

MARWIC

T · I · M · E · S

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

PENNSYLVANIA'S COMMUNITY PROGRESS COUNCIL CELEBRATES CIAO GRANT

By Carly Hess, WIC Director, Community Progress Council

When you've got big news, it deserves a big celebration! Pennsylvania WIC's Community Progress Council (CPC) welcomed elected officials, community partners, team and Board members, and many regional leaders and stakeholders for a press event in July to celebrate the recent awarding of a \$549,499 WIC Community Innovation and Outreach (CIAO) grant.

Representatives from the office of US Senator John Fetterman and the Office of the Governor of Pennsylvania, York County PA Commissioner Doug Hoke, City of York Councilwoman Betsy Buckingham, and our partners at the US Department of Agriculture, Food Research & Action Center, Pennsylvania Department of Health and PA WIC were in attendance to celebrate the award. Thank you to all for recognizing the immense impact these outreach efforts will have across York County, especially for rural populations and communities with limited English proficiency.

WIC CIAO is supported by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service and aims to 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. Visit <https://www.hellowic.org> to find out more about the WIC CIAO Project and awardees.

"Too many families with young children in York County are missing out on the nutrition support and other resources they need in order to thrive," said Robin Rohrbaugh, President/CEO, Community Progress Council. "We are proud to be part of this critical initiative to identify new ways of connecting people to WIC, and to the comprehensive, integrated services that Community Progress Council provides that we know are critical to helping families rise above poverty and

Continued on page 9



Pictured (left to right) Tiena Blouse, CPC Controller; Robin Rohrbaugh, CPC President & CEO; Ruth Robbins, CPC CPO; Carly Hess, CPC WIC Director; Melissa Maust, PA Bureau of WIC Nutrition Education and Program Manager; Jamie Van Lieu, Branch Chief WIC/FMNP/SFMNP USDA, FNS Mid-Atlantic Regional Office; Dr. Patty Bennet, AMS, Director, Marketing Order and Agreement Division USDA; Mark Shirk, PA Bureau of WIC Public Health Program Director; Krista Dressler, PA Bureau of WIC Public Health Program Manager; Geri Henchy, FRAC



Pictured (left to right, front row) Robin Rohrbaugh, CPC President and CEO; (second row) Ruth Robbins, CPC Chief Program Officer; Carly Hess, CPC WIC Director; (third row) Christine Smith, CPC Community Outreach Navigator; Charlotte Dorsey, WIC Education Manager; Elisha Brantley, CPC Community Outreach Coordinator; Hazel Fuentes, CPC WIC Breastfeeding Nutritionist; Nayantara Nair, CPC WIC Nutritionist

WEST VIRGINIA'S MONONGALIA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENTS WIC HOSTS 2ND ANNUAL MOTHER'S APPRECIATION DAY

By Sarah Moore, Outreach Coordinator

WV's Monongalia County Health Department WIC hosted its 2nd Annual Mother's Appreciation Day in Doddridge County, WV. The event was hosted in partnership with the Doddridge County Family Resource Network and the Clarksburg Beauty Academy.

The public was able to attend and receive free beauty services, such as hair styling and nail painting. While participants were waiting to receive their beauty services, they browsed the various community partner tables that were set up. This allowed them to know what resources the community had to offer.

It was a successful event and residents of the community are hoping to see it return again next year. ■



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(2) Fax: (202) 690-7442 or

(3) Email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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NEWS FROM THE USDA: HAPPENINGS AROUND THE REGION

■ National WIC Breastfeeding Week

By JoAnna Hazard, MS, RD, CSO, LDN

In appreciation of breastfeeding individuals and of all the dedicated volunteers, professionals, communities, and organizations supporting their efforts, Secretary of Agriculture Thomas Vilsack proclaimed August 1-7, 2023, as National WIC Breastfeeding Week. Each year in the first week of August, National WIC Breastfeeding Week is celebrated in conjunction with World Breastfeeding Week to promote and support breastfeeding as the best source of nutrition for a baby's first year of life. This year's World Breastfeeding Week Theme, "Enabling Breastfeeding: Making a Difference for Working Parents," helped shine a light on why this work is so important and centered the conversation on the babies and families who need our support. Workplace challenges remain the most common reason for women to have never breastfed or stop breastfeeding earlier than recommended. This year's theme highlights the importance and impact of paid leave and workplace support on breastfeeding outcomes.

The Breastfeeding Awards of Excellence are given out annually to WIC Local Agencies who have operated a breastfeeding peer counseling program for at least one year, and who meet all the core requirements of the FNS WIC Breastfeeding Model. Awards are given out at Gold, Premiere, or Elite levels, depending on program factors such as breastfeeding rates.

The Mid-Atlantic Regional Office is pleased to announce this year's winners of the Breastfeeding Awards of Excellence! Congratulations on a job well done!

GOLD Awards

- District of Columbia - Unity Health Care WIC Program
- Maryland - Baltimore County WIC Program
- New Jersey - Burlington County WIC, Passaic WIC Program, The City of East Orange WIC Program, St. Joseph WIC Program, Plainfield WIC Program
- West Virginia - Central WV WIC, Mid-Ohio Valley Health Department WIC Program

PREMIERE Awards

- Pennsylvania - Hope Enterprises Inc. Bi-County WIC (*See story on page 4.*)
- Maryland - CCI Montgomery County

■ MARO Visits Puerto Rico

By Jaime Van Lieu

MARO WIC Branch Chief Jaime Van Lieu visited Puerto Rico July 12-14, 2023. She ventured out of San Juan for the first time and visited the Caguas clinic on a very rainy day. The Caguas clinic was renovated with disaster funding provided to PR WIC after the 2017 hurricanes, and it was beautiful, bright, open, and had great flow! Participants were served quickly and efficiently and were excited to also receive their seasonal FMNP coupons. Jaime saw PR WIC's new MIS, as well as how benefits are loaded onto the EBT card, and the balance printed on a receipt for the participants to see.

