

MARWIC

T · I · M · E · S

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

WEST VIRGINIA WELCOMES DR. PATTY BENNETT, USDA MID-ATLANTIC REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR

West Virginia's Shenandoah Community Health WIC Program welcomed USDA Mid-Atlantic Regional Administrator Dr. Patty Bennett to the Martinsburg WIC clinic on August 21, 2023.

Shenandoah Community Health WIC Program case-load has steadily increased over the past year, requiring a move to a larger loca-



Dr. Patty Bennett and Local Agency Director Mitch Greenbaum at Spring Valley Farm



Dr. Patty Bennett and Heather King at Spring Valley Farm

tion which was recently renovated with WIC Infrastructure funding. Dr. Bennett's visit provided Local Agency Nutrition Director Mitch Greenbaum the opportunity to present this newest WIC clinic, as well as highlight the current flow of operations since the expiration of physical presence waivers.

The West Virginia WIC Program introduced electronic WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program benefit delivery and redemption this growing season. By embracing diverse QR code redemption methods, with the flexibility of WIC participants accessing benefits through physical QR codes, participant portal QR codes, or digital QR codes via the WIC Shopper mobile application, participant and farmer access and transactions have increased compared to paper FMNP processes. Dr. Bennett had the opportunity to experience a transaction and speak with farmers about their perspective on the modernized benefit delivery system.

Dr. Bennett, accompanied by WV WIC FMNP Coordinator Heather King and Deputy State Director Natasha Jones, traveled to Spring Valley Farm and Orr's Farmers' Market. Matthew Cook, the owner of Spring Valley Farm, shared that his farmers' market has redeemed \$13,357.68 this season through the FMNP, and is grateful for the ease of processing transactions and receiving payments. Dr. Bennett enjoyed participating in an educational transaction. ■

VIRGINIA/MARYLAND WIC DIETETIC INTERNSHIP GRADUATION

By Kailyn Stanley, MPH, RDN, CBS

Virginia and Maryland WIC want to recognize and congratulate the seven dietetic interns who recently completed their dietetic internship. This is the 32nd cohort to complete the program. Graduation is a huge achievement for interns, as it represents the attainment of the interns' career goals and allows them the opportunity to sit for the credentialing exam to become registered dietitians.

Congratulations to the Virginia/Maryland Interns: Alyssa Brown, Ashton Kite, Davida Mensah, Emily Salvggio, Peymaneh Ettekali, Rachel Howell, and Sarah Parsons. We are so proud of all your hard work! ■



Dietetic interns (left to right) Davida Mensah, Kailyn Stanley (Director), Peymaneh Ettekali, Rachel Howell, Ashton Kite, Sarah Parsons, Emily Salvggio, Alyssa Brown. Joining virtually is the program coordinator, Cristina Luibil

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NEWS FROM THE USDA: USDA MID-ATLANTIC REGIONAL OFFICE WELCOMES NEW LEADERS

By Jennifer Nagy

The USDA Mid-Atlantic Regional Office for the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) recently experienced a reorganization. The reorganization was implemented to improve alignment with the FNS national office and to help FNS better support state agencies and program participants. This change resulted in a brand-new division called the Supplemental Nutrition Division that now oversees WIC, the Farmers’ Market Nutrition Programs and the FNS Food Distribution Programs that include The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), and USDA Foods in Schools. MARO is happy to announce Monique Feeny, Christine Berberich, and Joni Garcia as leaders in this new division.

Monique Feeny, Supplemental Nutrition Division Director

Monique Feeny is the first Director of the Supplemental Nutrition Division and has over 20 years of experience in FNS. Her career at FNS began in Human Resources and since that time she has worked in all FNS programs within MARO. She has held supervisory positions in the Special Nutrition Programs and Grants Management and Administrative Services Department and most recently as the Branch Chief for the Community Nutrition Programs. Monique has been actively involved in MARO’s diversity and inclusion initiatives for several years and currently co-chairs the MARO Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council. Monique holds a Master of Public Health from Central Michigan University and a Bachelor of Arts in Communication from Rutgers University. Monique is also a graduate of the FNS Leadership Institute.

Monique completed a six-month detail in WIC several years ago and she is thrilled to be back in this new role. There are exciting changes happening in WIC, but with any change comes new challenges. WIC continues to face difficulties recruiting and retaining skilled staff and improving service delivery utilizing the latest technology. Monique looks forward to leading the MARO team through these changes that will ultimately strengthen service delivery and improve maternal and child health outcomes.

Christine Berberich, WIC and Farmers Market Nutrition Programs Branch Chief

Christine Berberich is the new Branch Chief of WIC and the Farmers and Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Programs. In 2012, she started her career at FNS as a Program Specialist in WIC at the Robbinsville, NJ office. Christine comes to this position with a wealth of knowledge from various programs and offices throughout MARO gaining invaluable cross program expertise. Most recently, Christine was the Special Assistant to the Office of the Regional Administrator. She supported the regional leadership team on special projects, strategic planning, program management and human resources initiatives. Christine served as a Management Analyst for SNAP supporting the SNAP director on compliance and management evaluations. Along with Monique, she serves as co-chair on the MARO Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility Council and is a member of the MARO Racial Equity Steering Committee.

