

MARWIC

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

WEST VIRGINIA'S MID-OHIO VALLEY WIC RESPONDS TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC

By Tina Smith, Outreach Coordinator

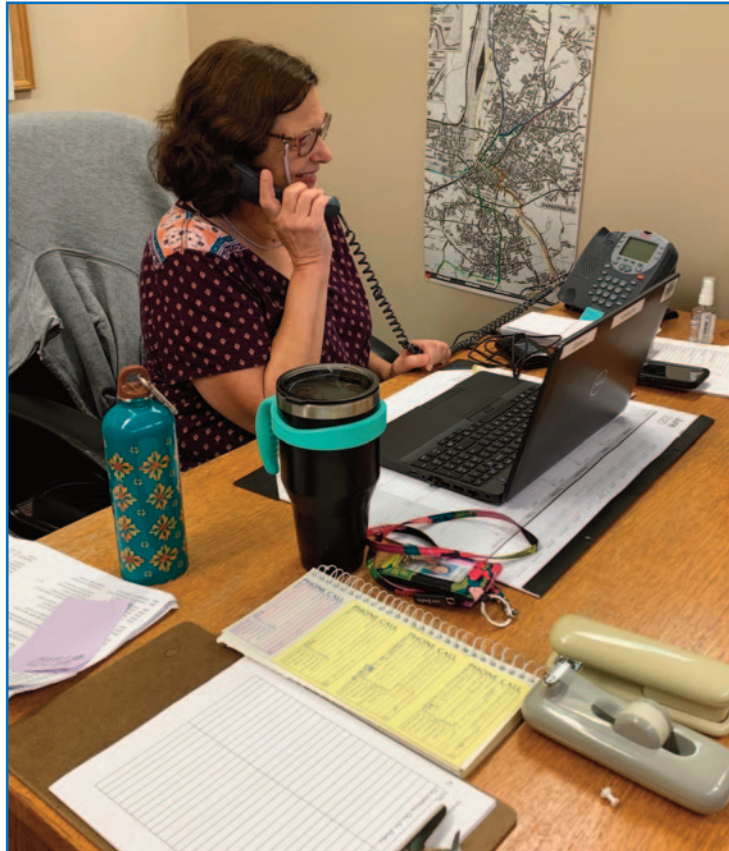
The COVID-19 pandemic has rushed Public Health to the forefront of every headline. WIC has been no exception. WIC has had to amend its protocols on every aspect of dealing with clinic appointments, staff and clients in order to keep everyone safe and healthy.

West Virginia's Mid-Ohio Valley (MOV) WIC staff has risen to the challenge and has provided a personal one-on-one approach with the clients during the allowed modification of remote certifications. MOV staff has followed up with clients to make sure their needs are heard and met, sometimes making additional referrals to services.

West Virginia WIC's new protocols include remote certification by phone since WV has a waiver for physical presence. MOV WIC covers nine counties in the region, though not all offices have been open during this time of COVID-19. Phones calls are routed to the main office and staff makes sure that all clients have been contacted regarding their upcoming appointments. With remote certification, staff uses technology to verify eligibility. Clients can email, text or fax their information to WIC offices. WIC staff also verifies medical cards through the WVMMIS system. Once the eligibility is verified and processed, then staff directs the call to a nutritionist. If the nutritionist is still with another client, staff will tell the client that the nutritionist would call them to finish out the appointments. If the client needs a new shopping guide or eWIC card, staff will mail it out to them. MOV WIC staff will also make arrangements with the client, practicing social distancing, to meet them at their local WIC office to be able to return formula if needed. Remote certifications have been useful with social distancing requirements and office closures. Also, with using WICSMART online nutrition classes, clients have been able to still do their class requirements. If the client does not have internet access, they can call into the office and speak to a nutritionist. With these new procedures, staff has been able to provide services for every county served from just a few offices.

In addition to the new protocols with WIC clinics, MOV staff has also taken on new tasks working with the Mid-Ohio Valley Regional Health Department. Staff has rotated between WIC duties and needed health department response. MOV staff has been on the frontlines answering calls on the COVID-19 hotline. They also have provided data entry for contact tracing. Staff has been out delivering PPE to first responders, hospitals, and nursing homes in the six-county health department region. MOV WIC staff has also covered for the county health department offices when staff has been limited.

With the additional opportunities working with the Mid-Ohio Valley Health Department, MOV WIC staff has developed new skills and a new appreciation for working in Public Health. ■



MOV WIC staff member Ronda Davis helping answer the Mid-Ohio Valley Health Department's COVID-19 hotline.

SUMMER 2020

■ First Lady of New Jersey Assists CUMAC and St. Joseph's WIC Families During COVID-19

.....Page 2

■ Delaware Vendor Unit Adopts Multiple Food Substitutions and Helps Participants Directly During Pandemic

.....Page 5

■ MARWIC TIMES Celebrates 25 Years

.....Pages 6-8

■ Pennsylvania, Award Recipient of the Implementing WIC Breastfeeding Support Grant

.....Page 9

■ West Virginia's Valley Health WIC Continues to Strive to Promote Mobile WIC Clinics

.....Page 11





MARWIC TIMES is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture, Mid-Atlantic Region Office as a discretionary project of New Jersey WIC.