On Thursday, she went to Guayama, about an hour south of San Juan. What a beautiful drive through the mountains! It was a hot day at the market; not surprisingly, farmers markets in PR open early in the day, at 6 or 6:30 am typically. At the market, they had several large stands absolutely bursting with tropical produce! Suffice to say the produce was quite different from what is found at NJ farmers markets! Pineapples, bananas, plantains, papayas, mangoes, guava, and many more! Inside the convention center adjacent to the market, seniors could apply for SMFNP and receive their coupons on the spot. Additionally, PR WIC's impressive mobile WIC clinic was on site and in full use! Participants were being certified for WIC and FMNP in the air-conditioned clinic, which featured a private lactation space, bathroom with changing table, and wheelchair lift. Samples of fresh cut fruit from the market were on a table outside the mobile clinic under an awning for waiting participants to enjoy.

Lastly, Jaime was overjoyed to attend PR's 9th annual nutrition and breastfeeding conference! It was both fun and informative!

■ Electronic Solutions for WIC — Farmer's Market Nutrition Program Kickoffs this Season

By Kellie Boyle, MA, RD, IBCLC

In an effort to modernize and increase the utilization and redemption of benefits in the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP), several of the states in the Mid-Atlantic Region transferred over from coupon benefits to an e-solution this 2023 Farmer's Market season! The District of Columbia, Delaware, New Jersey, and West Virginia all initiated an e-FMNP solution this season. Maryland is in the planning stages of an e-Solution for next season. The e-FMNP solutions throughout the region are innovative and vary from state to state. It is anticipated these modernizing solutions will make it easier and faster for eligible WIC participants receiving the benefits to use the benefits and increasing the use of the benefits by farmers/farm markets. All to say, improving equitable access to locally grown fruits and vegetables for eligible WIC participants, increase redemption rates and State agency utilization of grant awards in their overall operations in each State. ■

NORFOLK (VIRGINIA) WIC STAFFER RECEIVES SURPRISE ACCOLADES

By Donesha Scott, DrPH, CLC, Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Liaison, Virginia WIC

With a re-supply of breastmilk storage bags in-hand, on June 16, 2023, Jarene Fleming, Virginia WIC State Breastfeeding Coordinator, and Donesha Scott, Virginia WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Liaison, made a surprise visit to the Norfolk Health Department. Following an invitation from WIC Coordinator Denise Williams, the duo attended a WIC all-staff meeting to celebrate the accomplishment of WIC Nutrition Associate Daissy Torres. Daissy was surprised with a pinning ceremony for becoming a WIC Breastfeeding Expert and IBCLC.

Daissy has been with Norfolk WIC for three years and loves providing support and encouragement to pregnant and lactating participants. She joined us as a Breastfeeding Peer Counselor in 2020 and has grown with the WIC Program to become a Nutrition Associate.

Daissy is a passionate breastfeeding advocate and educator and started working independently to become an IBCLC. Her initiative made it possible for her to be the first to benefit from the WIC Breastfeeding Enhancement Initiative (BFEI). The BFEI is a Virginia WIC initiative designed to increase lactation expertise within the WIC Program. Funded by the CDC Workforce Development Grant, the BFEI has provided reference materials and funded employee educational leave. The overall goal is to have an IBCLC in each of Virginia's 35 health districts and to have all counseling staff complete advanced lactation training. The first cohort of 26 staff members are being supported to complete lactation-specific education and the IBCLC exam.

After the pinning ceremony, Jarene and Donesha had the opportunity to answer questions about the WIC Program and to network with staff during an after-meeting potluck. It was evident that Daissy's milestone has encouraged others in the room to pursue lactation education! Way to go, Daissy!! ■



Jarene Fleming carries breastmilk storage bags.



Pictured (left to right) Virginia WIC State Breastfeeding Coordinator Jarene Fleming, Norfolk WIC Nutrition Associate Daissy Torres, Virginia WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Liaison Donesha Scott.

NEW JERSEY'S NEWARK WIC PROGRAM AND THE LEAGUERS ENABLE BREASTFEEDING

By Sharon M. Schopfer, BS IBCLC RLC

On August 3, 2023, the Leaguers, a community partner with the Newark (NJ) WIC Program hosted the annual World Breastfeeding celebration at the Newark Department of Health and Community Wellness, second level conference room. We had exclusively breastfeeding mothers and their babies attend with some pregnant participants join us (in person and on Zoom) to enjoy the guest speakers, food, fun, prizes, and raffles.

Danielle Tropea MPH, NJ WIC Breastfeeding Coordinator attended, along with Jennifer Pitkin IBCLC, (Director of business development-Ardo USA) and Raquel Sims (community Doula), our guest speakers. Last but not least, our Newark Breastfeeding Peer Counseling staff – Lisa Olivo, Marieli Torres, Rose Saint Albord, Kaira Costa, and Breastfeeding Manager Sharon Schopfer was also there.

