

MARWIC

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

WEST VIRGINIA'S VALLEY HEALTH WIC UTILIZES FACEBOOK TO KEEP PARTICIPANTS INFORMED AMIDST THE PANDEMIC

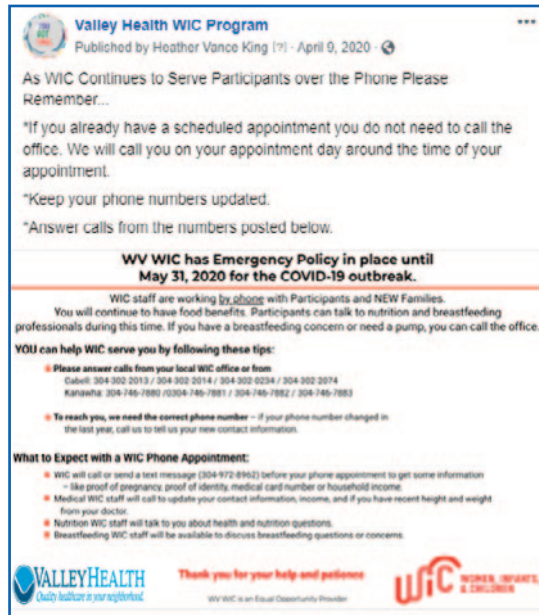
By Heather King, IBCLC, Lactation Consultant and Outreach Coordinator, Valley Health (East), Charleston, WV

Prior to the onset of COVID-19, WV's Valley Health WIC utilized its Facebook page to inform participants on mobile clinics, cooking demonstrations, WIC-related events and nutrition and breastfeeding guidance. However, the beginning of the pandemic led to food and supply hoarding and misinformation, which created panic in an already food insecure population.

Valley Health WIC then transitioned into providing information on participants' benefits and availability of WIC foods in the grocery stores. As COVID-19 safety guidelines were released, posts were shared from the CDC, NWA and local governments, along with explanations on new WIC clinic protocols.

Valley Health WIC also identified needs of our population with shared posts from food and diaper pantries, unemployment services, domestic violence hotlines, mental health agencies, and many more. Guidance on nutrition and breastfeeding stayed a priority with locally developed posts and shared posts from NWA, USDA, La Leche League, and national breastfeeding coalitions. Participants could also reach out to us via FB messenger with questions on their upcoming remote service appointments, personal benefit availability, and difficulties at the grocery stores.

As a result of staying active and informed, Valley Health WIC Facebook's following grew by 26% in the past year. With the pandemic continuing into 2021 we plan to grow our following by keeping participants informed by continuing to provide educational and creative resources. ■



Valley Health uses Facebook to post lots of important information for its participants and the greater community.



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PENNSYLVANIA WIC BENEFITS FROM FAMILIES FIRST CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE ACT OF 2020

By Brian Watts, Finance Manager, PA Department of Health, Bureau of WIC

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) of 2020 (Public Law 116-127) provided the WIC Program with \$500 million to remain available through September 30, 2021. The United States Department of Agriculture Food Nutrition Service allocated all FFCRA WIC supplemental funds through the WIC funding formula.

Each State agency received its pro-rata share of food and NSA funds. The allocation of FFCRA WIC supplemental funds provides State agencies with about \$330

million in food funds and about \$170 million in NSA funds.

Pennsylvania WIC received \$11,018,763 in FFCRA FOOD funds and \$4,657,237 in FFCRA NSA funds. PA WIC has spent approximately half of the FFCRA FOOD funds. Four million of the FFCRA NSA funds is in the process of being distributed to local Pennsylvania WIC agencies. Local agencies will work with their Regional Managers to invoice for those funds once the amendments have been executed. ■





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NEWS FROM THE USDA: MARO TAPS NEW REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR

By Joseph Dybas, Pathways Intern, USDA and MARO WIC Staff

Please join us in welcoming Dr. Patty Bennett as the Regional Administrator for the Mid-Atlantic Regional Office. Dr. Bennett assumed her position in November 2020 and brings a wealth of knowledge and experience that will prove invaluable to advancing the mission of the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). The Administrator of the FNS Mid-Atlantic Region provides leadership for 15 domestic nutrition assistance programs in six states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Benefit and administrative funds for the Mid-Atlantic Region nutrition programs exceed \$12 billion and reach close to 30 million people each month.

Dr. Bennett comes to FNS with over 15 years of experience in management, oversight, and program development within the federal government. Most recently she served as the Director of the Marketing Order and Agreement Division in USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service overseeing and supporting 27 agricultural commodities as they resolve marketing problems through the federal structure of marketing orders. Prior to that, she served in several key leadership roles in USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service where she worked closely with her teams to improve program operations and enhance customer service. In these capacities, Dr. Bennett was responsible for implementing and overseeing national programs for livestock humane handling and the United States National Residue Program, as well as establishing and maintaining effective relations with other federal agencies, national organizations, and stakeholders to carry out the Agency's mission.

Dr. Bennett holds a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine from the University of Florida, a Master of Science in Biology from Old Dominion University, and a Master of Public Policy from The George Washington University. Additionally, she is board certified in veterinary preventive medicine.

To learn more about Dr. Bennett, please be sure to check out the Q&A below!

Q: What does a career in public service mean to you?

A: When I began working for the USDA, I immediately felt that I had finally sorted out where I belonged professionally. My call to public service is fueled by working with team members who share a level of grit and determination to make a change to improve other's lives. Alone I can only do so much but working within an Agency like FNS, my efforts contribute to the incredible work accomplished at the national, state, and local levels to feed and care for those who need assistance. This is what motivates me and makes me proud to identify as a public servant!

Q: Who is your hero or someone you look up to?

A: I have always admired my parents who instilled in me core values that they themselves continue to embody. From an early age, they taught me that I stand on equal footing with everyone else, no more and no less. They also taught me the value of family and what it means to give of oneself in support of others.

Q: What activities/hobbies do you enjoy doing in your time away from work?

A: A good day is when I can end it by reading a book. I enjoy mystery novels and reading children's books awarded the Newbery Medal. ■



Dr. Patty Bennett

WEST VIRGINIA'S MID-OHIO VALLEY WIC EMPLOYEES RECEIVE COVID-19 VACCINE

By Tina Smith, Outreach Coordinator

West Virginia's Mid-Ohio Valley (MOV) WIC employees rolled up their sleeves the week of December 14, for their first dose of new COVID vaccine. During the week of January 4, staff received their second dose of the vaccine.

