

# MARWIC

## T · I · M · E · S

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

### VIRGINIA WIC DIRECTOR SPEAKS ON CAPITOL HILL

On July 28, 2021, the US House Education & Labor Civil Rights and Human Services Subcommittee held a hearing on the federal nutrition programs for young children and infants, including the WIC Program. The hearing provided an opportunity for members of Congress to become better informed on opportunities to streamline and modernize WIC, as well as the need to pass Child Nutrition Reauthorization this year.

Among those testifying on behalf of WIC were Paula Garrett, MS, RD, Virginia State WIC Director and member of the National WIC Association (NWA) board of directors; and Jessica Burris, a North Carolina WIC participant, Breastfeeding Peer Counselor, and a member of NWA's WIC Participant Advisory Council. The virtual meeting opened with introductions of program representatives and concluded after a question and answer period.

In preparation for her testimony, Paula not only tapped into her more than 20 years of experience with the WIC Program, she also worked very closely with NWA staff to ensure she provided a perspective that spanned beyond the state of Virginia. Besides emphasizing the need for modernization of WIC, Paula advocated for increased funding both for management information systems and for the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program. Paula explained the benefits of extending the certification periods for women (two years), infants (two years), and children to age six, as well as the need to streamline the certification process.

In a statement issued by NWA CEO and President, Rev. Douglas Greenaway, he stated that Paula Garrett "made a clear case for reform and modernization of WIC," that, as Paula stated, "would assure WIC meets the realities of families and addresses racial disparities in maternal health." Greenaway also noted that, "Ms. Garrett's call for stronger partnerships with healthcare, technological innovation, expansion of adjunctive eligibility, among other positive reforms, would streamline services, ease access, and connect eligible families with WIC services." ■



Virginia State WIC Director  
Paula Garrett, MS, RD

### WEST VIRGINIA WIC RECOGNIZES EPIC EARLY HEAD START FOR COVID COLLABORATION

By Lauren Korzep, WIC Nutritionist/Outreach Coordinator

EPIC Early Head Start is a free, home-based program designed to help low-income families with infants and toddlers (up to age three) and pregnant women. Parent educators come to participants' homes weekly for 90-minute education sessions. Families gather twice a month for play groups and socialization and are linked with a variety of resources and services based on their individual needs, including transportation to doctor appointments.

WV WIC Nutritionist/Outreach Coordinator Lauren Korzep nominated Jessica Brown, Family Advocate at Early Head Start for the Partners in Prevention award during early spring for referring Early Head Start families to WIC during COVID. Together, they conducted WIC appointments via Zoom and even facilitated a sign language interpreter via Zoom for hearing impaired individuals to receive WIC services. Early Head Start and its subsequent program Head Start (ages four and five) continue to be valuable partners of WIC helping families of young children receive a healthy start. ■

WIC Nutritionist Lauren Korzep presents award to Jessica Brown, Family Advocate at Early Head Staff.



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## NEW JERSEY'S EAST ORANGE WIC CELEBRATES BLACK HISTORY MONTH

By Chesney Blue, MPH, RDN, WIC Coordinator

**T**oward the end of February, New Jersey's East Orange WIC Program staff planned a Black History Month celebration to honor their ancestors from the past. Staff were encouraged to wear clothing that represented their heritage and bring in family artifacts, pictures and other cultural items to honor the past, present and future contributions of the African diaspora.

A few staff shared their family stories dating all the way back to the American Civil War. The items brought in to view included a sword used in battle by an enslaved African in the Civil War fighting for their freedom, books written by family members from the US and Caribbean islands and a sculpture representing Haitian independence.

A lot was learned and celebrated during this creative spirit lifter which provided a greater appreciation of the many diverse cultures within our community and program. ■



East Orange WIC staff celebrating Black History Month.

## WEST VIRGINIA'S MONONGALIA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT WIC STAGED REOPENING EVENTS

By Natalie Meriwether, MCHD WIC Outreach Coordinator

**W**ith COVID-19 restrictions letting up, most clinics have reopened. West Virginia's Monongalia County Health Department WIC and the counties we serve, opened back up for in-person appointments on August 1. We reopened in August at 25% capacity, with only new participants having their initial appointments in-person. However, beginning September 1, we reopened at 100% capacity with all appointments being in-person.

With the exciting news of reopening, we hosted an event every week in a different county throughout July to let our participants know. The events took place in Marion, Preston, Taylor, Harrison, and Monongalia counties.

At each event we had fun activities such as chalk and a bubble machine, and we gave out gift bags filled with books, a dry-erase board, cups, and other fun items. We also provided a snack for each child. The events were a hybrid drive-through, so families that felt comfortable to do so were able to get out of the car to talk and play.