Jennifer Pitkin started us off with an 'icebreaker of a game' from Zoom. It was a family activity in which she included her older children, Evan and Eva, who actively participate in this educational and interactive discussion of the benefits of breastfeeding.

Raquel Sims then spoke on her journey of becoming a Doula in the Newark area and how she plans to start her new career supporting moms as a Doula. She expressed how she became, and how she just completed her doula training and is excited to start this new adventure supporting area mothers.

Sarah Cooper from The Leaguers Pregnancy Program, is a prenatal educator and a continued community partner with Newark WIC Program, who escorted attendees to this celebration and translated the English presentation to Spanish for the mothers who she accompanied to this event.

After all the presentations were given, the Breastfeeding Peer Counselors led a great party game of Breastfeeding BINGO. All the attendees participated in this breastfeeding conversational event, and everyone learned more about breastfeeding experiences during this very interactive game. At the end of the game the winner received a prize.

Everyone enjoyed themselves so much. They ate delicious snacks throughout the event and enjoyed a nice piece of cake for dessert. Every participant who attended was given a raffle ticket. The prize baskets had many promotional and useful breastfeeding items in them, along with other adorable baby items. Almost everyone who attended received a prize, and everyone received a goody bag, along with the support, collaboration and community support in their effort to breastfeed. ■



Pictured (bottom to top) Newark WIC Breastfeeding staff Kaira Costa, Marieli Torres, Sharon Schopfer, Lisa Olivo, and Sarah Cooper (of the Leaguers).

MARYLAND WIC CREATES VIDEOS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

By Ernest Le, Maryland WIC Program Analyst

Social media has now moved into the video age. Where platforms were once made up of posts or photos, people on social media are now used to watching videos. Maryland WIC is moving into creating videos that are engaging and informative for our participants.

These videos are the brainchild of Chloe Dillaway, a former CPA in a WIC clinic who was hired as the State's Engagement Specialist. She started by reaching out to staff all across Maryland. Together, they brainstormed topics to address in the videos and then found volunteers to participate in the videos. Then we traveled out to film the WIC staff in their offices.

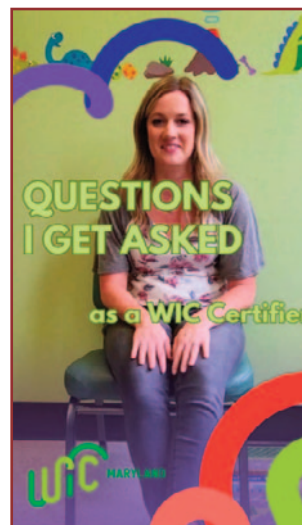
The new videos address common questions that participants ask and give the staff a chance to answer in their own words. Subjects include breastfeeding positions, why newborns don't sleep all through the night, how to feed a picky eater, and much more. Then Chloe was able to use Instagram's built-in editor to create videos with music and colorful animations to keep the viewer engaged.

On social media, it is important to keep videos short (less than 30 seconds if possible). To get the best responses from the staff, we encouraged them to speak naturally and pretend they were talking to an actual participant instead of trying to memorize a scripted answer. We then edited the footage down to bite-sized pieces for our audience.

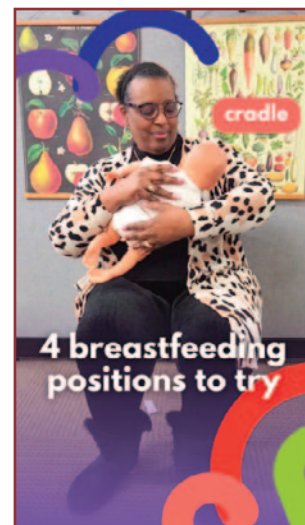
Maryland WIC's push for social media videos began with a series of breastfeeding videos in August to celebrate Breastfeeding Month. Our Instagram videos can be found on @MDH.WIC. ■



Rachel Romero films a video segment for social media on Maryland WIC.



Kayla Lashbaugh answers common questions she receives in her work at a clinic.



Thomasine Williams demonstrates breastfeeding positions in one of the new videos.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA WIC CELEBRATES BREASTFEEDING WEEK BY HIGHLIGHTING THE PUMP ACT

By Akua Odi Boateng, DC WIC State Director

On August 1, 2023, the DC WIC Program joined the Department of Labor (DOL), Wage and Hour Division and the National WIC Association to launch the Power to Pump initiative in the District. This was part of a nationwide day of action that focused on educating workers, employers, and stakeholders on workers' expanded rights to pump at work.

The team visited the Unity WIC Clinic at Anacostia. Together they toured the facility and had the chance to interact with WIC participants and staff. DC WIC highlighted their support services to breastfeeding parents, including the Breastfeeding Peer Counselor program, referrals to lactation professionals, enhanced food packages, and information on DC laws and regulations that support families, such as DC Paid Family Leave.

The team shared additional resources for WIC staff to use in communicating the PUMP Act with participants. ■



DC WIC staff poses with NWA and DOL leadership during a site visit to Unity's WIC clinic in Anacostia. Pictured (left to right) are Akua Boateng, DC WIC State Director; Jamila Taylor, President of the National WIC Association (NWA); Jessica Looman, Principal Deputy Administrator of US Department of Labor (DOL) Wage and Hour Division; Melissa Fett, Unity WIC Operation and Outreach Manager; Melissa Ordonez, Unity WIC Breastfeeding Coordinator; Bonnie Worstell, Policy Advisor for DOL Wage and Hour Division; Tacita Kelly, Clinical Director at Unity Health Care Anacostia.