According to MOV WIC Director Jennifer Habeb, "A majority of the staff members participated in the vaccination program from the Mid-Ohio Valley Health Department."

Office Assistant II and Outreach Coordinator Tina Smith said, "I felt it was necessary to participate in being vaccinated not only for my personal and family's safety, but also for our clients which we serve. We see many high-risk clients including premature infants that are very susceptible to many illnesses. I just felt it was something I had to do in order for us to be able to reopen and to serve our clients in full capacity."

In addition to receiving the COVID vaccine, MOV WIC employees continue to help the Mid-Ohio Valley Health Department in their COVID-19 pandemic efforts by answering health department phone lines, scheduling COVID vaccine appointments, and staffing vaccination clinics. By using support staff members, MOV WIC is doing their part in the fight against COVID-19. ■



MOV WIC Outreach Coordinator Tina Smith receiving her first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

MARYLAND WIC IMPLEMENTS DOCUMENT UPLOAD ON SMARTPHONE APP

By Ernest Le, Program Analyst

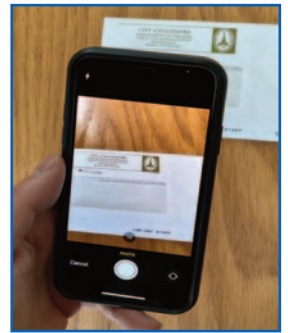
One of the biggest challenges of certifying participants during the COVID-19 pandemic is gathering all the required documents to verify their eligibility. Many participants would email their documents to WIC staff. However, there are many problems with this:

- Email is not secure
- Participants often did not know which address to send their documents to
- Email services usually have a size limit on attachments which means participants sometimes had to send multiple emails to include all of their documents
- Upon receiving the documents, WIC staff members still have to manually attach them to the participant's file in the tracking system (which in Maryland is called WIC On the Web or WOW)

Fortunately, Maryland WIC had already been working on a solution, and we launched it this past December. Using the Maryland WIC smartphone app, participants can upload documents. The documents are sent securely to WOW and automatically attached to the participant's file. Staff members can then check the participant file and complete the certification.

This new feature has been an instant hit. In the first month that it was available, over 1,400 documents were uploaded through the smartphone app. This was a feature that had been planned to make certification more convenient, but during the pandemic, it became essential.

Maryland is continuing to use technology to make the process of accessing benefits easier for our participants. ■



TECHNOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION IN PUERTO RICO WIC TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF SERVICES TO PARTICIPANTS

By Gloribel Rabelo-Figueroa, LND, CLE, Outreach and Satellite Region Supervisor PR WIC Program, Dany Villafuerte and Griselle Hernandez, Collaborators

Almost a year after the start of the health emergency declared by the federal government, Puerto Rico WIC can be proud of the multiple efforts that have been done to continue an uninterrupted provision of nutrition and health services to all participants.

Among the many efforts developed – many of which are dynamically in continuous improvement – is the use of technology. The creation of technological platforms and mechanisms constitute the vehicle on which we have relied to remain faithful to our mission of growing and facing challenges to continue achieving success.

Our mobile application Mi WIC PR is one of these technological developments, which with its launch and the incorporation of new functionalities, is a key element in the provision of services to our participants. Mi WIC PR is a fun and easy mobile application for potential and current WIC participants. The goal of Mi WIC PR is to provide the information and services participants need at their fingertips. Mi WIC PR was developed considering new technologies; it integrates with our secure data repository and is owned by the Puerto Rico WIC Program, which allows us to constantly add more functionalities.

Mi WIC PR is available for free in the App Store™ and Google Play™ and offers guests and WIC participants exciting features, including:

- Finding authorized foods using the UPC scan feature while shopping at the store
- Kid-friendly and healthy recipes
- Map directions to approved stores and nearby clinics
- Counseling with WIC staff through messaging
- Submission of required documents for virtual and in-person eligibility process
- Real-time number of participants waiting in line at clinics
- Automatic updates for new versions
- Available in English and Spanish

Current participants can access their virtual ID card by a “click-to-register” feature. The virtual card provides an alternative means of identity for WIC-related engagements and improves participants' experience while buying authorized foods.

Mi WIC PR will display key information to current participants, such as:

- My Information: name, WIC ID, birth date, clinic at which they were certified, and list of education courses taken
- My Benefits: food benefits and packages

Now WIC can stay connected with potential and current participants by using Mi WIC PR notifications. It is a non-intrusive way of providing timely messages, helpful and relevant information like events, announcements, and promoting the WIC Program to obtain retention. Also, the application is a great way of performing outreach campaigns to enroll eligible participants and increase participation.

Mi WIC PR also has a back-end platform for WIC staff to review and approve documents submitted by participants during and after virtual and in-person appointments. Through the messaging option, WIC staff is also able to send and respond to participants' questions, provide counseling, and send appointment reminders.

Some of the possible future features for Mi WIC PR are:

- Ability for participants to check their balance before shopping
- Book video and in-person appointments
- Nutrition education online
- Social media posts for participants to stay up-to-date with any current WIC news
- Self-check-in at clinics
- eWIC card, EBT card to purchase WIC approved foods at authorized stores

Mi WIC PR has contributed to modernize the WIC enrollment process and the continuity of service during the COVID-19 pandemic. ■



CHILDREN'S NATIONAL LAUNCHES BREASTFEEDING ATTRITION PREDICTION TOOL (BAPT)

By Candace Marshall, Intern, DC WIC State Agency and WIC Certified Paraprofessional Authority (CPPA) at Unity Health Care

Children's National WIC Program in Washington, DC launched the Breastfeeding Attrition Prediction Tool (BAPT) this past February with their WIC participants to promote breastfeeding among expectant mothers. The objective of BAPT is to predict a mother's likelihood of exclusively breastfeeding for the first six months of their infant's life. Targeted counseling and case conferencing is cross-collaborated among WIC staff to help increase a mom's breastfeeding knowledge, identify her social support network, and increase her confidence to breastfeed through our services. The tool consists of 26 multiple-choice questions that will be taken by the expecting mother; WIC staff will score. The mother's results will be evaluated by WIC staff to determine which competencies the mother needs more assistance on. They will receive tailored care and support through WIC for each mom to reach her own breastfeeding goals. To be eligible to take part in this voluntary assessment, WIC participants must be in their first trimester of their pregnancy, a resident of DC, and be able to read and write in English or Spanish.