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FIRST LADY OF NEW JERSEY ASSISTS CUMAC AND ST. JOSEPH'S WIC FAMILIES DURING COVID-19

By Anny Uddin, Chief Nutritionist, St. Joseph's WIC Program

In the wake of-COVID 19, Dr. David Asiamah, Director of Clinical-Community Engagement at HCPC and the Nowpow application, served as a liaison in introducing our WIC agency to Mark Dinglasan, Executive Director at CUMAC, an anti-hunger organization dedicated to empowering individuals and families.

CUMAC serves residents throughout the state of New Jersey. Just recently the First Lady of NJ, Tammy Murphy, visited CUMAC to help Mark and his team in building WIC grocery delivery boxes. Teaming up with Mark and his staff allowed our agency to help keep WIC moms safe and "stay at home" with their families during a time of uncertainty and fear.

CUMAC's volunteer "food delivery teams," from all parts of NJ, have been dropping off groceries to WIC moms every week, while adhering to social distancing guidelines set forth by the CDC. Mark and his team have been doing this since "stay at home" orders were mandated throughout the state and continue to do so as we speak. We are extremely grateful for all the compassion and positive energy Mark and his team brings to the table and look forward to continuing our support and partnership. ■



First Lady Tammy Murphy (left) assists in building WIC food delivery boxes alongside Kayann, a St. Joseph's WIC Program participant and CUMAC's Volunteer Coordinator.
Photo Credit: CUMAC, Paterson, NJ.



MARWIC TIMES Calendar

The deadline for the Fall issue of MARWIC Times is August 7, 2020. Submit articles, photos and calendar events to your State editor. Hi-res digital photos saved as JPEG/PDF file format preferred. All photographs must include a detailed caption.

By Joseph Dybas, Pathways Intern

The USDA Mid-Atlantic Regional Office (MARO) for the Food and Nutrition Service is thrilled to announce that Kenya Davis and Joseph Dybas have both officially joined the WIC team! Joining the team as a Program Specialist, Kenya will be primarily focusing her efforts within WIC's Farmers Market Nutrition Program, Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program, as well as WIC's certification, funding and participation arenas. Kenya is a graduate of Strayer University in Cherry Hill, NJ, where she obtained her Bachelor's degree in Business Administration with a concentration in Marketing. Although she is new to USDA, she is not new to federal service. From 2013 to 2020, Kenya was a Legal Administrative Specialist at the US Department of the Treasury, responsible for adjudicating forgery cases for almost every federal agency. In addition to her busy professional life, Kenya is also a mother to her 20-year-old son and four-year-old poodle. In her free time, she enjoys exercising and traveling.

Joe joins WIC as a Pathways Intern. Over the next few months, Joe will be working closely within vendor management, food management, and WIC MIS and EBT. Currently, Joe is a senior at Montclair State University, studying Political Science with minors in Global Security and Diplomacy, as well as Public Administration. Prior to joining USDA, Joe interned at the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Committee, Management Office, and has held several leadership positions at Montclair State. During his time at DHS, Joe was inspired to pursue a career within public service and grew to believe that there is no higher honor than working on behalf of the American people. In his free time, Joe enjoys traveling, hiking, and spending time with family and friends. ■



Joseph Dybas

MARYLAND WIC's 62ND WIC WISE 1 CLASS GOES VIRTUAL AMID QUARANTINE

By Cristina Luibil, MS, LDN, Nutrition Specialist, MD WIC Training Center

Every quarter, new staff at Maryland WIC undergoes a four-part training series. The curriculum was developed over 14 years and is very hands on, taking place over multiple days. The Maryland WIC Training Center was in the midst of preparing for their regularly scheduled new employee training when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Soon after, Maryland was under a mandatory stay-at-home order. Both State and Local Agencies started a "new normal" of teleworking full time, and clinics could continue appointments over the phone. Amid quarantine and phone certifications, the Training Center team had to quickly make a decision: do we hold this group of trainees until the next quarter and continue regular operations when we can in-person (whenever that may be), or do we quickly turn our whole training curriculum inside out and go virtual?

Of course, we went virtual. The training team worked tirelessly over two weeks to research and pick the best online training platform for our purposes. We brainstormed a new agenda to ensure trainees would not succumb to "screen fatigue." We utilized the State IT Unit to create a seamless transition into virtual learning for the trainees.

The first training session ended up being seven days online (four full and three half-days) and will include one in-person day when we are back in the office. It was important to the trainers that the trainees would receive the same quality of one-on-one help that they would have gotten in-person. With that, we instituted trainer/trainee partnerships to review work and answer questions on the phone, via email and over video chat.