PENNSYLVANIA'S BI-COUNTY WIC EARNS PREMIERE BREASTFEEDING AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

By Mike Henderson, Public Health Program Manager, Bureau of Women, Infants and Children (WIC), Pennsylvania Department of Health

Pennsylvania Bureau of Women, Infants and Children (WIC) sends their congratulations to Betsy Huff and all Bi-County staff members on receiving the USDAS's Premiere Breastfeeding Award of Excellence!

While Bi-County has earned the Premiere level in 2023, the current award is just a part of a larger picture of excellence. The following details illustrate the significance of Bi-County's Breastfeeding promotion efforts over the years:

- Bi-County won the Gold Award in 2016 and 2021. The award title is held for four years.
- Bi-County is the very first local WIC agency in Pennsylvania to receive a Premiere Award.
- Bi-County is one of two local WIC agencies in the Mid-Atlantic Region to receive the Premiere Award this year.
- Bi-County is one of just 13 local WIC agencies in the nation to receive the Premiere Award this year.

The Premiere Award clearly demonstrates Bi-County staff members' ongoing dedication and personal commitment to the health and well-being of pregnant women, children and infants in Lycoming and Clinton counties. Congratulations again on a job well done! ■



DELAWARE WIC PARTICIPATES IN LIFESAVERS CAREER SHADOWING FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

By Katie Waring, RDN, Northern Health Services Supervisor, Delaware WIC

Division of Public Health at Hudson State Center hosted students from Delaware's Brandywine School District Lifesavers.

This piloted after-school program was established from its 2021 Nursing Innovations Fund project to increase awareness of nursing careers among middle school age students. This was the second year students have been welcomed to learn what services and career options DPH has to offer.

About 30 students and faculty toured four stations, ending with a tour of the Mobile Unit. Interactive activities were provided at stations visited (WIC, Tuberculosis, Child Health, and Family Planning).

At the designated WIC station, there were smoothies and granola bars provided while participants completed a shopping cart activity choosing WIC-eligible foods. The recipes used for food items provided were from the Delaware WIC cookbook and Delaware Food Bank. After an overview of the program, pairs of students were provided with a category, such as pregnant woman or child, and given a shopping list of the WIC-eligible items associated.

Images of food items were laid out underneath each food group and the instructions were to "shop" items provided on the shopping list. This activity allowed for critical thinking, for example, determining if correct size and fat percentage of milk containers were selected. Once all items from each food group were collected, students calculated the remaining dollar amount they would have left over for fruits and vegetables.

At the end of the event, students were given the Delaware WIC cookbook and a goody bag with healthy lifestyle items to take home. ■



WEST VIRGINIA TSN IBCLC KATHY ROTENBERRY PRESENTS AT MERCER COUNTY COMMUNITY BABY SHOWER

By Diane Landy, WIC Outreach Coordinator

WIC representation is crucial at community baby showers.

These events provide a sense of community for many families and help them know how and where to reach out for help. Over the summer, West Virginia WIC's TSN agency staff attended many community baby showers within our region.


On July 7, TSN/WIC Breastfeeding Coordinator Kathy Rotenberry, IBCLC, provided a powerful presentation, *The Myths and Benefits of Breastfeeding*, for attendees of the Mercer County Community Baby Shower. Kathy and TSN/WIC Administrative Assistant Meagan Rotenberry provided an information table and

were available to greet and provide information on WIC services. Guests were encouraged to seek out assistance with breastfeeding through the WIC Program.

During the event, Kathy was interviewed by Greg Jordan, a reporter with the Bluefield Daily Telegraph. She took advantage of the opportunity to expeditiously describe the WIC Program, "We're a supplemental nutrition education program and today we're focusing on a lot of the breastfeeding aspects of our program. Breastfeeding is the healthiest first food. WIC provides a lot of supplemental foods, education, and breastfeeding classes to our participants. We're here to provide information. We're not a formula program. We're a nutrition education program."

Attendees were treated to WIC Mountaineer Caviar, a dish comprised of many beans/legumes, and was given the recipe to take home and try.

Community baby showers are a definite asset to struggling families. For parents who might not otherwise be able to accumulate the items required with the birth, fostering, or adoption of an infant and the resources and knowledge necessary to successfully bring a new life into the world, they provide invaluable assistance and support. ■



Mountaineer Caviar

Ingredients

- 1 can black-eyed peas or pinto beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 can corn or 1 1/2 cups frozen corn
- 1 can of Rotel diced tomatoes w/ jalapeno peppers, drained
- 1 can diced tomatoes or 1 fresh tomato, chopped
- 1 bell pepper, chopped
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1/2 cup fresh cilantro or parsley, chopped
- 1 Tbsp. sugar
- 1/2 bottle of Zesty Italian dressing
- 1 tsp. minced garlic

Directions

- Place all ingredients in 2-3 quart-sized container and gently mix.
- Pour Italian dressing over mixture and refrigerate. The flavor is best after marinating a few hours.
- Serve as an appetizer with tortilla chips or as a side dish.



TSN/WIC Administrative Assistant Meagan Rotenberry and Breastfeeding Coordinator Kathy Rotenberry, IBCLC.



Meagan Rotenberry talks about the WIC Program with passersby during the Mercer County Community Baby Shower.