Children's National will be the first WIC agency in the District to pilot this tool. Children's WIC Program has been selected as an ideal fit to launch this tool given the demographics of WIC population and location of their WIC clinics. The targeted support that will be fostered through the use of the BAPT will aid in addressing the lower rates of African-American women who breastfeed in Wards 7 and 8 of the District and draw more awareness on exclusively breastfeeding infants.

The original Breastfeeding Attrition Prediction Tool was developed in 1994 by Jill R. Janke, and the Vermont State WIC Program made revisions to the original instrument and implemented it in 2009. The New York State WIC Program made additional adaptations to Vermont's tool and utilized it as a component of their multiphase initiative to improve breastfeeding rates in 2014. A replica of New York State's version of the BAPT tool has been designed by DC Department of Health's Public Health Nutritionist and WIC and Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program Coordinator, Jessie Lupo. New York's version of the tool has been tailored for all DC WIC agencies to implement in the near future after evaluating the success rate of the pilot program at Children's National has been conducted.

The opportunity to assist in the implementation and evaluation of the Breastfeeding Attrition Prediction Tool at Children's National serves as my fieldwork experience as a course requirement under my Master of Public Health in Maternal and Child Health program at The George Washington University Milken School of Public Health. I currently work as a WIC Certified Paraprofessional Authority (CPPA) for Unity Health Care and I am passionate about growing my expertise in breastfeeding, identifying the challenges, and crafting effective strategies to reach certain populations to become more informed and feel more confident in breastfeeding their babies. I believe this tool has the potential to provide insight on where the barriers and gaps lie, why some mothers of color struggle with breastfeeding in their communities and what more WIC can do to positively impact their services. I am excited to evaluate the outcomes of this tool and address the areas that can be improved to better serve our mothers with breastfeeding in the District. ■

WEST VIRGINIA'S MONONGALIA COUNTY WIC OFFERS A HAPPY RETIREMENT AND A WARM WELCOME

By Kelsey Murray, BS, MPH, Outreach Coordinator/Nutritionist I

In October and November of 2020, West Virginia's Monongalia County Health Department (MCHD) WIC said farewell to Program Manager Anne MacBride and Nutrition Supervisor Brenda Fisher as they begin retirement.

It is with great honor that Anne and Brenda received the "Anne MacBride" Award after devoting more than 20 years of dedicated service to the WIC Program. In fact, Anne MacBride dedicated over 40 years of service and we feel that having that kind of accomplishment was so great that we presented her with the first "Anne MacBride" Award, for rising above and beyond. This award is a testament of perseverance and dedication to the WIC Program. The criteria for this award is based on years of service, which had to be lowered because Anne set the bar too high! We will be presenting the "Anne MacBride" Award to employees who retire with 20 years or more of service to ensure that Anne's legacy will live on with the MCHD WIC Program. Brenda was the second recipient of this award. Their positive and enthusiastic impact they had for the WIC Program and its participants will be greatly missed by all staff and participants alike. We wish them a very happy retirement.

As we part ways with such long-tenured colleagues, we welcome Colleen Groves, Camilla (Cami) Haught, and Meredith Capito to our agency.

Camilla Haught, MA, RD, LD is the new program manager for MCHD's WIC and plans to engage community outreach to spread the word about the services the WIC Program offers. As a Registered and Licensed Dietitian, Cami is enthused about being a part of WIC because she has always enjoyed working with the pediatric population. "I feel we do so much great work through WIC for our communities," Haught said.

Colleen Groves, RD, LD, CDCES is one of our two new nutrition program supervisors. She has recently relocated to the area from Bluefield, WV and we are excited to have her. Colleen has always had a passion to help increase access to healthcare and nutrition services. She is hoping to assist in improving enrollment and retention rates with the program.

Meredith Capito, MS, RD, LD is our second nutrition supervisor. She is excited to be a part of the WIC Program because of the opportunity it provides her to promote the health, well-being, and success of the citizens of her home state, West Virginia.

We are very excited to have new faces and an awesome group of women to lead our local agency. ■



Monongalia WIC wishes a happy retirement to Anne MacBride (left) and Brenda Fisher.



New members of the Monongalia staff (left to right) Colleen Groves, Camilla Haught, and Meredith Capito.

BREAKFAST WITH SANTA ON THE GO AT WV'S CABELL WIC

By Jenna Rose, MA, RDN, LDN, Valley Health Nutrition and Outreach Coordinator, Huntington, WV

In previous years, West Virginia's Cabell WIC Program has done a retention event for WIC participants called Breakfast with Santa. Normally the event is filled with families eating together, doing activities together (i.e., making Christmas ornaments and listening stories being read), a visit with Santa, and a bag of items to take home. As we began planning this year's event, we knew it would have to be done differently with COVID-19. As a group, the Cabell WIC office team decided they still wanted to provide this event to participants, even if it would look different this year. As a group we decided to do a drive-thru event called Breakfast with Santa on the Go.

The Cabell WIC staff went above and beyond their normal duties to make this year's event special for families. Denise Eagan, MA, RDN, LDN, purchased Christmas ornaments for each family so they could make them at home. She also wrapped presents. In addition, she dressed up as an elf on the day of the event and entertained families as they drove through the event. Sherii Carpenter, IBCLC, and Denise put together food bags with an oatmeal breakfast bar recipe attached so families would have the ingredients to make a breakfast treat at home. Rachel Miles Hoopes, MS, RDN, LDN, made a handout on the importance of reading to your child and tips on activities to do with a reading book, which was placed in the book each family received. Kendra Cremeans, Erin Simpson, Theresa Murcko, Lisa Toney, Dotty Hatten, Lisa Gilkerson, Shelley Hughes, and Monica Gissel worked on prepping for the event by registering participants for the event, wrapping gifts, making copies, laminating items, calling and reminding participants of the event, and played crucial roles on the day of the event to help it run smoothly. During the event, WIC Nutritionist Naomi Pruitt, and her husband Cliff dressed up as Mrs. and Mr. Santa Claus.

Jan Wilkes, WIC Nutritionist and IBCLC; Clara Cremeans, Cabell WIC Office Manager, and I secured monetary and in-kind donations and picked up many items for the event. Because of great teamwork, the event was successful.

Although the event was different this year, the participants were still grateful that we had the event. We served 29 WIC families and 53 children. Families brought their children and rolled down their windows so Santa could converse with the children. Participants popped their trunks open and staff loaded them.

Each family received several items, which included a blanket, Christmas card from WIC staff, a package of five cloth masks, a food bag (included ingredients to make a recipe and a cookbook), Christmas ornaments (to decorate together), a reading book, and door prizes and gift certificates from local food vendors. In addition, each child in the family received a gift and a filled stocking. Also, all active WIC participants from birth to 5 years old who attended the event received a pair of pajamas.