The virtual WIC Wise training received a lot of positive feedback. The Training Center staff is currently working on more virtual trainings to ensure we maintain our current Maryland WIC standard of quality. Overall, the virtual WIC Wise 1 training was a great experience for both the trainers and the trainees. ■



Trainers and trainees(*) pictured on line with and without face-coverings (left to right) top: Tamara Hendricks, Cristina Luibil, Christine Wright, Liliana Hernandez*, middle: Aiyana Green-Odle, Tracy Ducker, Leslie Blanco*, Ronda Jackson*, bottom: Maile James*, Nia Ebrahim*, Shannon Robinson*.

PENNSYLVANIA WIC DIETETIC INTERNSHIP PROGRAM GRANTED CANDIDACY STATUS FOR ACCREDITATION

By Stephanie K. Bender, MS, RDN, LDN

The PA Bureau of WIC successfully gained Candidacy Status for Accreditation from The Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND) on June 8, 2020. This couldn't have been achieved without the support from the PA WIC Local Agency, Hamilton Health Center, since they assisted with our on-site review. Candidacy status for Accreditation is granted for a non-degree Dietetic Internship Program enrolling 12 full-time interns annually preselected from WIC employees with a Community Nutrition/Public Health Concentration. Preselection is a benefit to WIC Local Agency employees since the applicants to the internship program would not have to go through DICAS match process.

PA's website will be activated soon and can be found under the resource tab on PAWIC.com. The website will be a valuable resource for interns, preceptors and Local Agencies. The ACEND Dietetic Internship website will have vital information such as admission requirements, required documents and agreements, academic calendar, handbooks, and important dates as it relates to the program.

The PA DOH WIC DI Program is a 10-month, remote, intern identified supervised practice program that affords selected interns the opportunity to work with a wider degree of populations and medical conditions. The program initially commences with community nutrition/public health competencies and learning activities and then progresses to a foodservice rotation that involves school-age children involved with the National School Lunch Program and the ultimately concludes with a clinical rotation encompassing more complex experiential learning activities dealing with a variety of disease states.

PA WIC is committed to workforce development, while at the same time providing an accredited program that is consistent with affordability as it relates to financial, geographical and personal needs. The Dietetic Internship is consistent with the PA DOH mission and core functions to promote healthy lifestyles, prevent injury and disease and assure delivery of quality health care. Please feel free to contact the Director of the PA DOH WIC DI Program, Stephanie K. Bender, MS, RDN, LDN, with any questions at stepbender@pa.gov or 717-783-1289. ■

WEST VIRGINIA'S VALLEY HEALTH CABELL WIC HELD ANNUAL NUTRITION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FAIR

By Jenna Rose, MA, RDN, LDN, Nutrition and Outreach Coordinator for Valley Health WIC-West

March was National Nutrition Month. To encourage preschool-aged kids to be healthy and fit, the Cabell County WIC Program held its annual Nutrition and Physical Activity Fair in early March. Two childcare centers – YMCA and Ebenezer – attended this year's event.

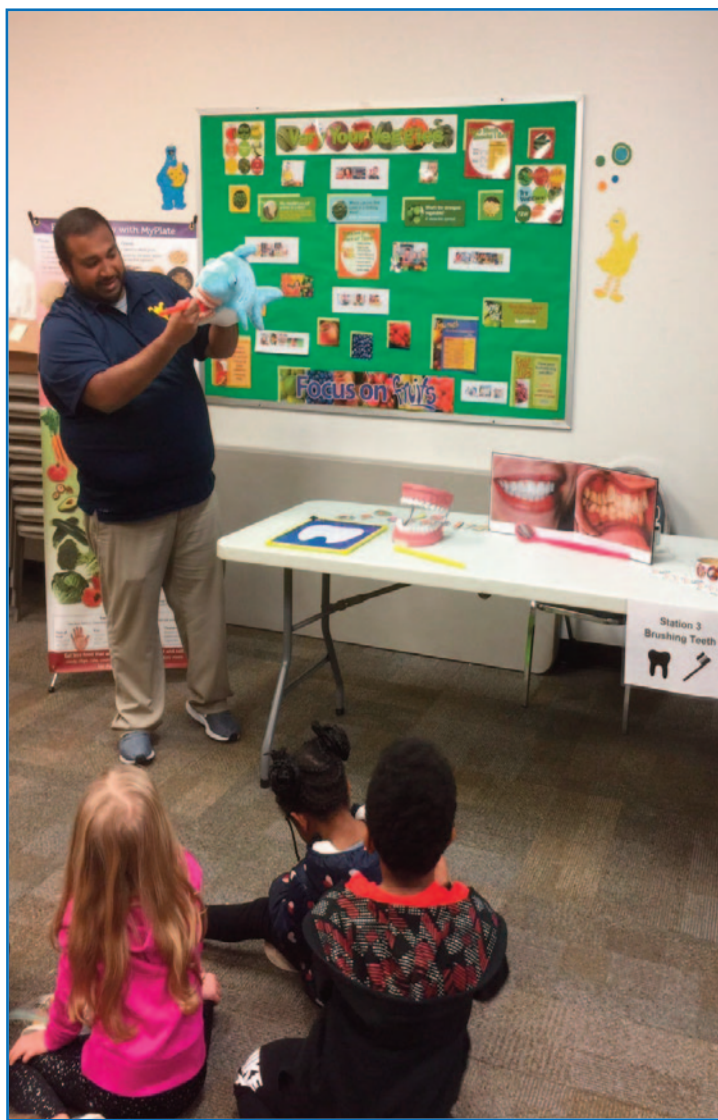
WIC Nutritionists Rachel Miles Hoopes, MS, RDN, LD, CLC, ACSM-EPMS and Kendra Cremeans, MS, RDN, LD planned this year's event. Activities included the WV Oral Health Program providing information on teeth-healthy foods and brushing teeth properly, an obstacle course for the children to go through, a reading station, My Plate activity mat/education session, and creating a trail mix station.