Other organizations also joined us at our events. Each event had different organizations, but UniCare and Parents as Teachers set up a table at most of them. These events have been a fun way to interact with our community again and we have had so much fun planning and hosting each one. ■



MCHD WIC Outreach Coordinator Natalie Meriwether, Program Director Cami Haight, and Nutrition Supervisor Colleen Groves.



By Joseph Dybas, Program Specialist

Please join us as we celebrate and recognize Amy Holtan, Team Lead at USDA's Food and Nutrition Service, Mid-Atlantic Regional Office, as she reaches her twentieth anniversary working to advance the mission of the WIC Program! Over the past two decades, Amy has dedicated her career to public service, working tirelessly to combat against the hunger crisis in America, increase food security, and to improve the overall health and quality of life for millions of Americans.

Upon graduating from St. Joseph's University with a Bachelor of Science in Accounting, Amy pursued a career in the private sector, working at one of the largest accounting firms in the nation. However, Amy quickly began to realize that her true passion was serving others and always had an interest in nutrition. In late 1998, Amy took a leap of faith and enrolled in graduate school at Immaculata College, known today as Immaculata University, where she obtained a Master of Arts in Nutrition Education. What came next for Amy is nothing short of inspiring, as she would work for the WIC Program at the local, state, and federal level over the next 20 years.

Amy first began her WIC career in 2001 at the Chester County Health Department, enrolling WIC-eligible participants and providing advice and recommendations concerning nutrition. Rosemary Davignon, former WIC Director of the Chester County Health Department, said that Amy's "enthusiasm and discipline ability to teach and educate staff and clients was well respected by peers and customers."

After five and a half years at the Chester County Health Department, Amy joined the Pennsylvania Department of Health as a public health nutrition consultant, quickly making her way from the Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Prevention Program back to WIC under the supervision of Shirley Sword. Amy was the lead nutritionist in all matters related to food selection for the PA WIC Program and played a vital role as PA sought to implement the NEW WIC Food Packages and Value Enhanced Nutrition Assessment (VENA) policies.

According to Sword, "Amy did a fantastic job of organizing the tedious and detailed task of authorizing brand-specific foods. She was instrumental in developing the application form and evaluation processes that are still used today for food manufacturer submissions in those categories."

While Amy enjoyed working at the state level, she was ready to step outside of her comfort zone yet again, and would leave the PA State Agency in 2012 to begin working at the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service, Mid-Atlantic Regional Office as a regional nutritionist. Amy would soon be promoted to leading MARO's WIC Benefit Delivery Unit in 2013.

As shared by Roberta Hodsdon, Director of Special Nutrition Programs, "Amy has been an extraordinary addition to the MARO WIC team, mentoring many staff over the past nine years, and realizing numerous significant accomplishments as the Regional Nutritionist and more recently in her current role as Team Leader of the WIC Benefit Delivery Unit."

Amy's current supervisor, Jaime Van Lieu, MARO WIC Branch Chief, added, "Amy is a born leader and a tremendous source of support to me and the rest of our team. She is organized, thorough, direct, and quick to offer solutions. We are so proud of Amy's numerous contributions to WIC over the last 20 years!"

Unequivocally, Amy's career in WIC thus far has been consequential in advancing the mission of FNS to combat hunger and increase food security.

Amy says "when switching careers from accounting to nutrition, I was looking to make a difference in people's daily lives. I could never have imagined where a career in WIC would take me, the wonderful people I have met along my journey, or how much joy I would get each day at work, knowing I am making a difference! I am so looking forward to see what changes the future brings to the WIC Program!" ■



Amy's PA WIC State Family (circa late 2000s)



Chester County Wellness Event (circa Food Pyramid Days)



Amy Holtan and Kathleen McCarthy presenting (circa early 2000s)



Amy's Chester County WIC Family (circa early 2000s)



Chester County WIC Mobile unit (circa 2003)



Amy working from home (circa now)



## SUNNY SKIES AS MARYLAND'S FREDERICK COUNTY WIC RETURNS TO FARMERS' MARKETS

As many WIC staffers know, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected our Farmers' Market season last summer. We were stuck indoors as we were mailing out our FMNP coupons and encouraging people to safely go out with their masks to use them. While many people were excited to have their coupons mailed to them, many families were too scared to go out and use them once they got them. The redemption rate of coupons was completely derailed due to the pandemic. Sadder yet, the experience of getting out in the sun, visiting with one another, and coming together as a community to support our farmers was taken away from all of us.