Christine enjoys spending her free time staying active – paddleboarding, kayaking, hiking, and playing tennis. She is happiest and most relaxed when she is doing yoga, sitting in her beach chair along the water’s edge in Brigantine, NJ, and spending time with her two adult children.

Christine is excited to be part of the MARO WIC team and working along with you to support the priorities of modernizing the WIC experience, making the program more accessible and helping WIC families thrive! In 2024, WIC will celebrate 50 years as a permanent program, and she hopes to join you virtually or in person to celebrate this golden anniversary.

Joni Garcia, Food Distribution Programs Branch Chief

Joni started her career with FNS as an intern in WIC with the Southeast Regional Office. After graduation, she joined the Mid-Atlantic Regional Office as a Program Specialist in SNAP. Joni has over 20 years of experience at FNS and has held various positions in SNAP including Nutritionist and Program Integrity Team Lead. During her time in SNAP, she led the Region’s efforts to expand SNAP participant access to healthy food through use of EBT at farmers’ markets and she has helped manage regional State Nutrition Action Councils (SNAC) efforts. Joni gained extensive experience in FNS programs through details to WIC, School Programs, and most recently as Acting Branch Chief in the Community Nutrition Programs. In May 2023, Joni joined the Food Distribution Branch as a Team Lead.

Joni has a passion for food and nutrition education and throughout her career has collaborated with various partners to provide healthy food to low-income families and ensure program integrity. In her spare time, Joni is a yoga instructor and volunteers at the Yardley, PA Farmers’ Market. Joni holds a Master of Science in Foods and Nutrition from the University of Georgia and a Bachelor of Science in Dietetics from Florida State University.

Joni is excited to be a part of the first Supplemental Nutrition Division in MARO and looking forward to many cross-program collaboration opportunities with WIC. ■

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA WIC ATTENDS THE MAYOR'S NATIONAL MATERNAL AND INFANT HEALTH SUMMIT

By Martiza Guzman, MPH, Public Health Nutritionist

District of Columbia Mayor Muriel Bowser and the Mayor's Office on Women's Policy and Initiatives hosted its sixth Annual National Maternal and Infant Health Summit in September. This year's Summit focused on working women and spotlighted resources for employers to help support their employees who are pregnant or returning to the workforce after expanding their families.

Comedian and actress Tiffany Haddish attended the Summit and spoke about her experience in foster care and her struggle with endometriosis and getting the medical help she needs. DC Health and MOWPI had several program staff in attendance highlighting the different resources available to mothers in the District. These include programs such as DC WIC, SNAP-ED, DC Healthy Start and Mamatoto's Perinatal Health Training program. DC WIC staff connected several families to the WIC Program and had a great time learning about its District partners in supporting the health and well-being of mothers and their children.



DC WIC staff at the Summit (left to right) are Maritza Guzman, MPH, Public Health Nutritionist; Mary De'Blasio, Mary's Center WIC CPPA, Training Coordinator; Akua Boateng, MS, RDN, DC WIC Program Director; Amenti Bekere, Mary's Center WIC CPPA



DC WIC staff ready to greet and connect mothers to WIC

WEST VIRGINIA'S VALLEY HEALTH WIC ATTENDS LOCAL BACK-TO-SCHOOL EVENTS

By Ginny Conner, MS, Outreach Coordinator, Valley Health WIC

West Virginia's Valley Health WIC recently attended two local back-to-school events.

The first event WIC attended was a celebration for National Health Center Week which was hosted by Valley Health Systems, Inc. at Enslow Park Presbyterian Church in Huntington. Approximately 350 people attended this event with their families and enjoyed a day of fun and education. There were many activities for the kids, as well as great resources available for the parents. Families could receive free health screenings, immunizations, backpacks, school supplies, and fresh produce. The Valley Health WIC tent was able to provide families with fresh produce purchased from Foglesong Farms, a WV WIC-approved farmer. Families received corn, tomatoes, peppers, and cucumbers, along with recipes to start off the school year with healthy eating ideas.

The other event Valley Health WIC attended was hosted by Crosspoint Church and was at Spring Valley High School in Wayne County. Again, there were lots of free community resources for families, including free school sports physicals, car seat safety checks, clothing, backpacks and school supplies and many other services. At this event we encouraged families who may qualify, to enroll in WIC and we provided free produce purchased from Bodimer Produce, a WV WIC-approved farmer.