Each child received a WIC bag filled with WIC outreach materials, nutrition information, a Valley Health frisbee, and books.

Teaching young children about healthy habits through fun hands-on activities will hopefully help these children remember the importance of physical activity and healthy food choices. ■



WIC Nutritionist Rachel Miles Hoopes, MS, RDN, LD, CLC, ACSM-EPMS, reading Eric Carle's *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*.



Ravi Parker, with the WV Oral Health Program, teaching children from a local childcare center how to brush their teeth.

DELAWARE VENDOR UNIT ADOPTS MULTIPLE FOOD SUBSTITUTIONS AND HELPS PARTICIPANTS DIRECTLY DURING PANDEMIC

By Maria Shroyer, MS, RD, LDN

The COVID-19 pandemic saw food swept off the grocery shelves more severe and longer than any snowstorm or emergency seen in recent years. Times were uncertain as to what foods would be available and when. WIC participants are already looking for specific brands and types of food and were left with limited choices or none at all.

The Delaware WIC Vendor Unit swiftly adopted an expanded food package. All new UPCs had to be obtained, sent to the stores, and stores had to be educated to download the UPC file nightly. Delaware WIC developed a flyer which was posted to Facebook and our website de.gov/wic.

As with any change, especially quick change, there was some confusion at the store. Often times, participants thought a food was WIC eligible but it was not. When participants contacted WIC through Facebook or on the phone, Vendor Unit Representative Terri Pool sprung into action. Terri viewed transactions online to see if she could find the discrepancy. She called participants, and in her very friendly tone of voice, guided them through the food lists so they felt confident at the stores. She even offered for them to call her from the store to clarify if the UPC was correct!

Here is Terri's account of one interaction:

The last time I talked to this client, I encouraged her to call me the next time she was in the store so I could verify UPC's of the items she would like to get. She just called me now. She was in Safeway in Dover and wanted to verify some UPC's. I verified about ten different UPC's for her for yogurt, cheese, and juice. She was very patient going through the items and verifying the UPC's. I am so glad she was comfortable enough to call me back to help her through her shopping trip today. It was nice to talk to a client who clearly appreciates the WIC Program and understands the challenges that we are all faced with."

Delaware WIC is so proud of our Vendor Unit for their hours of hard work in adjusting the food list and customer service that contributes to the availability of expanded foods for our participants during the hard times of COVID-19! ■