TJ Maxx provided reusable shopping bags to use for the event. This made it easier to keep us organized and load items into the vehicles. We mailed photo release forms to those participating in the event in advance. Some participants brought them back the day of the event and others emailed or sent them through a text to a WIC cell phone.

From the pictures we received from our participants it warmed our hearts seeing children decorating Christmas ornaments, helping prepare the oatmeal breakfast bars, reading their books, opening up their gifts and stockings, and wearing their new pjs while cuddling with their blanket. We could tell from the pictures we received that the families appreciated all the items we had provided, and we knew that we had provided a few moments of joy to these children. We hope one day we can consider doing the event in person again, but until it is safe to do so, we found a way to provide some happiness during the holidays and still let participants know we care about them. ■



Santa with Dallas, Parker and Siena



Jack making an oatmeal breakfast bar



Staff ready for the drive-thru with gift bags and food

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: FRUIT AND VEGETABLE CONSUMPTION IS A NATIONAL PRIORITY

By Mary Ann Ellsworth, MS RDN, Public Health Consultant, NJ WIC Services

2021 marks the 30th anniversary of the launch of the National 5-A-Day Program for Better Health. Recently released CDC data confirms that no progress has been made toward reaching national consumption goals. Although consumers know that consumption of fruits and vegetables as part of an overall healthy diet can help prevent many chronic diseases, just 2% of U.S. high school students eat enough vegetables, and just 7% eat enough fruit. Efforts to expand the reach of existing school and community programs as well as identify new strategies, such as social media approaches are needed. (<https://www.cdc.gov/media/mmwrnews/2021/0122.html>)

The launch of the 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, the need for health equity, the impact of food insecurity and lessons learned during the pandemic all make this a "Fresh Start Moment." Public health advocates admit that current strategies are not working, and nutrition leaders continue to evaluate potential next steps needed to solve this national crisis, including increasing the WIC Cash Value Benefit. ■

MARYLAND'S GREATER BADEN MEDICAL SERVICES WIC TACKLES NUTRITION EDUCATION CHALLENGES DURING THE PANDEMIC

Greater Baden Medical Services felt the remote certification process was going smoothly, but as a public health nutrition program, we were concerned about the quality of secondary nutrition education. Early in the pandemic, our staff was trained in scheduling the appropriate follow-up appointments, telephone counseling skills, and assigning Online Nutrition Education (ONE). Participants assigned ONE would get a follow-up appointment to briefly discuss completed modules, and we found many participants were not completing the assigned modules.

In an effort to improve the quality of nutrition and decrease the number of missed secondary online nutrition education contacts, we decided to convert our FY2021 Nutrition Education Topics into YouTube videos. CPAs Marilyn Okine, Meseret Abebe, Garland Lumauig, and Annette Pickens created nutrition PowerPoint presentations with topics ranging from "Managing Stress during COVID-19" to "Healthy and Affordable Meals and Snacks." Shachia Bryan, the Nutrition Supervisor, converted the PowerPoints into videos in English and Administrative CPPA Xiomara Echevarria translated the presentations and videos into Spanish.

When we contact participants for follow-up appointments, we introduce the nutrition topic, engage the participant in open-ended questions, and then we text and email them the YouTube video so that they can use the video as an additional nutrition information resource. This process allows us to provide secondary nutrition education to all participants. In addition, participants have really responded positively and express how easy it is to access the YouTube videos. ■



Screenshot from a Greater Baden Medical Services WIC video in Spanish

WEST VIRGINIA'S BRAXTON COUNTY'S TWIST ON TRUNK OR TREAT

By Hannah James, Central WV WIC Outreach Coordinator

For the past several years, West Virginia's Braxton Community Coalition has held a Trunk or Treat event at the Flatwoods Factory Outlet Mall on or near Halloween. It is filled with a variety of treats, music, games and prizes. This gives local businesses and agencies an opportunity to get creative and decorate their vehicles, trunks, and even themselves! The event is always a huge success and attracts hundreds of trick or treaters! The Trunk or Treat offers a safe and fun environment that the entire family can enjoy, while providing information and handouts from community partners about the vital services they provide within the county. It's a win-win situation if you ask me!

This past year however, Halloween was quite different due to the COVID-19 pandemic. At first, it was uncertain if the Trunk or Treat would proceed as normal or if it would need to be postponed until 2021. Thankfully, the Braxton Community Coalition, along with a county-wide partnership, was able to modify this event to ensure participant safety and social distancing. Instead of a Trunk or Treat, the event was promoted as a Drive-Thru Trick or Treat. Although this would be a little different than years past, everyone strived to make it as spooktacular as possible!

Since this was promoted as a drive-thru event, the location was moved to Holly Gray Park to provide participants with as minimal contact as possible, while still receiving treats and outreach materials. A pumpkin carving and decorating contest and virtual costume contest were a couple of new features this year that really put contestants' creative thinking skills to use.

On October 31 – Halloween night – people came from all around Braxton County to participate in the Drive-Thru Trick or Treat. The park was lit up with colorful lights and spooky displays. All were greeted with friendly and familiar masked faces who were eager to hand out their prepared goodies. Along with the COVID-19 pandemic came new challenges, but with a little imagination, community partners joined together to achieve a positive outcome for 2020! ■



Braxton County WIC's Drive-Thru Trick or Treat at Holly Gray Park

ASPHN LAUNCHES THE CLEAN AWAY COVID PUBLIC SERVICE CAMPAIGN

The Association of State Public Health Nutritionists (ASPHN) has launched the website, Clean Away COVID, to help families effectively protect against COVID-19 in the home.

Specifically tailored for WIC participants, topics include hand washing and sanitizing, simple home cleaning practices, and safer disinfectant use if someone is sick. The guidance was developed in partnership with the Western States Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit (PEHSU), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR).

Clean Away COVID features an empowering video that engages viewers through sensory learning. The campaign also includes a series of educational modules for WIC clients and WIC staff as well as a complete toolkit of short learning videos, posters and infographics — in both English and Spanish.

