the search was designed to address that specific request for information.

In walks a dinosaur. RAWR!! The bulletin board. A bulletin board draws interest, just like it did in school because it relates to something personal, something many people may have in common in a much smaller setting. Direct information pertaining directly to that person in that environment, in that community, in that program. It has a more home-like, comfy feel... bringing people back to a time period of connection, feelings of belonging and togetherness. A sense of community. Accuracy is immediate and evergreen (functionally splendid through more than one growing season... a lot like our WIC babies.)

WIC is all about community. We encourage the opportunities to bring people together, whether it's attending events in the community, presenting our information to people who need our services, or running a very busy WIC clinic. Here at WV's Mid Ohio Valley WIC, we still feed our dinosaurs. Our dinosaurs are dressed for eye-catching appeal and chock-full of the latest information featured in that particular month. It's often themed according to the needs of our participants.

Our dinosaurs are all about people. Fun and interactive. In the Fall, we included recipe card giveaways featuring WIC-approved soups (ingredients from the pantry and the refrigerator.) Families chose their recipe of interest from pockets on the board. In February, our biggest dinosaur was adorned with "love messages" to families. Each heart displayed a message of encouragement and love. Examples were "You are your child's first love," "You don't have to be perfect; your little one loves you just as you are," "Be proud of you... we are!" Participants were invited to leave their own love messages on the handful of empty hearts our dinosaur was wearing. At MOV WIC, our participants are part of our family, our community and our lives. We want to help them grow, to succeed, and to learn the best ways to become healthy and happy. And if it takes a dinosaur to do it...then we enthusiastically "RAWR!!" ■



*The lost art of bulletin boards has been revived!*



## MARYLAND'S JOHNS HOPKINS WIC HOSTS BABY SHOWER TO CELEBRATE BREASTFEEDING

By Rachel Romero, WIC Breastfeeding and Peer Counselor Coordinator

At Maryland's Johns Hopkins WIC, we hosted a Baby Shower for pregnant and breastfeeding participants to celebrate breastfeeding with lunch, fun, and raffle prizes. We had over 50 people attend and learn about their rights when it comes to breastfeeding, including the latest on the PUMP Act for pregnant and nursing employees. The presentation was done in English and Spanish. Community partners, such as Baltimore Medical System, Baltimore Healthy Start, Wellpoint, and more attended and shared more information about their programs and resources. Each vendor brought a raffle prize for participants and each participant was given a breastfeeding tote bag with a breastfeeding water bottle, nursing bra, diapers, and other items. It was a great event, and we are already looking forward to next year's event! ■



WIC participants attend a Community Baby Shower organized by Johns Hopkins WIC

## PENNSYLVANIA'S ERIE COUNTY WIC IMPLEMENTS VERSATILE DIGITAL CHECK-IN SYSTEM

Pennsylvania's UNFHCC Erie WIC realized there was a need for an improved check-in experience for clients as caseload began to increase following the end of pandemic-era changes. The check-in window once again became a crowded area at the local agency's busiest clinic, the Booker T. Washington Center WIC office. To streamline the process of appointments for clients and assure confidentiality, a digital kiosk system was launched in October 2023.

This kiosk system includes a sturdy metal stand housing a check-in iPad that utilizes Qminder software. This software can communicate check-in information to staff in the back of the office on their own individual iPads or computers, so it is always clear how many people are waiting and how long they have been in the office. It also allows for easy confirmation of phone numbers and other personal information and is fully HIPAA compliant. The Qminder software also allows clients to check in using their native language much of the time, as it currently supports 20 different languages. Direct messaging with clients is also an option with this software, allowing staff to quickly confirm or clarify anything without the client having to return to the front desk.

The goals of this project were to prevent bottleneck effect at the check-in window, improve communication and accessibility for clients, and have real-time data on clinic efficiency and wait times. Ultimately, the addition of this kiosk system has greatly helped UNFHCC Erie WIC's ongoing objectives of improving client service and experience, increasing clinic efficiency, and utilizing the latest advances in technology. ■



Staff member Yaslenne Pagan checks the digital kiosk

## WEST VIRGINIA'S MONONGALIA HEALTH DEPARTMENT WIC HOSTS MOMMY MELTDOWN EVENT

By Sarah Moore, Outreach Liaison

WV's Monongalia County Health Department WIC's location hosted a "Mommy Meltdown" event on December 20. This event was created to provide a festive and relaxing place for parents to wrap their presents, without interruption, before the chaos of the holiday season ensued. Parents were able to converse amongst each other, while enjoying Christmas music, hot chocolate, cookies and other festive treats!