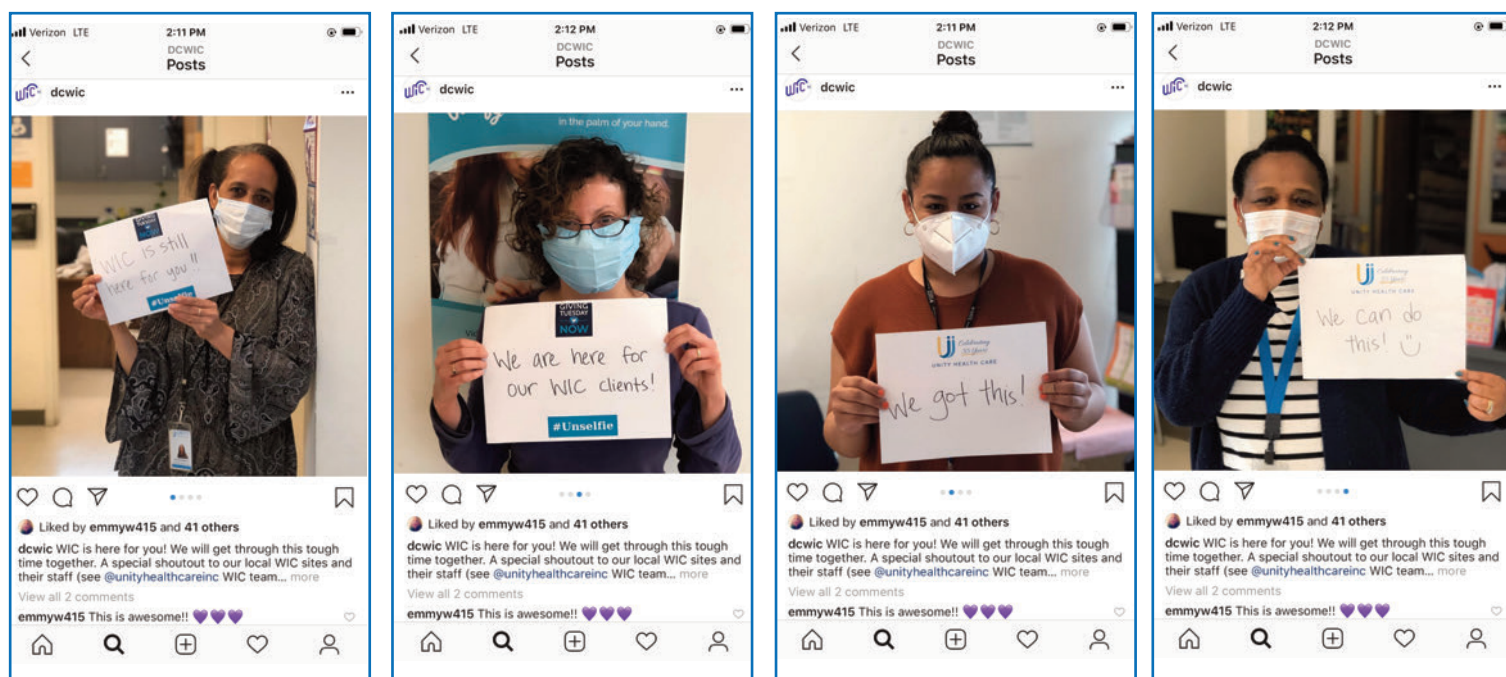
Terri Pool guiding a participant on the phone.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA WIC IS ESSENTIAL TOO!

By Paige Zaitlin, MS, MPH, RD, LD, WIC Director, Unity Health Care Inc.

At Unity Health Care Inc. in Washington, DC, WIC staff has embraced their role as essential workers in the time of COVID-19. Unity staff worked hard to adapt to the changing environment. DC is a state with paper checks, and the team at both the state and local level has risen to the challenge of providing benefits remotely almost overnight. This includes completing certifications via phone and sending vouchers through the mail. The WIC staff has become an efficient mailing enterprise!

We have received positive feedback from participants on our modified service delivery, such as "I enjoy coming to the office but I had a great experience over the phone same feeling and vibe that I get from being in the office." ■



These photos were posted on DC WIC's Instagram page @dcwic. The Unity WIC staff wanted to show their participants that they are still here for them, providing valuable assistance during this tough time. Pictured are Amy Lukin, MS, RD, LEC, LD, CPA/Unity Breastfeeding Coordinator; Zeida Eslava-Cortez, Breastfeeding Peer Counselor; Ferehiwot Shanka, Administrative Clerk; and Francisca Henriquez, CPPA.

This issue marks the 25th anniversary of MARWIC TIMES. Since July 1995, New Jersey WIC Services/Department of Health, with funding from the USDA Mid-Atlantic Region, has published this quarterly newsletter which serves the states and territories in the USDA Mid-Atlantic Region.

MARWIC TIMES was founded by the late Marilyn Lynch, MS, RD, the long-tenured NJ WIC Program Manager, with hundreds of hours of assistance provided by numerous members of her staff, and is produced by Editor Lisa Arnold and Creative Director Christina Balas. This publication showcases best practices throughout the Region, and with its presence on the internet, reaches colleagues across the country and around the world.

It is fitting that the 100th issue of MARWIC TIMES marks the tireless work of dedicated WIC employees during the COVID-19 pandemic. This newsletter has chronicled the amazing work of WIC staff in the aftermath of tragedies including 9/11, hurricanes, earthquakes, and more.

Thank you all for your continued contributions and your dedication to the WIC Program, and we look forward to another quarter-century of informative and inspiring stories!







WEST VIRGINIA'S VALLEY HEALTH WIC CONTINUES TO STRIVE TO PROMOTE MOBILE WIC CLINICS

By Jenna Rose, MA, RDN, LD, Nutrition and Outreach Coordinator

In early 2020, West Virginia's Valley Health WIC Program partnered with a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC), Valley Health Harts, to start a monthly mobile WIC clinic in the Harts area of Lincoln County. Our current WIC office in Lincoln County is in Hamlin, which is approximately 40 minutes away from Harts. Rural counties, such as Lincoln, provide challenges for potential participants to obtain WIC services due to the distance that must be traveled for services.

Valley Health's administration was open to allowing WIC to come join their family medicine clinic, Valley Health Harts, on the third Friday of each month to provide WIC services inside the health center to participants who lived in the area. WIC staff members would make the trip each month with WIC supplies to complete appointments.