PUERTO RICO VIRTUAL CLINIC: HEALTH PROVIDER PORTAL TO INTERCHANGE MEDICAL DOCUMENTATION

By Magdaliz Bonilla-Mendez, Nutritionist

In the Puerto Rico WIC Program, we continue to implement digital service models that allow us to facilitate access to services, streamline processes and strengthen regulatory controls. Now, we have launched the Puerto Rico WIC Program Health Provider Portal to Interchange Medical Documentation. This portal is part of the digital transformation process that the Puerto Rico WIC Program is promoting through technology.

The Health Provider Portal integrates with the My WIC PR mobile application and with the internal systems used by the Program's nutritionists and clerks. In this way, it allows the digital interaction of participants, health providers, and WIC staff within an infrastructure that exceeds industry standards and is in compliance with HIPAA law.

Through this integrated solution and the mobile application, participants can electronically request medical documentation, such as prescriptions, to their health provider, as required, to receive the corresponding benefits. From the portal, the health provider will receive the request and will be able to electronically complete the participant's medical documentation. Some patient and healthcare provider information will pre-populate on the form to facilitate its fill-out. By completing the medical documentation from the portal, errors will be minimized and a record of all the prescriptions issued by the health provider for each patient will be kept.

In addition, through the portal, the health provider will be able to receive and send messages to WIC Program staff and have access to relevant information, among other functionalities. As soon as the health provider completes and submits the medical documentation, the Program Nutritionist can view the medical prescription through their internal systems. Also, participants can view their medical prescriptions through the mobile app.

On the other hand, to use the portal, health providers must be registered. The portal validates the medical license of the health provider before the Board of Licensing and Medical Discipline of Puerto Rico. In this way, technology helps us avoid fraud and strengthen regulatory controls.

More than 97% of our participants have access to our mobile app. After about one month of operations, over 110 health providers were registered and over 49 medical documents were digitally interchanged. This new platform allows us to offer certain services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

For more detail on the characteristics and functionalities of the portal, it can be seen in the instructional video located at: <https://wic.pr.gov/activarcuentaEN.mp4>. ■



PENNSYLVANIA'S ALLEGHENY COUNTY WIC ATTENDS AFGHAN SUPPORT CENTER EVENT

By Leah Ruggiero, MPH

An Afghan Support Center event was hosted by Cherokee Federal at the Pittsburgh Marriott Hotel, July 19-22, 2023. The purpose of the Support Center event was to provide resources to Afghan Refugees settling in Pennsylvania's Allegheny County. The Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD) WIC Program offered WIC services and education on



Private consultation space



Leah Ruggiero



Community Engagement Coordinator Lillian Colon, AS, CMA, CM, and Customer Service Coordinator Leah Ruggiero, MPH tabling at Afghan Support Center

WIC as one of 70 providers at the event. The ACHD WIC Program has been focusing efforts on reaching refugee families by assisting with WIC enrollment and answering questions about WIC for those currently enrolled.

During the span of the event, 469 newly-settled Afghans were reached. The ACHD WIC team – Lisa Matt, Leah Ruggiero, Lillian Colon, Tyler DeJanes, Nanette Foy, and Heather Finnell – provided appropriate support to attendees. Utilizing the private consultation space, ACHD WIC was able to conduct appointments for families attending the event. The ACHD WIC team capitalized on translation services provided by Cherokee Federal to answer WIC-specific questions and distribute valuable information and outreach materials. ACHD WIC was also able to foster collaborations with additional resettlement agencies and grow partnerships with previous collaborations thanks to the Afghan Support Center.

The ACHD WIC Program looks forward to continuing to support refugee families resettling in Allegheny County through continuing partnerships and attending events like the Afghan Support Center! ■

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA WIC ATTENDS BABY SHOWER FOR MOTHERS IN DISTRICT

By Melissa Seyoum, RDN

DC WIC staff attended a community baby shower for mothers, hosted by United Planning Organization (UPO) in June. Give aways at the shower included diaper bags, breastfeeding covers, children's books, and fresh fruits and vegetables from local farmers' markets.

WIC IBCLC partners from DC Breastfeeding Coalition lead a discussion where mothers were invited to share their past successes and challenges with breastfeeding. Those in attendance were provided information on WIC services and how WIC can play a role in helping mothers have a healthy pregnancy, delivery, and get breastfeeding off to a great start. ■



Giveaways for attendees of the baby shower



The theme of the baby shower is "Sweet as Can Bee"



DC WIC Staffer Maritza Guzman with UPO Health Service Specialist Merybel Lara Cruz

SEASONS CHANGE AT WEST VIRGINIA'S MID-OHIO VALLEY WIC

By Kelly Hopkins, M.Ed., Outreach Coordinator, Mid-Ohio Valley WIC Office, Parkersburg, WV

Sitting on my back porch after a busy day in our WIC office, I am reminded of the beauty of one particular tree in my neighbor's backyard. One branch grows to make a heart-shaped wreath with its leaves, perched just-so at the top. Every year, it grows this way. It's the only branch of its kind.

This is my peaceful place, my serenity, where I can go to decompress and recharge. Where I watch the changing of colors every Fall, the graceful dancing of leaves as they find their way to the ground, snowflakes soon to follow. And in the Spring, tiny neon green buds greet me with the promise of new beginnings.