Access materials through the website, CleanAwayCOVID.org. Uses include:

- Share the energetic music video with staff, clients, and family
- Print out and display the posters in the clinics and offices
- Send the Clean Away COVID website link to staff, clients, and family
- Download the toolkit and use it with other nutrition classes or to help train WIC staff
- Share the Spanish materials with other providers and non-English speaking clients
- Play the videos in the waiting room
- Promote Clean Away COVID on social media using some of the campaign's sample shareable messages and graphics

For more information or assistance, please contact Lourdes Pogue at lourdes@asphn.org or 814-255-2829, extension 710. ■

VIRGINIA WIC PROVIDES OUTREACH ON FACEBOOK LIVE EVENTS

By Jarene Fleming, IBCLC, RLC, State Breastfeeding Coordinator, Virginia Department of Health

Virginia WIC collaborated with La Casa de la Salud for two special Facebook Live events. La Casa de la Salud is a non-profit organization that works to align health system programs and policies to improve the quality of life of the Hispanic community. Created in 2014 by the Virginia Commonwealth University Department of Epidemiology and Public Health, it strives to remove barriers to access health information, services and programs. La Casa de la Salud provides community health programming in the Spanish language.

On December 7, 2020 Virginia WIC, represented by State Breastfeeding Coordinator Jarene Fleming, IBCLC, RLC and Virginia Breastfeeding Coalition Outreach Coordinator Monica Brannon, BSN, RNC-MNN, IBCLC-RLC, provided information about COVID-19 and breastfeeding to an audience of 837 people. Participants wanted more information about WIC and we were invited back for a deeper dive into the services offered by the Program.

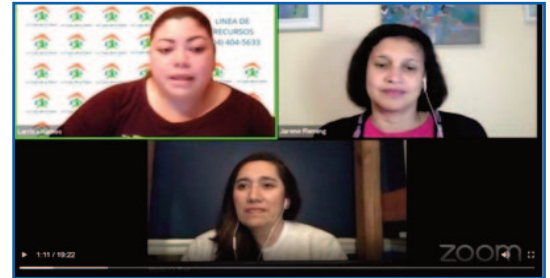
Arlington WIC Breastfeeding Program Coordinator Zulma Vargas, MPH, RDN, IBCLC was the featured guest on the January 20 program for a lively discussion about the impact of WIC on health outcomes, the importance of prenatal enrollment, virtual services, and the public charge.

"This new partnership with La Casa de la Salud is exciting," said WIC Program Manager Megan Nason, MS, RD. "La Casa de la Salud is a trusted and valuable resource for Spanish-speaking families and these collaborations help us reach more community members. We look forward to returning for a Breastfeeding Awareness Month event in August."

The January 20 live broadcast reached 640 people, and that number continues to increase; both events are available for viewing on the La Casa de la Salud Facebook page: <https://fb.watch/39m2suFgF0/>. ■



Dayana Camacho, Zulma Vargas



Larissa Ramos, Jarene Fleming, Monica Brannon

CHECK OUT THE PENNSYLVANIA WIC EXPERIENCE 360 VIRTUAL TOUR

By Jessica Smith, Public Health Program Administrator, PA Department of Health, Bureau of WIC and Candance Sanderson, M.Ed., Public Health Program Administrator, PA Department of Health, Bureau of WIC

PA WIC created a 360 virtual tour of a kitchen classroom. By engaging new WIC participants and existing families, the site aims to increase participation and retention. It utilizes activities, games, and videos to provide nutrition education, referrals, food list details, recipes, enrollment information and more. The website includes hyperlinks to www.pawic.com, an online pre-application, and local WIC office contact information. Experience.PAWIC.com is a fun way to learn more about the PA WIC Program and services.

We invite you to check out the PA WIC Experience 360 Virtual Tour at Experience.PAWIC.com. Encourage parents and children to play our games to learn more about nutrition and the Pennsylvania WIC Program. ■

WEST VIRGINIA'S MONONGALIA COUNTY WIC INTRODUCES THE WIC NUTRITION EDUCATION KITCHEN

By Kelsey Murray, BS, MPH, Outreach Coordinator/Nutritionist I

West Virginia's Monongalia County Health Department (MCHD) WIC Program is celebrating the completion of the WIC Nutrition Education Kitchen, which aims to be a tool to provide nutrition education and cooking skills to participants of WIC.

This kitchen, which is located in MCHD WIC, will be used to record videos that will feature healthy recipes, basic kitchen skills, and proper food handling practices. Soon the space will be utilized to host in-person nutrition education and cooking classes for WIC participants in their six-county area.

"I am very excited to start the filming for our cooking demonstrations in our WIC kitchen," said new WIC Program Manager Cami Haught. "I hope the WIC community finds them valuable and will interact with us on Facebook for future recipes they would like to see."

In an effort to increase engagement with active participants and potentially eligible WIC participants, the videos that have been recorded in the new kitchen have been posted several times per month on the MCHD WIC Facebook since February.

WIC nutritionists and staff are excited to have a one-of-a-kind kitchen to promote opportunities for our WIC participants. Providing hands-on experiences to WIC participants will hopefully provide them with the knowledge and skills that they need to be successful throughout their time with WIC and after.

The cooking instructions provided in the WIC kitchen will assure that participants are able to utilize all foods given to them through the WIC Program and see the variety of preparation options available.

Follow MCHD WIC at: <https://www.facebook.com/MCHDWIC>. The page features weekly delicious recipes and advice on proper nutrition education. ■



Scenes from the recently completed WIC kitchen



DELAWARE HOSTS SPECIAL 12 DAYS OF HOLIDAYS SWEEPSTAKES FOR WIC PARTICIPANTS AND STAFF

By Maria Shroyer, MS, RD, LDN

The State Office at Delaware WIC wanted to give a morale boost to participants and staff. The idea was born to do a holiday prize giveaway.

State contractor AB&C Marketing Group created an online website where a door for the day is clicked and a fact is shown. Staff received information on stress relief, WOW computer system, recipes, and breastfeeding. Participants received tidbits on WIC resources to download like the WIC App and WIC Smart, a recipe, a home fitness workout, breastfeeding, and more.

The promotion ran December 8-19. Participants received a text to go to the link to reveal the fact and enter the sweepstakes. Daily prizes were awarded: 12 for participants and four for staff. At the end, 25 grand prizes and 15 staff grand prizes were available. Prizes included a yoga mat, massage roller, digital cordless jump rope, and resistance bands. A Chill Band (Fit Bit-type bracelet) and a Fit Kit (small equipment with access to a fitness program and dietitian-approved eating plan) were selected as Grand Prizes.

The promotion was well received by both participants and staff. Participants expressed their thanks. One participant was so excited and said, "I've never won anything before." In keeping with social distancing guidelines, prizes were sent via mail.

The goal was met to increase spirits, gain a little knowledge, and have some fun along the way! ■



Breastfeeding Coordinator Charmaine Sampson displays the array of prizes.

SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW AT WEST VIRGINIA'S VALLEY HEALTH WIC

By Jenny Z. Morris, MM, IBCLC, Breastfeeding Coordinator
Valley Health WIC Program, Charleston, WV

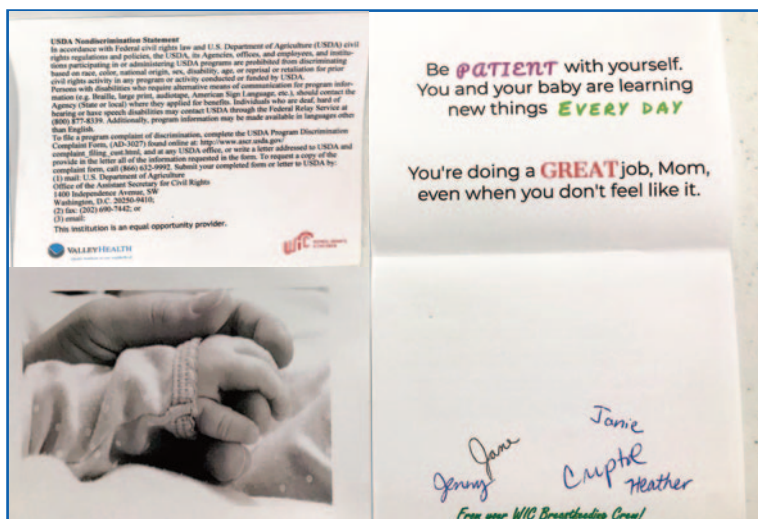
This might seem to be about a wedding but it definitely is not! It is about the way the breastfeeding crew at West Virginia's Valley Health WIC Program has used both approaches to keep in contact with our participants through the COVID-19 crisis. While we have multiplied our use of 'NEW' things such as texting and email, and occasional video chats for instructing moms on pump assembly, we have also used the 'OLD' approach of mail delivery.

The idea came about after a client said that the Mother's Day card they received from WIC last spring was the only card she had ever received. We designed cards to be mailed to our participants during times they would not typically be seen face-to-face in our office for appointments. Together with our outreach coordinator, the breastfeeding coordinators and breastfeeding crew designed cards to be sent at two, four, seven, ten months, and another card for the accomplishment of one year of breastfeeding.

Each client receives a hand-written personal note in their card as well as personal encouragement to reach out to us any time by phone, text, or email if they have a concern or question. While we are less able to personally touch our participants during this time of crisis, we feel that the personal touch of a hand-written card will help her feel valued by both WIC and her baby. ■



4-month breastfeeding milestone card



2-month breastfeeding milestone card

NEW JERSEY'S EAST ORANGE WIC PROGRAM HAPPENINGS DURING GLOBAL PANDEMIC

By Chesney Blue, MPH, RDN, Program Coordinator

We Are Essential!

The City of East Orange WIC team jumped into action and adjusted effectively to make sure services did not stop during the New Jersey stay-at-home orders last March. The Program continues to work remotely during these hard times in America. Staff are working as quickly and efficiently as possible to get benefits out to clients. To better communicate to our participants, we utilized our Facebook page by posting needed resources such as clinic updates, community food distributions and mental health services in dealing with the uncertainty of the pandemic.

WIC staff are also essential public health employees who are committed to improving food insecurity in our neighborhoods. We thank and appreciate all staff in continuing the effort to adequately nourish women and children.

Mayor's Wellness Campaign

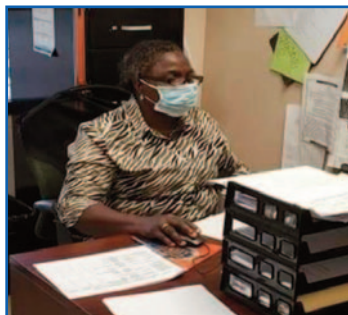
Since we are glued to our desks and phones due to remote services, we saw a need to get moving and work up a sweat to boost our immunity. On October 22, WIC staff took a break from their desks and participated in a quick one-mile walk around city hall. The East Orange Department of Health and Human Services kicked off the Mayor's Wellness Campaign with city employees to promote the health and wellness activities planned for the upcoming year. WIC staff was front and center at the

"Get Up and Walk Challenge" that

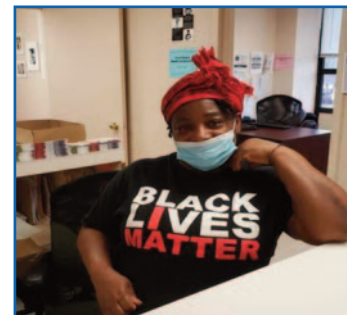
encouraged us all to take a break to stretch and move around. A group of WIC staff were able to walk, talk and pose for a photo-op (in a socially distanced way) with our very own City of East Orange Mayor Ted R. Green. It was a great and sunny day for walking. We encourage all to get up and move.

Holiday Community Drive-By Baby "Sprinkle"

On December 28, the City of East Orange WIC Program partnered with Honey Babees, Inc., a local Essex County non-profit, to plan a socially distanced, drive-by baby sprinkle for WIC clients. We set up in front of city hall to distribute the gifts for easy drive-up access for our moms. We distributed 50 baby gift bags to pregnant women and women with newborns. The gift bags included diapers, wipes, newborn clothes, and infant books and toys. Participants also received a grab-and-go boxed lunch. Moms were so happy to receive the gifts. We want to give a big thanks to Honey Babees, Inc. for sponsoring this event. ■



Chief Nutritionist Olufunke Odedele counseling clients over the phone.



Intake Joan DuPuis takes a break from mailing checks.



East Orange WIC staff walking with Mayor Ted R. Green (center)



East Orange WIC team picture



Peer Counselor Roxana Barrios and Intake Clerk Joan DuPuis decided to run instead of walk



Honey Babees, Inc. volunteers created a lovely backdrop for the event.



LOCAL WEST VIRGINIA WIC OFFICE OFFERS VIRTUAL COOKING CLASSES

The coronavirus pandemic has created challenges conducting traditional face-to-face outreach. Shenandoah WIC, which serves the eastern panhandle of West Virginia, sought to maintain collaborative partnerships with other local community organizations by offering virtual cooking demos.

Currently, three virtual cooking demos have been conducted with the Early Headstart program and the WV Healthy Grandfamilies program. Early Headstart and the Headstart program serve many WIC-eligible families from pregnancy through preschool. The Healthy Grandfamilies program is through West Virginia State University and is designed for grandparents raising one or more of their grandchildren.