Valley Health WIC advertised the mobile WIC clinic through word of mouth, flyers, Facebook, Lincoln County FRN, and the Harts Health Center.

Valley Health WIC completed three Harts mobile WIC clinic days before we had to cease operations due to COVID-19. During our tenure at Valley Health Harts, we completed 28 WIC appointments. Our goal is to restart mobile WIC clinics at Harts once it is safe to do so. This partnership has proven that participants will enroll in WIC if some of the challenges/barriers are removed and it makes it more feasible for them to obtain WIC services. ■



Jan Wilkes, IBCLC, WIC Nutritionist and Breastfeeding Coordinator-Valley Health West (left) and Shelley Hughes CLC, WIC OA/MA, showing off the new WIC logo outreach banner used to advertise during our time at the Harts mobile WIC clinic.

PENNSYLVANIA, AWARD RECIPIENT OF THE IMPLEMENTING WIC BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT GRANT

By Tiffany R. Myers, MS, RD, LDN, CLC

Pennsylvania is among seven State Agencies or Indian Tribal Organizations to receive the WIC Breastfeeding Support Campaign grant award which is being managed for the USDA Food and Nutrition Service by the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR). Tiffany Myers, State Breastfeeding Coordinator, will be leading the implementation of this project in Pennsylvania. More specifically, this project will be launched during World Breastfeeding Week in August 2020 and will be piloted until September 2021 in clinics across the southwestern region of the state including Adagio Health, Blueprints, Community Action Partnership of Cambria County (CAPCC), Fayette County Community Action Agency (FCCAA), Southwestern Pennsylvania Human Services, Inc. (SPHS) in Westmoreland County.

The goal of this project is to improve total and exclusive breastfeeding rates. Project objectives include, but are not limited to increasing WIC participants' awareness of WIC services and resources, increasing their knowledge, confidence, and self-efficacy to breastfeed successfully, and empowering them to advocate for themselves with their families, employers, and other influencers/support systems; increasing breastfeeding knowledge of supporters so they can more effectively support breastfeeding; and educating WIC staff on the WIC Breastfeeding Support resources and additional opportunities to engage with WIC participants to support breastfeeding.

In efforts to meet the project goals and objectives, implementation will include the use of social marketing and social media posting to promote WIC Breastfeeding Support, use of campaign materials (i.e. flyers and posters), the Buddy Program, and WIC staff education on the background and objectives of the campaign. Additional project interventions specifically being implemented in Pennsylvania include new breastfeeding education materials and the use of telehealth modalities to provide online breastfeeding lessons and virtual breastfeeding classes to participants.

PA WIC is excited to partner with UNR to evaluate the data collected throughout this project and to learn of the project outcomes to inform next steps for implementing successful campaign activities statewide. You can explore the new WIC Breastfeeding Support website at <https://wicbreastfeeding.fns.usda.gov/>. ■



NEW JERSEY'S TRINITAS WIC CONTINUES SERVICE WITH A SMILE

Despite the chaos and uncertainty during the pandemic, New Jersey's Trinitas WIC carried on. ■

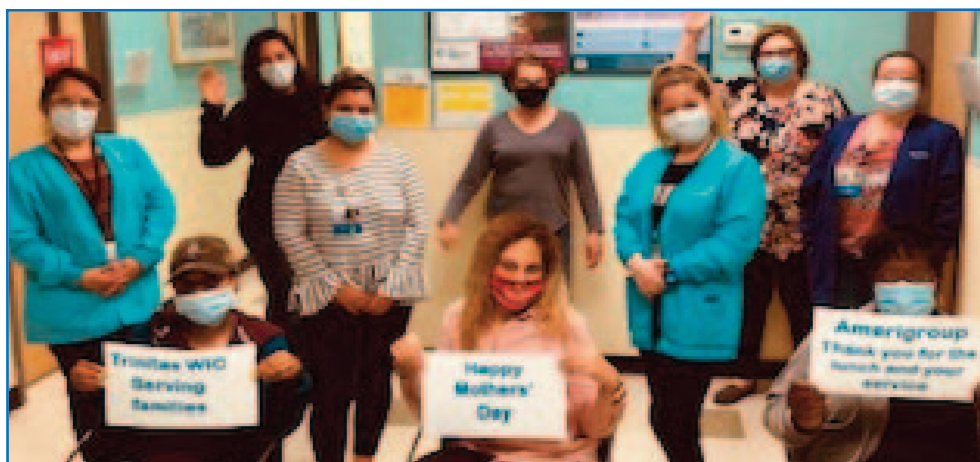
During the COVID 19 period in March and April, WIC food vouchers were mailed to over 3600 participants.

This was possible in part to the dependable and reliable efforts of James Forkin of the Supply Chain, Shipping and Receiving Unit.



Amerigroup provided a lunch break for staff.