These events helped prepare local children and families for school and provided them with resources that may have not been aware of that are available to them. Both events were successful! ■



Valley Health WIC Outreach Coordinator Ginny Conner at Valley Health's National Health Center Back to School Event



Ginny Conner helping a child and her mom get fresh produce at the Valley Health WIC tent at Crosspoint Community Church back-to-school event

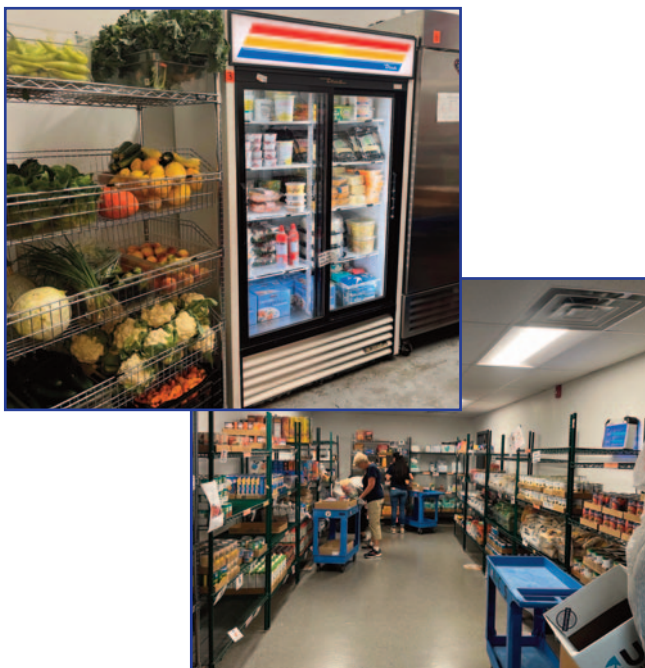
PENNSYLVANIA STATE WIC STAFF VISITS CHESTER COUNTY WIC

By Krista Dressler, PA WIC Public Health Manager

Pennsylvania WIC Director Sally Zubairu-Cofield, PA WIC Division of Regional Territory Coordination Director Mark Shirk, PA WIC Division of Finance and Technology Director Joseph McLaughlin and PA WIC Public Health Manager Krista Dressler visited Chester County on September 20. State agency staff had the pleasure of meeting Leah Reynolds, the Program Director at Kennett Area Community Service (KACS) center in Kennett Square, PA.

KACS serves the community by providing food distribution and emergency assistance to families. They work to connect their neighbors in need with food, shelter and a path forward. Chester County Health Department has the opportunity to partner with KACS as KACS works to construct a new building to help better serve their community and are hoping to have WIC join them.

To learn more about KACS, visit their website at www.kacsimpact.org. ■



Pictured (left to right) are Mike Baysinger, Chester County Health Department; Joseph McLaughlin, PA WIC; Krista Dressler, PA WIC; Leah Reynolds, Program Director, KACS; Mark Shirk, PA WIC; Alison Swaim, WIC Director, Chester County Health Department; Sally Zubairu-Cofield, PA WIC; Jeanne Franklin, Public Health Director, Chester County Health Department

MARYLAND'S GARRETT COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT CELEBRATES BREASTFEEDING MONTH

By Diane Lee, Public Information Officer, GCHD

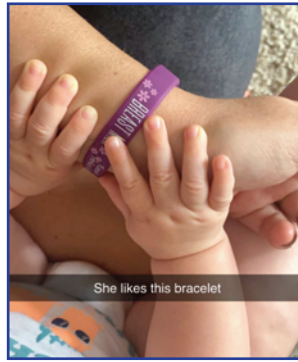
The staff of Maryland's Garrett County WIC celebrated National Breastfeeding Awareness Month. This year's theme, *Enabling Breastfeeding: Making a difference for working parents*, was used to decorate a tree in the lobby of the Garrett County Health Department.

"The theme helps shine a light on why breastfeeding is important," said WIC Coordinator Caroline Evans. "It centers the conversation on the babies and families who need our support. We help moms in their exploration of choosing breastfeeding as a foundation for health for their children, regardless of whether they are a WIC participant or not. We provide services to help them be successful in reaching their personal goals by providing prenatal and postnatal education and ongoing support after the baby is born."

Studies show that mothers who breastfeed are less likely to have breast and ovarian cancer, type II diabetes, and postpartum depression. Breastfed infants are less likely to be obese, have type II diabetes, asthma and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

WIC staff includes an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant who assists clients in planning for feeding their babies. She provides individualized assistance, pumps for special needs and returning to work, and anticipatory guidance to help moms meet their goals. The services also include free weight checks for the baby, help with problem resolution, and referrals.

"We know that while a majority of moms initially breastfeed, far fewer are able to meet their goals concerning exclusive breastfeeding and duration," said Garrett County WIC Breastfeeding Coordinator Tracy Savage. "Our main focus in WIC is helping moms explore their personal goals, and providing accurate information, tailored support and encouragement to help them meet those goals." ■



Pictured with the National Breastfeeding Awareness Month Tree in the lobby at the Garrett County Health Department are WIC Staff from left to right Director Caroline Evans, Dierdra Shu, Tracy Savage and Karen George

BREASTFEEDING CELEBRATION AT CHEVERLY WIC PROGRAM IN MARYLAND'S PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY

Maryland's Prince George's County Health Department organized a mini health fair celebration for Breastfeeding Month at its Cheverly location right in front of the WIC Program office. Through mail, email, and texts, supported with follow-up phone calls, we invited WIC participants who were expecting moms and those who are already breastfeeding.

A total of 35 families attended the event. Participants signed in and received light refreshments. As they approached the area, participants were guided in small groups or individually to visit the tables.

Two tables displayed breastfeeding information and state-produced educational flyers. The Breastfeeding Peer Counselor introduced herself and guided the participants to watch the presentation by the Breastfeeding Coordinator about how WIC promotes and supports breastfeeding. The BFPC also explained her commitment in helping our WIC families. A WIC CPA spoke about the nutritional value of breastmilk.