MCHD WIC staff members were eager to jump in on the festivities and worked like little elves to ensure all presents were wrapped. Overall, it was a fun event for all and each attendee left with a mound of wrapped presents and another item checked off of their "to do before Christmas" list. ■



Wrapping a present while enjoying the company of WIC

## PENNSYLVANIA'S ADAGIO HEALTH ENCOURAGES KIDS IN THE KITCHEN

By Jane Eberhardt, RD LDN CLC; Audrey Vidmar, MS; Samantha Elms, RD LDN CLC

In September 2023, Adagio Health opened the first WIC Teaching Kitchen in Pennsylvania. Teaching Kitchens are a space where you can cook, eat, and learn all about healthy foods in a fun, hands-on group environment. It offers educational opportunities around basic cooking skills, nutrition education, mindful eating, family meals, infant feeding, and more. WIC participants have learned to utilize WIC-approved foods in new, creative ways in addition to trying new foods.

The Teaching Kitchen also allows a multigenerational cooking experience for parents or grandparents to cook with their children. Four out of five Adagio Health Teaching Kitchens are in Adagio Health WIC offices in Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, and Indiana counties. The fifth Teaching Kitchen is a collaborative space agreement with Lawrence County Community Action Partnership. Each Teaching Kitchen was designed and intended to best fit the needs of each community.

In addition to the Teaching Kitchen's educational component, families prepare and receive a full meal at the time of class, recipe ingredients to duplicate the meal at home, and the opportunity to shop through the on-site Adagio Health Food Cupboard at no-cost.

As of February 2024, Adagio Health has held a total of six classes with 19 families for a grand total of 55 participants.

Participants have expressed how much they enjoy the kid-friendly kitchen utensils, learning new cooking tips, and spending time with their children in this environment. They have found the class useful and interesting, and most families have expressed intentions to attend more classes. Monthly classes in each county will be held throughout 2024. ■

*WIC participants having fun in the Teaching Kitchen*



## MARWIC TIMES Spring Calendar

- The Association of State Public Health Nutritionists (ASPHN) Annual Meeting – Integrating Nutrition and Health: Nourishing People and Planet – will be June 9–11, 2024 in Minneapolis, MN. Registration is in-person only. A full day of sessions focused on Food is Medicine is scheduled for Monday, June 10. Find details at <https://asphn.org/2024-annual-meeting/>
- NJBreastfeeding.org announces the Virtual Annual Breastfeeding Conference will be held on August 7, 2024. Registration fee \$30. Watch for registration to open late April until mid-July.
- The deadline for the Summer issue of MARWIC Times is May 6, 2024. Submit articles, photos and calendar events to your State editor. 5" x 7" digital photos (saved in JPEG/PDF format) preferred. All photographs must include a detailed caption.

## WEST VIRGINIA'S VALLEY HEALTH WIC SPREADS HOLIDAY CHEER AT THE BREAKFAST AND LUNCH WITH SANTA EVENTS

By Ginny Conner, MS, Valley Health WIC Outreach Liaison

West Virginia's Valley Health WIC recently brought the magic of the holiday season to life at two heartwarming events. Lunch with Santa in Kanawha County at Texas Roadhouse and Breakfast with Santa in Cabell County at Chili's restaurant were done in partnership with Valley Health's Kids Care and Southside Pediatric clinics. With the spirit of giving in full swing, children were treated to a memorable event filled with joy, gifts, and shared moments of connection.



*Oaklynn with Santa at Breakfast with Santa*

This event was a true celebration. Families enjoyed a delicious breakfast/lunch, and each family received a bundle of heartwarming goodies, including gifts, stockings filled with surprises, a meal kit, cozy blankets, book bags, pajamas, a children's book, and ornament crafts. Some families were also gifted with restaurant coupons and door prizes.

What made this event truly special was the dedication of the Valley Health employees who provided funding through payroll deduction, and generous donations from Texas Roadhouse, Chili's restaurant, and local businesses and churches. Thanks to generous community support, the families' expectations were met and exceeded.

At the event, Valley Health staff created a welcoming and festive atmosphere that resonated with everyone present. The Breakfast/Lunch with Santa events were a heartwarming success, bringing smiles, laughter, and cherished memories to all who attended. ■



*Valley Health WIC East staff working the Lunch with Santa event are (left to right) Maddy Lewis, WIC OA/MA; Maura James, MS, RDN, WIC Nutritionist; Samantha Farnsworth, MS, RDN, LD, Nutrition Coordinator*



*Weston and his mom at Breakfast with Santa*