Thankfully, the 2021 Farmers' Market Season has been much better. As we gradually recover from the throes of the pandemic, we have been able to distribute FMNP coupons at the market once again! It has been such a rewarding experience to interact with everyone at the market! The local farmers and other vendors are so happy to have Maryland WIC staff back at the market. Furthermore, it has been wonderful to see our participants and their excited families coming to the market to see us, receive their coupons, go shopping for healthy fruits and vegetables, and enjoy being out in the community on these beautiful and sunny Farmers' Market Coupon Distribution Days! Here's to a wonderful season! ■



*FMNP Distribution July 24 at Frederick Farmers' Market (at the Gavigan's Furniture Store parking lot), 10am-1pm, (left to right) Shari Lotito, Felicia Brinson, Mindy Ramirez, Shannon White, Glenda Paniagua Lopez, Christine Pelkowski.*



*FMNP Distribution July 24 at Frederick Farmers' Market, 10am-1pm, (left to right) front row: Mindy Ramirez, Shannon White, Glenda Paniagua Lopez; back row: Felicia Brinson, Danielle Lane, Shari Lotito.*



*FMNP Distribution July 27 at YMCA Farmers' Market, 3:30pm-6:30pm, (left to right) Nicole Miller, Katie Li, Mindy Ramirez.*



*FMNP Distribution July 31 at Frederick Farmers' Market, 10am-1pm, (left to right) Nicole Miller, Glenda Paniagua Lopez, Mindy Ramirez.*



*FMNP Distribution July 31 at Frederick Farmers' Market, 10am-1pm, (left to right) Nicole Miller, Katie Li, Mindy Ramirez.*



## PUERTO RICO MOBILE UNITS DEMONSTRATE THEIR SUCCESS IN COMMUNITIES

By Gloribel Rabelo-Figueroa, LND, CLE, Social Media & Satellite Region Supervisor, PR WIC Program and Maria J. Medina-Guarch, Consultant to the Executive Director, PR WIC Program

As published in the Winter 2021 edition of MARWIC TIMES, Puerto WIC acquired two mobile units to serve as clinics. During the spring of this year, these units officially began operating in the southern area of Puerto Rico. It is important to point out that recent earthquakes, specifically in the southwest region of the Island, destroyed our WIC clinics in the municipalities of Guánica and Guayanilla. Consequently, the mobile clinics have been able to provide WIC services to various communities in these municipalities. These services include nutritional assessment, follow-up, supplemental foods, nutrition education, including breastfeeding promotion and support, and food instruments which are the necessary means for obtaining said supplemental foods.

The mobile units have all service areas found in a local clinic including reception/waiting, anthropometric measurement, breastfeeding and restroom; in addition to being fitted with the necessary equipment and fixtures. Also, the units are adorned with adequate vehicle signage with WIC contact information, logo and eye-catching pictures of real WIC participants; thus creating impressive, noticeable and striking mobile billboards with the intent of spreading the WIC message 24/7.

All our staff involved in the operation of these mobile clinics indicate having an enriching and fun experience. We have also established the catchy slogan, "Follow our Healthy Route," to involve communities in our efforts. In the same way, our services have been promoted through press releases published in local print and virtual newspapers, as well as through the official WIC social networks and that of the impacted municipalities. We hope to continue designing new "healthy routes" for our mobile units as part of the essential public health services that WIC participants need and deserve. Expect future reports on our exciting new mobile clinics! ■



*Puerto Rico WIC's mobile units have hit the road!*





## CHILDREN'S NATIONAL WIC TAKES A FIELD TRIP TO ARCADIA CENTER FOR SUSTAINABLE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

By Chrisonne Henderson, IBCLC, Community Lactation Consultant, Children's National Hospital WIC Program

It's that time of year again – Farmers' Market season! To help Children's National WIC staff get excited about this year's launch, the team took a field trip to Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food and Agriculture, located on the historic grounds of the Woodlawn Estate in Alexandria, VA, just outside of Washington, DC.

Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food and Agriculture is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to develop a more equitable and sustainable local food system in the Washington, DC area. Arcadia does this through several of their program initiatives, some of which we experienced first-hand during our visit. One such example is Arcadia's Mobile Market, a program focused on increasing access to healthy, farm-fresh food in underserved neighborhoods. In the District of Columbia, nearly a quarter of all residents are considered low-income; many of whom live in food deserts with few nutritious, affordable food options. The Mobile Markets benefit these communities by making regularly scheduled stops in areas easily accessible to their participants including street corners of targeted neighborhoods, in nearby parks, rec centers, and healthcare clinics. Arcadia's Mobile Markets accept all forms of payment including WIC CVV, SNAP-EBT, and FMNP vouchers. One other benefit of the Mobile Markets is that the produce supplied to the markets is primarily grown by Arcadia at its Center for Sustainable Food and Agriculture, giving participants an easy, affordable, and sustainable opportunity to obtain fresh fruits and vegetables.