The state-produced BFPC Program videos were displayed. During intervals, we gave certificates to all breastfeeding moms who were present. We had five raffles – one supermarket gift card, two baskets with baby items for pregnant participants, and two bags with special care gifts for the ones who were breastfeeding.

It was a fun and relaxing time for all. We enjoyed the event from its planning to the end. The turnout was very good, and we were pleased with their participation. ■



NEW JERSEY WIC CELEBRATES BREASTFEEDING SUCCESSES IN FFY 2023

By Danielle Tropea, NJ WIC State Breastfeeding Coordinator

NJ WIC Kicked off FFY 2023 with a 10-session tiered training series for all Peer Counselors and nutrition staff in October 2022. The training facilitated by *Every Mother's* Cathy Carothers, featured the new breastfeeding curriculum. Peer Counselors and nutritionists interested in growing their breastfeeding knowledge were invited to join all the sessions and prepare to become Designated Breastfeeding Experts (DBEs). Invitations were extended to NJ maternal child health program staff outside of WIC. Over 224 perinatal healthcare providers attended.

Accomplishments:

- WIC Breastfeeding Award of Excellence: Five local agencies received the prestigious 2023 Gold Award, which recognizes WIC agencies that have demonstrated exemplary practices in breastfeeding promotion and support. *AND THE WINNERS ARE...* Burlington County WIC, City of East Orange WIC, City of Passaic WIC, City of Plainfield WIC, and St. Joseph Medical Center WIC.
- Investing in breastfeeding support: Four agencies received National WIC Association subgrants totaling over \$17,000 to defray the costs of becoming an IBCLC. *AND THE WINNERS ARE...* Four Breastfeeding Peer Counselors and three Designated Breastfeeding Experts (DBEs) from the City of Passaic WIC, and one staff member from the following local WIC Programs: the City of Plainfield WIC, St. Joseph WIC, and VNAC-NJ WIC. NJ WIC anticipates a gradual increase to seven additional IBCLC positions between January 2023 and the summer of 2024.
- Celebrating National Breastfeeding Month 2023: The NJ Department of Health highlighted the progress made implementing the Statewide Breastfeeding Strategic Plan. Highlights include:
 - Governor Phil Murphy declaring August 2023 as Breastfeeding Month.
 - On August 16, NJ WIC hosted our second annual virtual celebration of Breastfeeding Month, which was attended by over 150 people. The theme for the event was inspired by the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) World Breastfeeding Week, Enabling breastfeeding by making a difference for working moms. The event highlighted WIC staff's vital role in supporting breastfeeding moms in the workplace and empowering them to continue providing the best nutrition for their babies. Information about NJ laws that protect against discrimination in the workplace, and the state's paid maternity coverage of up to 24 weeks were shared
 - 10 of NJ's 16 local WIC agencies hosted in-person celebrations and health fairs to celebrate Breastfeeding Month.
- Training Continues: NJ WIC has contracted with an instructional designer to create asynchronous training units on the NJ Department of Health's Learning Management System to train new and future staff.

The accomplishments of NJ WIC continue to make a positive difference in the lives of WIC-eligible families in the state. Our work to improve access to breastfeeding support and nutrition counseling helps to ensure that more New Jersey mothers and babies can benefit from breastfeeding.

Learn more about NJ WIC events at <https://tinyurl.com/23BFMwrapup>. ■

MAKING BREASTFEEDING AND WORK, WORK AT VIRGINIA'S NORFOLK WIC

By Daissy Torres, IBCLC, RLC, Designated Breastfeeding Expert, Norfolk WIC Program Health Department

Following a long COVID-19 break in outreach activities, Virginia's Norfolk WIC proudly celebrated Breastfeeding Week with a special event at the new Jordan-Newby Library.

Centered around this year's World Breastfeeding Week campaign, *Let's Make Breastfeeding and Work, Work!*, the event showcased newborn care and lactation education activities. Topics discussed included Virginia's lactation laws and effective ways to return to work while lactating. Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Shantel Sam taught techniques like hand-expression, paced bottle feeding, and safe breast milk storage. Our sponsors provided gifts for all attendees.

Norfolk Department of Health Director Dr. Susan Gurois read VA Governor Youngkin's Breastfeeding Awareness Month Proclamation to the attendees, who also enjoyed conversing and meeting other expecting and lactating parents. The event was an excellent opportunity for parents to network and build relationships within the community.

In addition to the activities, we partnered with community organizations to share knowledge and friendly discussions focusing on birthing support, prenatal and postnatal mental health, safe sleep, car seat safety, Medicaid enrollment, military support, human milk donation, and dental health.

A panel of experts was assembled to answer questions during a Q&A session. Michael Jones from Dad2Dad's support group, Maggie Lane from Postpartum Support VA, and Chanacy Butler from EVMS Loving Step program, provided information to help attendees make informed decisions to empower their unique journey. The highlight of our event featured local support groups for fathers and caregivers, who provided education to pregnant and lactating people and members of their support system. Our uplifting event provided a safe space for families to ask questions and created a culture of support for parents and caregivers.