Pictured are Chandra Curry, Raisa Luna, Linda Bailey, Maribel Solano, Stefanny Vargas Masis, Claudia Muelle, Rosa Paredes, Miriam Zokner, Lourdes Cortes, Anita Otokiti.



NJWIC approved several waivers that allowed WIC to process enrollment via tele-service. Limited staff were able to work remotely. Drive-by services were offered. Nutritionists coordinated home delivery of specialized formula and nutritionals.

NEW JERSEY'S ST. JOSEPH'S WIC AND THE NOWPOW APPLICATION THRIVE

By Anny Uddin, Chief Nutritionist, St. Joseph's WIC Program

New Jersey's St. Joseph's WIC Program launched our alliance with the Nowpow application about a year ago. A special thanks to the support system that was provided by the Health Coalition of Passaic County (HCPC), mainly Dr. David Asiamah, Director of Clinical-Community Engagement, and his continued support in the initial and ongoing phase of Nowpow's implementation. Today we are able to fully support our clientele using a more viable method when it comes to providing community referrals via Nowpow's e-prescriptions (HeatherRx) method. The application makes it easy for us to connect our participants to highly individualized and realistic community resources. This sense of empowerment is highly significant in achieving goal realization and further substantiating a pathway to improve overall health and well-being.

Nowpow provides our agency with the ability to provide e-prescriptions to locals with tailored multiple language features, identified needs, required documents for any service, and connects them with these resources. The application also provides us with the capability to track the outcome of these referrals. Our services have come full circle within the community, especially in the time of the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic. One of WIC's major concentrations is to continue to build partnerships throughout the regions we serve. Nowpow has not only allowed us to provide personalized community referrals to the participants we host at our WIC Program, but has also served as a liaison in connecting us with other community agencies and organizations all together.

Using Nowpow, participants are able to receive e-prescriptions in the form of text messages, emailed referrals, or a printed hard copy. A recent data collection that was started at our WIC agency, but not completed due to the outbreak of COVID-19, depicts "texting" to be the main requested method to receive referrals. Approximately 634 WIC clients out of 789 requested to have e-prescriptions sent to them via text message. In follow-up conversations with clients, many reported that it was "less paper to carry out of the office," while others mentioned "it's on my phone; I will never lose it." This is one of the major successes we have come across in substantiating Nowpow's allegiance in providing tangible, client-focused resources to those we serve. Our clients feel "seen," and as WIC's focus remains on Value Enhanced Nutrition Assessment (VENA), Nowpow has become a force in meeting the clients where they are.

One of WIC's objectives is to help promote positive behavior change by providing our participants with options that are tailored specifically to them. It is unfortunate that the recent pandemic has brought to light much criticism and disparities within the system, which highlight many flaws in different types of social services. Nowpow has somewhat bridged the gap in helping us provide virtual referral services to our clients in a time of crisis. Going forward, we can only anticipate the application's continued success within our scope of practice. We look forward to working with the surrounding referral agencies as well to continue to provide optimal services throughout the community. ■

WIC IN SOUTHERN WEST VIRGINIA STAFF SPOTLIGHT: ELISE LEEF, RDN, TSN/WIC NUTRITION LIAISON

By Diane Landy, TSN/WIC Outreach Coordinator

WIC in Southern West Virginia would like to showcase Elise Leef, RDN and TSN/WIC Nutrition Liaison. Backed by a BS in Dietetics and a MS in Nutrition from the University of California, Davis, with previous professional experience as a clinical dietitian and assistant director of dietetics, Elise is celebrated by fellow WIC staff as the go-to person within the agency for answering nutrition questions. Elise was born in WV but raised mostly in California, and we're thankful she returned to West Virginia in the summer of 2001.

This October will mark her 18th year of employment with TSN. When asked what significant change she has seen take place regarding nutrition focus during the years she's worked for WIC, she replied, "Before VENA the nutrition education focus was on telling participants what we thought they needed to know to have a healthy pregnancy, healthy baby, and child. Little info-bites we went through by rote, depending on the participant category. This often led to families feeling they were being perceived as deficient. After VENA, WIC shifted to participant-focused nutrition education. This has led to a more positive experience for all, I believe."

Elise says she was compelled to seek an RDN degree because she was searching for a way to be helpful and therefore of value. "Learning to eat healthy while pregnant led me to understand there were variations in nutritional requirements which I found intriguing."

She says she is inspired by the people she serves, and how everybody is different in what they need and how they learn. She enjoys trying to reach the individual. When asked what she has gained from working at WIC, she responded, "A sense of belonging to a larger whole of caring professionals."

Other noteworthy attributes about Elise:

What is the favorite part about working for WIC? *Babies.*

What's the most adventurous thing you've ever done? *Joining the USAF.*

What motivates you to wake up and go to work? *I won't feel good about myself if I don't.*

What's something about you (a fun fact) that not many people know? *I am a Veteran.*

If you had to eat one meal every day for the rest of your life, what would it be? *Apples and PB*

What's the last book you read? *I am always reading something, mysteries mostly, very annoying to my husband.*

Her final thoughts on nutrition? "I used to believe and want to save the world with nutrition. I believed that if everyone ate the right foods they could be cured of a multitude of illnesses. I have learned we are way more complex and our health depends on many other factors, including, but not limited to, our genetics, habits and what we believe."