We were greeted at the Center by our tour guides for the day, Regan McLaughlin and Juan Pablo Echeverria. They gave us an overview of Arcadia's history and programs currently offered to schools, community centers, and veterans. First stop on our tour was the Groundhog Garden. The garden consisted of varying fruits, vegetables, and herbs. We were able to touch, taste and smell many of the herbs found in the garden including parsley, basil, thyme, mint, fennel, marshmallow root, oregano, and fenugreek.

Once we finished touring Groundhog Garden, we took a short hike over to Dogue Farm, the main production space used to grow most of Arcadia's vegetables. We observed the farmers at work and shortly after got to speak with some personally about the work they do. One of those whom we spoke with was a veteran whose passion for gardening led her to Arcadia's Veteran Farmer Program. This program is offered exclusively to veterans, and provides them the time, space, and resources to learn the basics of farming. Veterans looking to pursue farming as their career path can also benefit from additional guidance of seasoned farmers under this program as well. To end our tour, she invited each staff member to pick their own garlic bulb from her garden to take home.

Visiting Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food and Agriculture was a special treat for us at Children's National WIC. It was a great way to launch us into Farmers' Market season and gave us the opportunity to visit with a DC WIC FMNP partner and ally in supporting the health and well-being of our DC community. We are truly grateful for the invitation from Arcadia and we hope to visit again in the future.



*Children's National WIC Team gathered at Arcadia's Center for Sustainable Food and Agriculture to learn more about a DC WIC FMNP partner.*



*Staff selecting their garlic bulb to take home.*



*Staff getting the chance to touch, taste, and smell some of the herbs at Groundhog Garden.*



## LATINA DIETITIAN SHARES CULTURAL EATING PRACTICE AND GUIDANCE WITH DELAWARE WIC

By Maria Shroyer, MS, RD, LDN, Delaware WIC

In January, Delaware WIC had a virtual staff inservice with Krista Linares, MPH, RD. You can find Krista as the Latina Dietitian on Instagram or [www.nutrition-consabor.com](http://www.nutrition-consabor.com). Before the presentation, Krista asked the top three Latina countries of Delaware WIC participants. Delaware WIC identified Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Guatemala. Her presentation covered specifics of different regions including the Caribbean and South America, with a deep dive into the three countries identified by Delaware WIC.

Krista developed and shared her Latino MyPlate. Krista's philosophy is that no traditional foods should be avoided or labeled as unhealthy; they can all be part of a balanced diet!

Krista says, "I'm here to teach nutrition through Latin culture and diet, instead of keeping them separate." She gave strategies for culturally sensitive counseling, shopping practices, Latino sources of iron, and more!

Staff comments included, "This was a great topic! Wonderful to learn more about food cultures from different countries that represent clients we serve."

Krista says on her website, "Our culture is full of so many rich, nourishing traditions. It can strengthen our spirit as well as our bodies." ■



Krista Linares, MPH, RD

## WEST VIRGINIA WIC WELCOMES PROGRAM SPECIALIST EMILY JARVIS

Emily Jarvis joined the West Virginia WIC state office in April as the WIC Program Specialist coordinating the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program and the Approved Foods List.

Emily holds a Master of Science in dietetics from Marshall University and is a registered and licensed dietitian. Formerly a health facilities surveyor, Emily brings with her a vast knowledge of regulatory interpretation and compliance. Emily has recently completed a certificate of training in Adult and Pediatric Obesity and Weight Management through the Commission on Dietetic Registration.

She is passionate about using her nutrition knowledge to help WIC participants achieve optimal nutrition! ■



Emily Jarvis

## PENNSYLVANIA'S ALLEGHENY COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT WIC FARMERS' MARKET NUTRITION PROGRAM OFFERS CHECK REDEMPTION INCENTIVES

By Candis Sines-Westerberg, MEd, Public Health Nutrition Supervisor, Allegheny County Health Department and Gary Santel, MS, Public Health Nutrition Administrator and Retail Store Coordinator, Allegheny County Health Department

The Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD) WIC Program, located in Pittsburgh, PA, gave incentives to participants with their Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) checks to hopefully increase FMNP check redemption rates for the 2021 season. The WIC Program developed a ticket program to help increase Farmers' Market redemption by Allegheny County WIC participants.