Norfolk WIC's goal to promote equity and support for families was so successful that we will plan a mid-year breastfeeding celebration to continue connecting WIC participants to community resources. We look forward to continuing to help build a more robust support system for WIC families. ■



Cydney Lopez with the diaper cake



Pictured (left to right) Michael Jones, Dad Engagement Specialist, Dad2Dads, UpCenter; Chanacy Butler, Senior Community Health Worker, EVMS Loving Steps; Maggie Lane, Care

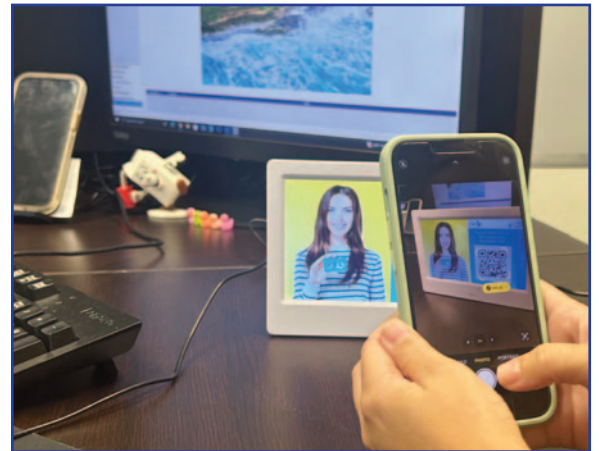
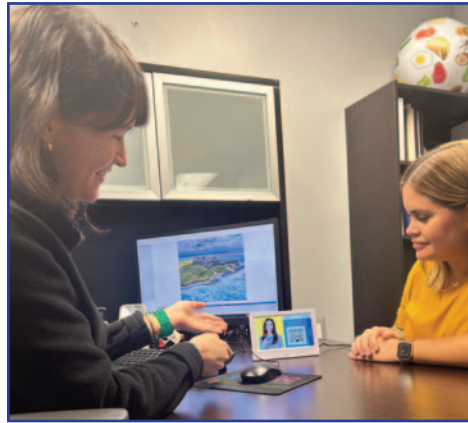


Pictured (left to right) at the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society table are Shantel Sam, BFPC, Norfolk WIC; Dari Zardeski, Financial Assistance Case Worker; Sara Thompson, Lead RN, Home Visiting Nurse; non-WIC participant, service member Ashley Kirk

PUERTO RIC WIC CONTINUES WITH THE MODERNIZATION OF NUTRITION AND BREASTFEEDING EDUCATION

By Magdaliz Bonilla, Nutritionist

Nutrition and breastfeeding education plays a key role in promoting the health and well-being of mothers, infants and children. In an era strongly marked by technological advances, the Puerto Rico WIC Program has embraced innovation to improve access to essential nutrition and breastfeeding education. In this sense, the use of QR codes is a bridge between the dissemination of information through traditional methods and the use of modern technology to improve such dissemination. Based on this, we have transitioned from traditional printed materials to QR code-based resources, thus reshaping the landscape of nutrition and breastfeeding education.



Digital frames with integrated programming have been created for this QR codes project. Said frames contain the different QR codes so that participants have digital access to brochures on 60 different nutrition/breastfeeding topics, by category, and distributed as follows: 20 nutrition topics in Spanish, 20 breastfeeding topics in Spanish and 20 nutrition/breastfeeding topics in English. This framework is available on the desktop of each nutritionist at the local level to be used during the nutrition intervention and assignment of a specific topic to reinforce nutrition education. Then, the participant can access the assigned brochure with his/her cell phone or tablet.

Although the main purpose of this project is to reinforce the nutrition and breastfeeding education, there are other advantages such as:

- Instant accessibility: Printed materials are easily misplaced, but with the use of QR codes, participants can access information immediately and read it from anywhere.
- Customized content: Participants can be directed to resources that match their specific needs.
- Multilingual support: The QR codes were created in Spanish and English to serve the culturally diverse communities on the Island.
- Reduced environmental impact: By decreasing the use of paper and printing, we are contributing to an eco-friendly approach to education.
- Interactive engagement: Provides a more meaningful learning experience for all participants as well as valuable insights for Program improvement.

Modernization and technological advances in nutrition and breastfeeding education, within the PR WIC Program has transformed the way support is provided to participating families. These innovations have facilitated access to high-quality information and care and therefore we will continue our efforts towards such advances. ■

DELAWARE BRIGHTENS UP CLINICS WITH NEW BREASTFEEDING PHOTOS

By Maria Shroyer, MS, RD, LDN and Ida Lewis, IBCLC, RLC

A breastfeeding monitoring statewide led Delaware WIC to identify the need for updated breastfeeding photos in clinics. Delaware WIC partnered with Terrance Neal of Bring the Noise



Ana



DeShauna



LaShanna



Jennier



Domonique

photography of Milford, DE, a minority-owned and operated business.