Wishing our very own, sincerely talented, insightful, highly-proficient Elise a very happy and well-deserved 18th WIC anniversary this October! ■



Elise Leef, RDN

WEST VIRGINIA'S VALLEY HEALTH WIC PROGRAM EMPLOYEES COMPLETE TELEHEALTH VISITS OVER PHONE AND INCREASE CASELOAD

By Jenna Rose, MA, RDN, LD, Nutrition and Outreach Coordinator Valley Health

COVID-19 brought on an unprecedented time for West Virginia's Valley Health WIC staff and its participants. Through the WV WIC State Agency's hard work and support, and with their guidance regarding policy and a change on how we were going to deliver services during this time, WIC staff was reassured that WIC participants would continue to receive WIC services.

The Valley Health WIC staff was able to adjust quickly to a new way of completing WIC appointments, via telehealth. Participants have been grateful that we care enough about them and their families that we have not been requiring them to come to a place where there are often crowded waiting rooms and children touching children. In addition, the WIC telehealth appointments have been able to help many of our participants who don't have reliable transportation.

With outreach events and opportunities being limited during this pandemic, we have found that using our Valley Health Facebook page has been a great outlet to keep our participants informed of our new protocols and how they can stay in contact with us. We appreciate our Valley Health WIC Facebook administrator, Heather King, for keeping our Facebook page up to date so parents/WIC participants can have accurate information regarding WIC and COVID-19.

The Valley Health WIC Program has been able to persevere through this difficult time by using many techniques to stay connected with our participants and potentially eligible participants. Valley Health WIC staff has not just maintained caseload during this pandemic, but with diligent work by staff, was able to grow the Valley Health WIC caseload during the month of April by 3.5%. Hats off to all the Valley Health WIC staff that have continued to provide our participants the services they so desperately need in a calm and reassuring manner and letting them know WIC is here for them! ■



WIC Nutritionist Rachel Miles Hoopes, MS, RDN, LD, CLC, ACSM-EPMS, reviewing a handout for a telehealth visit with a WIC participant.



WIC Nutritionist Jenna Rose, MA, RDN, LDN, Valley Health WIC Nutrition and Outreach Coordinator, completing a telehealth visit with a WIC participant.

WEST VIRGINIA'S MONONGALIA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT WIC CELEBRATES NATIONAL NUTRITION MONTH

By Patty Jo Barlow, Nutritionist and Outreach Coordinator

West Virginia's Monongalia County Health Department WIC Program celebrated National Nutrition Month with a night of exploration, food and fun. The event was held at the Spark! Imagination and Science Center in collaboration with Head Start/Early Head Start and West Virginia University Extension Family Nutrition Program. The theme, "Be Transformed with Good Nutrition, Bite by Bite," was based on the story *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* and the National Nutrition Month 2020 theme. *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* was read aloud to the children, and they each received the book to take home.



Fun for all

Along with celebrating National Nutrition Month, the event was also intended to encourage families to visit the Spark! Imagination and Science Center year-round. The center generously provides free admission to local WIC and SNAP recipients.

Healthy foods that were served at the event were prepared by WIC, Head Start/Early Head Start and WVU Extension staff in the new WVU Extension kitchen. Some of the options included homemade tortilla chips, fruit salsa, carrot hummus, beet hummus, spinach hummus and sandwiches. Recipes for the three types of hummus and the fruit salsa were given to all those attending.

Monongalia County Health Department WIC Program hopes to continue hosting a similar event to celebrate National Nutrition Month in future years. The children and parents all seemed to enjoy the event and the activities that the Spark! Imagination and Science Center has to offer. ■

NEW JERSEY'S BURLINGTON COUNTY WIC RISES TO THE CHALLENGE OF COVID-19

By Tracy L. Little, MPH, CHES, Burlington County WIC Coordinator

"COVID 19 - EMERGENCY DECLARATION - THIS BUILDING CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC"

Over the past 12 weeks, these have been the headlines that we have been living with and the headlines that have turned the WIC Program upside down.

March 16th, we were advised we needed to close our doors to the public and find another way to service our participants. The WIC staff of Burlington County (NJ) rose to the occasion. We immediately began calling participants and letting them know that we would be reaching out to them by phone and mailing checks. We split our staff into two teams and on a rotating basis, either worked from the office or home. With the guidance from the State WIC Office and the waivers they could obtain, we quickly fell into a routine and did not miss a beat.

What is next, we do not know. Reopening plans are in the works and we are confident that we will meet the challenges that will present with the new functionality. We do miss working together as one team and look forward to all being together again soon. ■



Team A



Team B