In my peaceful place, I have had a front row seat to the comings and goings of a baby in my neighborhood, a newborn no more. So many changes. As the seasons change, he grows, babbles, sits up, crawls. Now unrestrained, he has tasted freedom, like a tiny bud opening up to the possibilities ahead. Summer has arrived and soon enough Fall and Winter. Baby boy will walk, talk, and learn to feed himself. He is on his own timeline, yet in tune with the changing seasons. Unique and one-of-a-kind beautiful child, growing in his own way. Very much like that special tree in my neighbor's backyard.

He is a breastfed baby. A pacify baby. A WIC baby. He is healthy, happy and thriving. His family chose WIC.

They trust our guidance, our assistance with nutritional needs and questions, our continuing support and education and access to healthy foods, particularly with the rising cost of groceries. And for those reasons, this family has a peaceful place from which to watch the seasons of their lives change as well.

Sitting on my back porch after a busy day in our WIC office, I watch the heart-shaped wreath on the branch of a special tree and hear the sing-song babbling of a happy and healthy baby as the seasons change around me.

Here at MOV WIC we are honored to be a part of a bigger community family. Everywhere we go, families stop to tell us how WIC has been a very big part of their journey as a healthy family. We nurture, we encourage, we listen. And at the end of the day, we are reminded to take some time to take it all in. To watch, to listen, to appreciate every season, as families grow all around us. ■



The view from Kelly's back porch

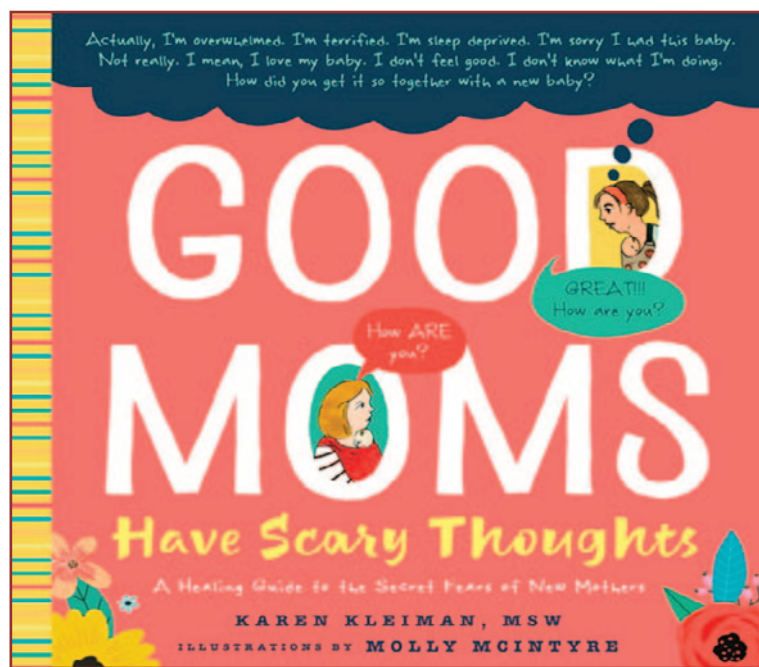
NEW JERSEY'S VNACJ WIC RECEIVES COMMUNITY SUPPORT

By Robin McRoberts

Thanks to a generous donation from the United Way of New Jersey's Monmouth and Ocean counties, Visiting Nurse Association of Central Jersey WIC received 50 hygiene bags to distribute to Monmouth County WIC families with new babies. WIC staff distributed the bags, which included shampoo, soap, toothpaste, baby wash and baby shampoo, when families came into clinic to complete WIC certifications. Families were so appreciative and commented on how expensive these items were in the store. One mother expressed that she would buy more fruit for her family with the money she saved.

In November 2022, VNACJ WIC was the recipient of a grant award from the Monmouth Park Charity Foundation. This small grant provided funds to purchase copies of *Good Moms Have Scary Thoughts: A Healing Guide to the Secret Fears of New Mothers*, written by Karen Kleinman, MSW, with illustrations by Molly McIntyre, and the materials for a Generalist referral toolkit.

Being a new mom can be overwhelming and in addition to community resource referrals, staff can give her a copy to help her through this challenging time. Generalist tool kits contain information on community programs, other VNACJ CFHI Programs, CDC Developmental Screening informational sheets and referral forms for local programs such as diaper pantries and clothing/food banks. Having the materials in one file enables WIC Generalists to easily provide supportive materials to families. ■



WIC ENROLLMENT OPPORTUNITIES AT WEST VIRGINIA FAIRS AND FESTIVALS

Staff from West Virginia WIC extended outreach and enrollment statewide through the summer at West Virginia fairs and festivals. As part of an ongoing effort to modernize services and remove barriers to accessing WIC benefits, the West Virginia WIC Program utilizes an online participant portal to accept applications.

"Fairs and festivals are an opportunity for WIC staff to meet families in the community while highlighting the support and public health services available through WIC clinics," said Jamie Wilkinson, Outreach Coordinator for West Virginia WIC's Office of Nutrition Services. "We look forward to seeing new faces as well as those who have been a part of the WIC Program since their pregnancy and child's birth."

Local West Virginia WIC agencies host children's activities, diaper changing stations and mother's lounge for infant feeding, and free Farmers' Markets, while enrolling eligible families who attend the events.

During July, WIC staff attended the Marshall County Fair (July 24-30), Jackson County Jr. Fair (July 28-29) and WV Hot Dog Festival (July 29). In August, WIC staff could be seen at the Tri-County Fair (August 3-5), Braxton County Fair (August 1-5), Berkeley County Youth Fair (August 5-12), WV State Fair (August 10-19), Town and Country Days (August 14-19), and Parkersburg Homecoming (August 18-19).