He hosted a breastfeeding photo shoot with actual Delaware WIC participants and Peer Counselors. Multiple races and ethnicities were represented – Black, Latina and Haitian. Participants were gifted the files from their photoshoot. Large sized photos were ordered, professionally framed, and are now displayed in our 10 clinics statewide. ■

PENNSYLVANIA'S FOUNDATION FOR DELAWARE COUNTY WIC PROGRAM HOSTS BLOCK PARTY

By Gabrielle C. Northern, WIC Clinical Nutritionist, BS, CLC

The Foundation for Delaware County (PA) WIC Program celebrated both Farmers Market Week and World Breastfeeding Week on August 8. The event took place at our Upper Darby WIC Clinic in conjunction with our weekly farm stand – a collaboration with Black Lighting Farm. It was a day full of learning, games, music, refreshments, and a host of raffles. The focus was to celebrate farmers, reduce the commute between farm to table, increase redemption of FMNP vouchers, and uplift breastfeeding families.

During the event, staff issued USDA Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) vouchers to eligible participants and provided nutrition education on the value of increased fruits and vegetables in their daily diet. Since the inception of the farm stand in 2022, FMNP redemption rates have increased 11%. These increases are evident throughout all Delaware County WIC locations as participants throughout the county are encouraged to stop in our Upper Darby site to pick up FMNP vouchers and visit the farm stand.

Our very own WIC Clinical Nutritionist, Jennifer Braxton, NDTR, CLC, provided a mini class, demonstrating the various ways to utilize the produce from the farmer on site: Black Lighting Farm. Families learned how to make summer peach salsa and peaches & cream smoothies. Our hope is that our WIC families increase their fruit and veggie intake using these simple tips/recipes.

This was our second year having a farmer come to the Upper Darby WIC site. The farmer consistently offers a wide variety of PA-grown fruits and vegetables that are in season. According to our previous Outreach Coordinator, Michael Murphy, MSCN, on average Black Lighting farm had a redemption rate of 40-60 vouchers per week. The day of the event their redemption rate increased to 80 vouchers. And there after it increased dramatically to over 200 vouchers a week.

For WBFW, we showcased our then-Breastfeeding Coordinator, Kim Walker, stunning breastfeeding photo gallery throughout the Upper Darby Clinic. The intention was to allow participants to see themselves in the art and know that they too could breastfeed. Since installing the gallery, we have received many compliments from our families.

WIC Clinical Nutritionists Skyla VanTrikt and Michaela Master set up a breastfeeding booth providing a space for families to ask questions and receive breastfeeding education. While at the breastfeeding booth, participants were offered a chance to fill out a quiz to win a prize in our raffle.

This event was made possible with the help of our WIC team and donors Acme, Giant, Price Rite, and Shop Rite. ■



WIC Nutritionist Skyla VanTrikt, and former Breastfeeding Coordinator Kim Walker



WIC Nutritionist Jenn Braxton during a food demo with th breastfeed photo gallery in the background



WIC Nutritionists Micheala Master and Skyla VanTrikt

FROM LOCAL AGENCY TO STATE OFFICE: VIRGINIA WIC WELCOMES NEW EMPLOYEE

By Renee Johnson, Training & Development, Virginia WIC State Office

The Division of Community Nutrition (DCN) Virginia WIC Program is pleased to welcome Becca Hanley to its team. In August, Becca assumed the role of Nutrition Education Liaison, where she supports both the DCN Training and the State WIC Office Nutrition teams. Her primary areas of responsibility include managing local agency new employee training, continuing education annual requirements, nutrition education materials, and the online nutrition education platform.

Becca comes to DCN with more than seven years of WIC experience. She joined the Virginia WIC Program as a Nutritionist Senior in 2016, and by 2019, assumed the role of WIC Coordinator for the Blue Ridge Health District. Becca received a Bachelor of Science in Athletic Training from Emory & Henry College and a Master of Science in Nutritional Science from the University of Kentucky.

Becca is a Charlottesville, VA native and is excited to relocate to Richmond. In her free time, she loves spending time with her rescue dog, Lexi, and cheering on her beloved Kentucky Wildcats. Becca, like most of her teammates, is an early morning person and has settled nicely into her new role. Join us in welcoming Becca to Virginia WIC! ■



Becca Hanley

WEST VIRGINIA'S MONONGALIA COUNTY HEALTH DISTRICT WIC'S MARION COUNTY OFFICE OPENS CHILDREN'S CLOTHING CLOSET

By Sarah Moore, Outreach Liaison, MCHD WIC

West Virginia's Monongalia County Health District WIC's Marion County location opened a children's clothing closet for participants to utilize. This idea came to fruition when a local foster closet was closing. When the Marion County Office staff heard of this, they felt they had to do something. A few staff members came to collect all of the items from the foster agency and immediately got to work folding and organizing the closet.

The closet has sizes from newborn through 14/16, and has everything from socks and shoes to winter coats and scarves. Parents and caregivers can shop the closet for their children completely free of charge.

Since the closet opened, we have received various donations from the public and hope to continue to see it grow in the future. This closet is another opportunity for our office to support parents and caregivers with the difficult, yet rewarding task of raising little ones. ■



PENNSYLVANIA'S FHCCP GETS BACK OUT INTO THE COMMUNITY

By Kristin LeVan, Nutritionist and Outreach Coordinator, FHCCP

COVID put a hold on many in-person expos and community programs, but the time has come when many of these programs are coming back and meeting together once again!