The program offers social support services and nine facilitated discussion groups on various topics including nutrition, legal issues, addiction, parenting, and more. To prepare for the cooking demos the nutritionist attended a free webinar about how to conduct a virtual cooking class through Today's Dietitian and can be accessed at <https://ce.todaydietitian.com/VirtualCooking>.

Virtual cooking demos were held on the Zoom platform and included three kid-friendly recipes and materials from ChooseMyPlate.gov. Shenandoah looks forward to doing more cooking demos for the community this year. ■



TURNING ON THE SWITCH FOR REMOTE OPERATIONS AT MARYLAND'S GREATER BADEN WIC

The pandemic has completely changed the way Greater Baden Medical Services operates our WIC clinics. Transitioning to telephone certification within 48 hours was challenging, to say the least. Fortunately, in 2017, GBMS WIC participated in a technology innovation grant to pilot the feasibility of performing a certification online.

As part of that project, Greater Baden introduced RingCentral, a virtual phone system that allows staff to send and receive faxes, texts, and calls from their designated phone system on desktops, laptops, and cellphones. RingCentral allows staff to use these features whether in the office or at home. We also began using IntakeQ, a HIPAA-approved patient portal to obtain proofs/documents needed to verify WIC eligibility. Ironically, at the end of that project, staff decided the in-person certification process was much better suited to meeting the needs of our participants. And although the tools purchased were no longer being used, they were still available.

In March of 2020, when the pandemic started, the Greater Baden team was extremely thankful they had participated in the technology grant project. They were able to revert back to using RingCentral and Intake Q with very little staff training. They created a remote certification handbook that clearly outlined procedures for completing certifications and other pertinent organizational processes for remote operations. The development of this handbook was lead by CPA Marilyn Okine and Administrative CPPA Maria Argueta. This operational handbook, RingCentral, and IntakeQ have definitely made the virtual certification process more efficient.

Staff are still uncovering new ways to use both platforms, such as the creation of group chats within RingCentral to maintain effective lines of communication. ■

MEETINGS BY ZOOM: BUT SANTA CLAUS CAME TO WV'S VALLEY HEALTH WIC PROVIDING STRESS RELIEF DURING UNCERTAIN TIMES

By Kelsey Rudinski, Nutrition Coordinator, MHS, CLC, Valley Health Kanawha County WIC Program, Charleston, WV

Christmas had to be celebrated a little differently this year. For the annual December staff meeting, which was held by Zoom, staff was encouraged to dress up in Christmas attire.

Most of the staff meeting was held by Zoom with each staff sequestered in their individual clinic rooms. Halfway through the morning meeting, we gathered in the large lobby area (physically distanced) for a quick demonstration on pump assembly and the importance of clear communication in these unusual and challenging times. The peer counseling staff raced to see who could demonstrate how to put a pump together faster. Peer counselor Crystal Lovett, RN CLC, showed Medical-Office Assistant Chelsea Shabdue how to put a pump together as if they were in person. Peer counselor Jane Barber, IBCLC, talked nutritionists Haley LeBarron, RDN CLC, and Karen Joseph through putting a pump together as if they were on the phone. During this part of the demonstration, staff distracted Haley and Karen by acting like they were family members at their house. This aspect of the exercise was fun for staff and demonstrated the need to be able to explain things clearly while completing phone appointments to help meet clients where they are. In the end, Crystal was able to demonstrate how to put the pump together faster with no distractions from other household members, compared to over the phone with many distractions.

Kanawha County WIC had a surprise appearance from Santa Claus and The Grinch, masks included! Everyone agreed this was a great way for staff to celebrate the holidays in a safe, fun way!

And even the Grinch's heart grew three sizes that day. ■



Medical-Office Assistant Chelsea Shabdue and Peer Counselor Crystal Lovett, RN, CLC



Office Assistant Shannon Hughes as Santa

RESILIENCE IN PRACTICE: PIVOTING TO ADDRESS CHANGES IN PUBLIC HEALTH NUTRITION IS THE THEME OF THE VIRTUAL ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ASSOCIATION OF STATE PUBLIC HEALTH NUTRITIONISTS (ASPHN)

Meeting Sessions are June 14-16, 2021, followed by Poster Sessions with Q&A on June 17 and 18. Registration is free and is open to non-members. Look for details at www.ASPHN.org.



POPULATION HEALTH UNITS PARTNER FOR LUNCH AND LEARN IN VIRGINIA

By Jarene Fleming, IBCLC, RLC, State Breastfeeding Coordinator
Virginia Department of Health

The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) Office of Health Equity and the Office of Family Health Services, Division of Community Nutrition WIC Program collaborated to host a virtual Lunch and Learn for VDH staff and community partners.

The Zoom presentation, titled Human Milk Banking in Virginia, was presented for a live audience and recorded on November 18, 2020. Convened and hosted by State Breastfeeding Coordinator Jarene Fleming, IBCLC, RLC, opening remarks were provided by Sable K. Nelson Dyer, JD Acting Director of the Office of Health Equity. The featured speakers were Ashlynn Baker, RN, IBCLC, Manager of The King's Daughters Milk Bank and Michelle Brenner MD, IBCLC, Professor of Pediatrics at Eastern Virginia Medical School/Children's Hospital of The King's Daughters and the Medical Director of the King's Daughters Milk Bank in Norfolk, VA.

There were 140 participants. If you missed it, you can view it now on the VDH Livewell Youtube Channel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?t=154&v=oA6EuXKqCEo&feature=youtu.be>. ■



WEST VIRGINIA STATE OFFICE BREASTFEEDING COORDINATOR COMPLETES CLC CERTIFICATION

By Emma Walters MS, RD, LD
WIC Nutrition Education Coordinator/Supervisor

Jodi Giancola, our State Office Breastfeeding Coordinator, has completed the Healthy Children Project, Inc., Center for Breastfeeding Online Training Course and passed the Academy of Lactation Policy and Practice (ALPP) certification exam in December 2020.

The course is traditionally a 52-hour in-person, intensive five-day course with an exam on the fifth day. Due to the pandemic, they now offer an on-line version of the course with the same up-to-date, comprehensive, evidence-based content and strong focus on clinical counseling and assessment skills as the in-person course. The self-paced on-line course has faculty presentation videos, self-check questions, competency verification, Zoom office hours, and must be completed in six months. The Certification Exam is remotely proctored and provided through ALPP.