September events included the Italian Heritage Festival (September 1-3), Beckley Kids Classic Festival (September 9), Preston County Buckwheat Festival (September 28-30) and Autumn Fest (September 30). ■



PENNSYLVANIA'S BLUEPRINTS WIC UNVEILS LACTATION LOUNGE

By Chandra Dyne, CLC, WIC Manager

Blueprints WIC serves Washington and Greene counties in Pennsylvania. Over the last few years, great progress has been made to increase breastfeeding promotion and support within the Blueprints service area. Part of this support includes supporting families at their comfort level. While WIC staff support families nursing or pumping wherever and whenever their child needs to be fed, staff also recognized that not all parents feel comfortable pumping or nursing in public. We have experienced breastfeeding families in our office who use formula when out in public because they do not feel comfortable latching in front of others. This sparked the idea to create a welcoming space for families who wanted a private, comfortable location to feed their child. Thus, the Lactation Lounge was born.

The WIC Lactation Lounge is located in the WIC suite of our primary WIC clinic in Washington, PA. The Lounge includes a comfortable chair for mom to nurse/pump, a sink to wash hands or pump parts, toys for children to play with, free breastfeeding support items, and so much more! A comment/suggestion box was included as well to solicit feedback on how we can improve the space.

The Lactation Lounge was utilized by a WIC family the first day it was finished! The Lounge continues to be utilized on a regular basis by WIC families. A bulletin board was made for the waiting room to let families know we have the Lounge as an option if they would prefer a private space.

News traveled fast across the agency! Staff from other departments has called/stopped by to see the Lounge. The Lactation Lounge has not only been a wonderful addition for our WIC families, but also a way to normalize breastfeeding across the agency. The Lounge has sparked conversations amongst staff and management who have breastfeeding staff or pregnant staff.

As a reminder, we encourage families to feed their child when/where they need to be fed, but some families feel more comfortable nursing their child in private. The Lactation Lounge provides a space for families to nurse in private or pump in a clean, relaxing, locked location. This is just one small step to break barriers and build futures for breastfeeding families by supporting their breastfeeding journey. ■



Blueprints Lactation Lounge



Sign on the outside of the door, which can be changed from "open" to "in use"



One of the toys in the Lounge – a mama cat and her nursing kittens

PA's Community Progress Council *continued from page 1*
reach economic self-sufficiency."

Community Progress Council was selected through a highly competitive grant process. They are one of only 36 organizations selected nationwide, and the only organization selected in Pennsylvania. CPC's project aims to strengthen WIC in York County by increasing awareness of program services and benefits among eligible families, and connecting those families to comprehensive, integrated services to empower them to make progress in education, income, employment, housing, and other goals to help them achieve economic self-sufficiency.

With support from the WIC CIAO grant, CPC will create WIC Community Outreach Navigator positions dedicated to promoting WIC throughout the county, in various languages and locations. Navigators will use a mobile outreach vehicle unit to expand partnerships with Head Start, grocery stores, food pantries and other organizations within the maternal and child health sector to meet people where they already are and connect them to greater services. The mobile nature of outreach efforts will specifically target people with limited transportation and families living in rural areas. In addition, marketing and program materials will be translated into Haitian Creole and Arabic to meet the growing needs of participants with limited English proficiency.

"As just one example, every family that is income-eligible for the comprehensive early childhood services of Head Start is also income-eligible for WIC, which are both programs of Community Progress Council that serve young families across York County," said Rohrbaugh. "This project provides the incredible opportunity to reach eligible families, connect them with WIC, and then also connect participants with comprehensive, integrated services through Community Progress Council to provide ongoing coaching and holistically support families in their journey toward economic self-sufficiency." ■



Picture (left to right) Jaime Van Lieu, Branch Chief WIC/FMNP/SFMNP USDA, FNS Mid-Atlantic Regional Office; Patty Bennett, AMS, Director, Marketing Order and Agreement Division USDA; Kara Motosicky, Public Affairs Specialist, USDA-FNS, USDA Food and Nutrition.

WEST VIRGINIA'S MARION COUNTY WIC RECEIVES A NEW LOOK

By Sarah Moore, Outreach Coordinator

Monongalia County Health Department's Marion County (WV) WIC location received a new look this summer!

Madison Knight, a Fairmont State art major, was the artist behind the design. She wanted to display artwork that embodied the support WIC offers to families, especially new moms. The design consisted of a quilt with stitching of all the benefits WIC provides as a "blanket" covering the mom and her family.

Once Madison sketched out her art, she recruited the help of some of her Fairmont State peers. The project took about three weeks to complete. We are happy that the Fairmont office brings some color and artwork to the community, while also allowing passerby to see the benefits WIC has to offer. ■

Fairmont State student Madison Knight and classmates Holley Morrison and Brea "Bee" Spevock blanket the Marion County WIC office with paint and love.



PENNSYLVANIA'S GERMANTOWN WIC CLINIC CELEBRATES GRAND OPENING

By Nichole M. Vaughn, MBA, PHR, SHRM-CP, Human Resources Director/Outreach Coordinator NORTH, Inc.