On October 4, Breastfeeding Coordinator Courtney Forbes, and WIC Retail Store Manager and Contract Compliance Manager Brad Lechleitner, both from the Family Health Council of Central PA (FHCCP), attended the 2023 Annual Statewide Refugee Consultation at Central Penn College. Luke Sutliff from the State WIC agency also attended and presented for the PA WIC Program. Everyone who attended was able to get a tour of FHCCP's Mobile Unit and learn about the additional services FHCCP's Tapestry of Health WIC Program provides at a local level.

Several refugee resettlement organizations such as Church World Services attended. Some of the presentations provided education on the races and ethnicities of refugee families coming to the state and what barriers they face.

FHCCP Breastfeeding Coordinator Courtney Forbes and Nutritionist and Outreach Coordinator Kristin LeVan attended another great event – the Hearing Loss Expo, organized by the Department of the Hearing Impaired and Hard of Hearing – on October 11 at the Penn Harris Hotel. Presentations took place throughout the day covering legal rights, interpretation services, and a welcome message by Secretary Nancy Walker from the PA Department of Labor and Industry. Exhibitors included Parent to Parent, Career Link, Assisted Sign Language Services, plus many more.

FHCCP looks forward to reconnecting in person with community programs and events to network with other agencies and promote WIC services and other programs provided through WIC. ■

WEST VIRGINIA'S TSN WIC STAFF ENJOY AUTUMNFEST OUTREACH EVENT

On Saturday, September 30, Mercer County (WV) WIC staff enjoyed celebrating the beginning of a new season by setting up a WIC fruit and vegetable pop-up market along with breastfeeding and diaper-changing areas for AutumnFest 2023 in Princeton, WV. This state-led WIC event was one of many scheduled at festivals throughout the state during spring, summer, and fall of 2023. The event reminded the public about the WIC Program services, and also amplified through good-old-fashioned grassroots marketing that the WIC Program is alive and well.

Grandparents, young parents, and children were happily surprised to choose from a large assortment of locally grown apples, peppers, watermelons, squash, cucumbers, and garlic, courtesy of WV WIC. Extremely important is the relationship that was further cultivated by purchasing the pop-up market items from Sprouting Farms, a WV WIC FMNP vendor. Impressive too is the fact that the local farm provides producers with the critical training and resources needed to build connections to local markets, contributing to planting the seeds of a healthier, stronger, and more sustainable future.

Staff clearly enjoyed the event and felt it was worthwhile. Nutritionist Emaleigh Rose noted the event was the highlight of her fall. "I loved seeing the participants outside the clinic setting and introduced WIC to others not familiar with the program. I felt the entire event was a hit. Everyone was so appreciative of their fresh fruit and vegetables," she said. "I hope this event is continued for many years to come."

Jordan Tedder, Nutritionist Assistant, said, "We were thrilled to see so many of our participants out and about enjoying the fall festivities with their families. At our tent we were able to distribute all the produce and it was a joy to make others happy." ■



TSN Assistant Director Ashley Dowell (left) and Administrative Assistant Meagan Rotenberry smile for the camera after setting up for the day

PENNSYLVANIA'S NORTH CENTRAL WIC REACHES OUT TO THE COMMUNITY

By Elizabeth Johnson, Nutrition Aide/Outreach Coordinator

Pennsylvania's North Central WIC Program recently had the opportunity to work with local organizations to help share with the community what programs are offered to families in the area. These are the first of many events we are excited to have the opportunity to take part in. Since COVID, we have not had many opportunities to go out and network within the community and these events allowed us to reconnect with the community.

In August, we attended Keystone Rural Health Consortia, Inc. Family Fun Day to help celebrate National Health Center Week. We had the chance to network with Keystone Rural Health, the Ridgway Fire Department, CenClear and many more great organizations.

We were also invited by our local Salvation Army to participate in their Back to School Bash where we were able to set up a table to share information about the WIC Program and we were able to meet some of the families that we work with in the clinic. ■

Elizabeth Johnson was given the chance to sit in the driver seat of the fire truck



Elizabeth Johnson with members of the Ridgway Fire Department



Nutrition Aide/ORC Elizabeth Johnson and Nutrition Aide Amanda Deitz at the Salvation Army's Back to School Bash

FAMILY HEALTH COUNCIL OF CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA HOLDS OPEN HOUSE

By Kristin LeVan, Nutritionist and Outreach Coordinator at FHCCP

The Family Health Council of Central PA (FHCCP) held an Open House to highlight two of its Tapestry of Health Clinics in Cumberland County and introduce its first Mobile Unit to the community. The promotion for this event was 'Local Support, Providing a Lifelong Impact.' Local community providers, funders, and other WIC agency staff were invited to tour the Tapestry of Health Carlisle and Camp Hill sites, tour the Mobile Unit at Karns in Lemoyne, and talk with WIC staff on how we can partner together to continue the great work that our programs provide.