A former college professor before coming to WIC, Jodi felt the course was rigorous and well organized. It provided an enjoyable format, academic integrity, and was very user friendly. She is excited to have just reached her one-year anniversary with West Virginia WIC and is eager to apply her new knowledge. She intends to strive for her IBCLC credential in the future. ■



Jodi Giancola

WEST VIRGINIA'S TSN/WIC STAFF WISH A SOUPER NEW YEAR TO PARTICIPANTS

By Diane Landy, TSN/WIC Outreach Coordinator

TSN/WIC staff in Southern West Virginia celebrated National Soup Month in January by participating in an educational virtual presentation on the health benefits of eating soup. Several staff contributed ideas for the event. Nutritionist Cheryl Legg suggested the agency focus on a virtual presentation that could be put on the agency Facebook page to connect with participants. Director Elva Clemons suggested the topic of immunity-boosting soups. Nutritionist Ashley Dowell wanted to share a WIC soup recipe she had made and served to her family that was from the 2020 NWA WIC calendar. After many email exchanges and information sharing, our event was ready to implement.

Staff met via Zoom to record the presentation, complete with large, steaming bowls of soup as Zoom backgrounds, designed by the agency outreach coordinator. After introductions, the agency coordinator shared a family favorite, a simple vegetable recipe, followed by Ashley's presentation describing how to make the chunky broccoli soup WIC recipe, its nutritional benefits, and how her family liked it. Finally, Cheryl discussed the importance of hydration for optimal health and the two main components of hydration, water and minerals, and how many soups satisfy both of those components. She also shared her favorite soup recipe during the winter months, French onion soup.

Feel free to watch our complete presentation by visiting the WIC in Southern WV Facebook page and searching among our videos for "TSN/WIC Staff Discuss Some Benefits of Eating Soup." ■



It was a SOUPER presentation!

SPOTLIGHT ON WV WIC AT FAYETTE COUNTY FAMILY RESOURCE NETWORK MEETING INSPIRES FRN MEMBERS

By Diane Landy, TSN/WIC Outreach Coordinator

Family Resource Networks (FRN) can be found in every county within the state of West Virginia. They are an asset to the state, allowing community service providers the opportunity to share updates about their programs on a monthly basis. The meetings typically have one special presentation each month focused on an in-depth informational presentation about one of its members.

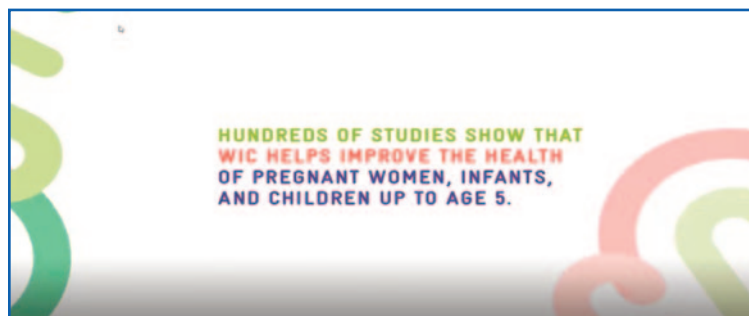
In January, the TSN agency was honored to give a 30-minute virtual WIC presentation to all Fayette County members. Because TSN provides updates on a monthly basis about the WIC Program, it seemed important to focus on another aspect of WIC, perhaps one from a different perspective. After searching through available videos, NWA's WIC Voices was chosen (available online at <https://youtu.be/YdNWnqZVDsU>).

West Virginia WIC, as well as several other states, had contributed to the video, and it was my hope that the video would inspire members to get ideas about how their organizations might collaborate with WIC.

With 30 FRN members present, the video was shown, one I was sure no members had seen before. In addition to watching the video, all members received PDFs of the State Outreach general brochure and foster child brochure. This was important because these brochures could be sent electronically from our community partners to potential participants. These potential participants could read the information online or print the brochure at home on their own paper.

Why is this so important? Since the pandemic, many people do not want to touch any hard-copy materials. Of equal importance, FRN members were shown the WV WIC website, extremely important for them to see because it has a plethora of information and would be something they could easily find in a search once they knew what it looked like.

Also shared was the agency Facebook page; once there, I scrolled down a bit to show them the kinds of valuable information WIC participants might find on the page. Within a week, three of the FRN members "liked" the agency Facebook page and one community partner emailed me, requesting to send materials about her organization to all agency WIC clinics. All in all, I feel this presentation was successful. ■



MOTIVATION AND THE DOG DAYS OF COVID-19

By Rachel Miles Hoopes, MS RDN LD CLC ACSM-EP, Valley Health Cabell WIC, Huntington, WV

Reprinted with permission from the December 2020 issue of "Healthy Habits Newsletter," Valley Health's quarterly newsletter

Here we are 10 months from when COVID-19 and the coronavirus became common words in our lives and our world changed. Our work is different, our family daily lives are different, our economy is different, our stress levels are different, and this list could continue for each of us.

As time marches on and holidays approach, it can be hard to continue with all these new habits that help us and each other be safe. It can feel overwhelming to have to rethink our traditions that bring us closeness with those we love and give us peace.

Remember that this year is far from normal. We may not be at our most productive. It is hard to maintain great habits or make new plans when all around is constantly changing. In the *New York Times* article by Mr. Herrera, Dr. Danielle Hairston of Howard University stated, "Allow yourself some grace. Change and modify your expectations." Later, she added, "This country is going through a collective grief."

As weeks drag on and seasons shift, finding ways to stay motivated can help us make it through this period, including keeping ourselves, our co-workers, and our families as healthy as possible.

Ms. Boring-Bray in *Psychology Today* discusses making small and SMART goals. SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely. Maybe it is using a mask when away from home or having everyone wash hands for 20 seconds when they return home. Maybe it is stretching three days a week, or connecting with friends each week, even if it digitally or on the phone.

Both the articles from Rice University and *Psychology Today* encourage taking time to care for yourself and your mental health. That may look like connection with others through a Zoom dinner. It could mean making and keeping preventative doctor's appointments. It may also include reaching out for professional mental health services when needed.

It is OK for this to be a bad time. It is OK for us to struggle through. It is OK to take small steps. It is OK to seek help. It is OK to ask for support from others. It is OK to adjust.

May you enjoy your holiday season in peace, safety, and health. ■



Rachel Miles Hoopes



**MARWIC
TIMES
Calendar**

The deadline for the Summer issue of MARWIC Times is May 7, 2021.

Submit articles, photos and calendar events to your State editor.

No Polaroid pictures. 5" x 7" digital photos (saved as JPEGs)

preferred. All photographs must include a detailed caption.