On June 26, 2023, NORTH, Inc. celebrated the grand opening of its tenth WIC office in PA's Philadelphia County. The new Germantown WIC Office is projected to serve over 3,000 WIC participants in the Northwest section of Philadelphia. The Agency used the grand opening celebration as an opportunity to show the community that they care about not just their nutritional needs, but also about how they look and feel.

The grand opening celebration was designed to be a street party for the community. Radio station WRNB broadcasted live from the office, providing music to add to the excitement of the day. Every little girl in attendance had the opportunity to sit down with a manicurist and have their fingernails transformed into sparkly creations. The little boys had the opportunity to have their hair cut by one of four barbers onsite. Face painters and balloon artists were also a part of the event, ensuring that the little ones left with smiles on their faces. There was even an appearance by a real-life mermaid! By the end of the event, the staff had enrolled many new participants and received positive feedback from the community about the presence of a new WIC office in the neighborhood. ■



Joining the celebration are (left to right) Casey Perry, WIC Program Operations Coordinator; Sally Zubairu-Cofield, MPH, State WIC Director; Linda M. Kilby, PhD, RD, LDN; Janet Ohene-Frempong, NORTH, Inc. Board Member; Paul R. Amigh, Public Health Program Manager; Jessica Hopf, WIC Administrative Nutrition Manager



A young WIC participant receiving a free haircut



A young WIC participant enjoying a day of pampering with a free manicure

REARVIEW MIRROR REFLECTIONS FROM WEST VIRGINIA'S MID-OHIO VALLEY WIC

By Kelly Hopkins, M.Ed., Outreach Coordinator, Mid-Ohio Valley WIC Office, Parkersburg, WV

2023 is not quite in our rearview mirror but nonetheless, it's time to reflect. It's been a year of new beginnings, changes, new adventures, compromises, and unexpected opportunities here at West Virginia's Mid-Ohio Valley (MOV) WIC. We started the new year with several new employees in all areas. We accepted the challenge to work as a team and continue to provide a quality program to families, while new staff was trained. We offered positions to a new Breastfeeding Coordinator, Medical Liaison, Assistant Local Agency Director and Office Administration Supervisor, Nutritionists and Office Assistants, covering our entire nine-county region. Our Outreach Coordinator position was redefined with new goals at the local and state levels. We learned to lean on each other for support and to solve problems together.

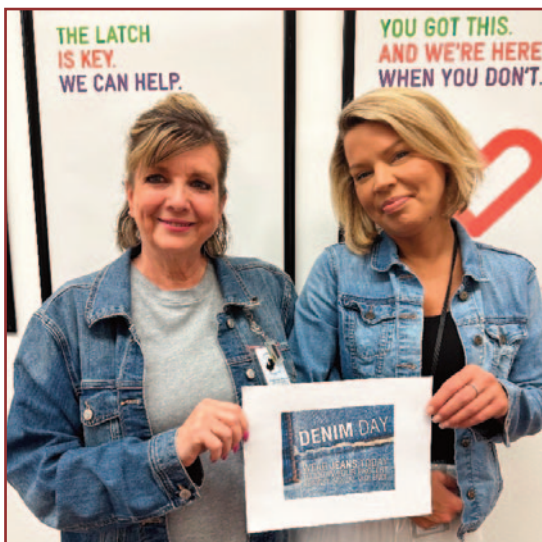
MOV WIC accomplishments included increasing our community footprint in our smaller, outer counties as well as increasing relationships with community partners through event attendance and networking as an established presence at Family Resource Network meetings. We updated an extensive Community Resources list for all counties to increase referrals to much-needed available support programs.

We stirred up creative presentations at local Head Starts, grocery stores, Toddler Tuesdays, Community Baby Showers, and Celebrating Children events. We attended Drug Take Back Days, the opening of a new satellite hospital, Middle School/High School Career/Resource Fairs, Community Partner resource events and Parent Advisory Boards. We supported National Days of Awareness by planting pinwheels to support Child Abuse Awareness, the wearing of denim to support survivors of Sexual Abuse and wearing blue/yellow to support World Down Syndrome Day, to name a few.

MOV WIC filmed public service announcements for social media and provided interviews for local newspapers/magazine inserts. We increased our social media presence through more frequent posts, including before and after events. We were seen out and about in the community at a more frequent rate to establish a face to our agency and to promote and explain our services. We rolled out Pop-up Farmers Markets and included those Markets for all eligible participants via a statewide rollout. We piloted a digital hemoglobin system in our local clinic as an alternative to finger sticks. We put into place a second lab at our Wood County facility and explored the possibility of mobile pop-up WIC clinics as well.

We provided a Mother's Breastfeeding Lounge and Farmers' Market/seed planting activity at two festivals, as well as increasing enrollment opportunities at the Parkersburg Multi-Cultural Festival.

We said goodbye to some very talented co-workers who helped us grow and provided us with light and positivity along the way. As we look back, we catch our breath and know that the reflection may indeed be in the rearview. Nevertheless, it mirrors who we are, what we have learned, and what we will continue to build on for our future. When looking back, it may be old school, but we have learned it's always a good idea to use our mirror. ■



Office Assistant Trish Law and Kelly Hopkins are sporting jean jackets on "Denim Day"



Nutritionist Miret Mikhail and Kelly Hopkins are making Smoothies with Head Start



Mid-Ohio Valley Outreach Coordinator Kelly Hopkins at "Drug Take-Back Day"



MARWIC TIMES Calendar

The deadline for the Winter issue of MARWIC Times is October 20, 2023. 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.