Penn State Nutrition Links, ELECT (Education Leading to Employment and Career Training) Program, MAT (Medication Assisted Treatment) program, Capital Area Intermediate Unit, the Project Coordinator from Shippensburg University, current participants, people looking for WIC and SNAP information, state agency staff, and counseling programs all visited our locations during our Open House. Visitors toured the offices, met with direct service staff, discussed each other's programs, and learned about WIC and other programs, discussed ways to collaborate, and learned about WIC's referral process.

Overall, it was a fun and successful day collaborating with the community and local providers. FHCCP looks forward to the continued work with local providers on meeting all the needs of current and prospective WIC participants! ■



FHCCP Vice President of Nutrition Services Melissa Bishop and State Agency WIC Director Sally Zubairu-Cofield at the Camp Hill site during the Cumberland County Open House



FHCCP Nutrition Education Coordinator Kelsey Brandt at the mobile unit during the Cumberland County Open House



FHCCP staff, state agency staff, and community partners come together at the mobile unit during the Cumberland County Open House

RUTGERS NJMS WIC PROGRAM AWARDED CIAO GRANT TO REACH MORE FAMILIES THROUGH INNOVATIVE WIC OUTREACH EFFORTS

The Rutgers NJMS (New Jersey Medical School) WIC Program, located in Newark, NJ has been awarded \$597,638 to implement a USDA-funded WIC Community Innovation and Outreach Project (WIC CIAO). Newark is the largest city in New Jersey.

The grant will support efforts to develop, implement, and evaluate innovative outreach strategies to increase awareness, participation, and benefit redemption in the WIC Program, and reduce disparities in program delivery. The city of Newark is the county seat of Essex County, where WIC provides benefits to 6,014 participants, including 1,594 pregnant and postpartum women, 1,424 infants up to age 12 months, and 2,996 children up to age 5.

"Too many women and children in New Jersey are missing out on the nutrition they need in order to thrive," said Susan Stephenson-Martin, Director, Rutgers NJMS WIC Program. "We are proud to be part of this critical initiative to identify new ways of connecting people to WIC."

Rutgers NJMS WIC Program was selected through a highly competitive grant process. The project has three goals:

- Increase WIC awareness and enrollment among the underserved Portuguese families and immigrant families in the northern part of Newark, the Ironbound district
- Increase enrollment/retention of participants by collaborating with Greater Newark Health Care Coalition to strengthen point of service agencies/Community Based Organizations' knowledge of WIC and ability to assist clients with WIC navigation
- Increase redemption of WIC benefits by surveying and educating existing WIC participants and vendors

In total, there are 36 awardees made up of WIC state and local agencies, including tribal nations, and nonprofit entities and organizations.

WIC CIAO is administered through a USDA cooperative agreement with the Food Research & Action Center, in partnership with the Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition, the Native American Agriculture Fund, and Unidos US. WIC CIAO is part of USDA's Food and Nutrition Service broader initiative to modernize WIC. ■

WEST VIRGINIA'S VALLEY HEALTH SYSTEMS, INC. WIC ATTENDS THE WEST VIRGINIA HOT DOG FESTIVAL

By Ginny Conner, MS, Outreach Coordinator, Valley Health WIC

In July, Valley Health WIC attended the West Virginia Hot Dog festival. A WV WIC goal for the current fiscal year was to attend fairs and festivals. For this outreach goal, we were able to purchase fresh produce from local WV WIC-approved farmers. We really appreciated Bodimer Farms from Gallipolis for supplying the fresh produce for our event. This event was highly attended and there were about 1,000 festival goers that went through the WIC booth. More than 1,000 pieces of produce were given out in four hours at the WIC tent!

The WIC booth also featured a nursing area. Mothers came and cooled down with their little ones and were able to feed them in a private area.

This event would not have been possible without the teamwork of the Valley Health WIC West employees. Many staff members worked shifts and participated in handing out fresh produce, WIC brochures and information, and fun items (water bottles, pens, and stress balls). We look forward to more fun events with our staff and local community! ■



Valley Health WIC Staff working the WIC Booth at the WV Hot Dog Festival are (back, left to right) Rachel Miles Hoopes, MS RDN LD CLC ACSM-EP and Kendra Cremeans, RDN, LDN, (front, left to right) Cassandra Mendoza-Hockley, WIC OA/MA and Naomi Pruitt, WIC Nutritionist



Staffing the booth are Clara Cremeans, Cabell WIC Office Manager and Ginny Conner, Valley Health WIC Outreach Liaison. Also shown working are Dotty Hatten, Wayne County WIC Office Manager; Jan Wilkes, IBCLC, WIC Nutritionist and Valley WIC West Breastfeeding Coordinator. Behind staff is Lisa Gilkerson, WIC OA/MA



Valley Health Staff working the WIC Booth at the WV Hot Dog Festival (left to right) Clara Cremeans, Cabell WIC Office Manager; Ginny Conner, Valley WIC Outreach Liaison; Denise Eagan, MA, RDN, LD, Valley Health West Nutrition Education Liaison; Dotty Hatten, Wayne County WIC Office Manager; Lisa Gilkerson, OA/MA; and Jenna Rose, MA, RDN, LD, Nutrition Coordinator, Valley Health West



MARWIC TIMES Calendar

The deadline for the Spring issue of MARWIC Times is February 5, 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.