Most of the Farmers' Market vouchers were mailed in 2021, which included four golden and nine silver prize package tickets. Participants were randomly selected to receive a golden ticket. One participant from all nine of the Allegheny County WIC offices received a Silver ticket in their FMNP check mailing envelope. The golden ticket winners received a crockpot, books, utensils, and toys. The silver ticket winners receive a bag books, toys, and utensils.

In addition to the ticket prizes, some participants also received Food bucks. The Pittsburgh Food Trust provided \$35,000 worth of Food bucks to the ACHD WIC Program or \$20 per family in the four WIC offices which had the lowest FMNP check redemption rates in 2019.

The goal of the prize tickets and the Food bucks is to increase Farmers' Market check redemption among WIC participants in a largely urban region, as well as increase fruit and vegetable consumption in lower income families. ■

## MARYLAND WIC FARMERS' MARKET COOKBOOK MOVES TO DIGITAL PUBLICATION

Every year since 2014, Maryland WIC has published a Farmers' Market Cookbook. This professionally designed magazine contains easy-to-follow recipes to show participants how they can use their fruit and vegetable benefits. Besides recipes, the cookbook also has tips for storing fresh produce and fun activity pages for kids. Tens of thousands of copies are printed every year, and they are a popular handout at clinics and farmers' markets. There is a lot of work that goes into designing and writing the Farmers' Market Cookbook every year, but the Maryland WIC staff take pride in putting out a professional publication.

Production of the 2021 cookbook was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, making it an especially tricky year. Planning and production on the Farmers' Market Cookbook takes place several months in advance, and at the beginning of 2021, it was unclear if Farmers' Markets would even be open for the upcoming season.

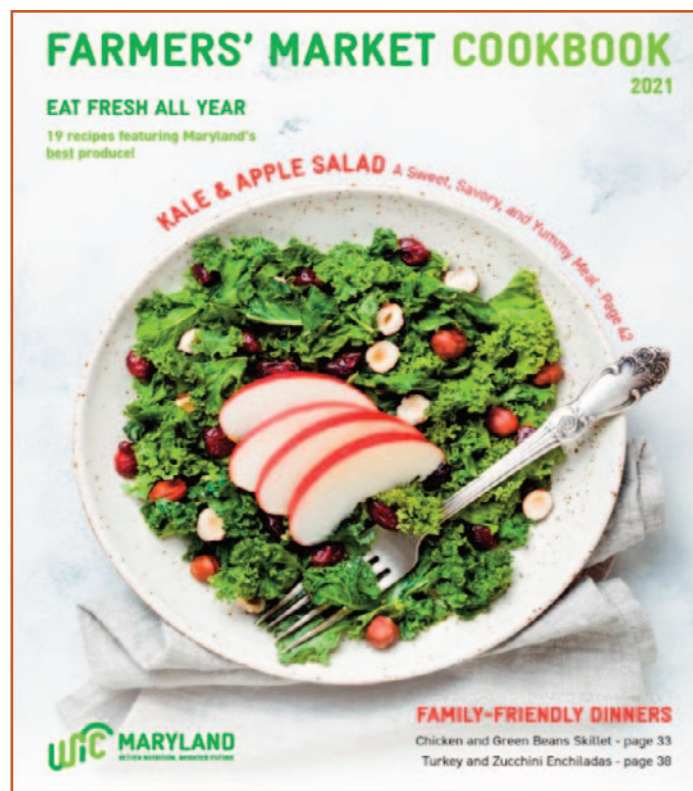
Since we didn't know if there was going to be an avenue to distribute physical copies of the cookbook, the Maryland WIC staff decided to move to digital distribution. In collaboration with a graphic designer, we found a way to host the cookbook online in a flipbook format. When readers advance the pages, they appear to turn just like the pages of a real book. An unexpected advantage of the format was that we could add hyperlinks to the table of contents – a reader can tap on any entry in the table of contents and be taken immediately to that recipe.

When it came time to distribute copies, we had to adapt our methods to local conditions. Some local agencies mailed out flyers to their participants with a QR code linking to the cookbook. Others sent out a link using text messaging. While we were putting the digital version together, we also took the opportunity to host all the previous editions of the Farmers' Market Cookbook on our website.

Hopefully, we will go back to printing physical cookbooks next year. In the meantime, we learned a lot during the challenge of moving to digital production.

Visitors can browse an archive of the Maryland WIC's Farmers' Market Cookbook at:

[https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/wic/Pages/fm\\_cookbook.aspx](https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/wic/Pages/fm_cookbook.aspx). ■



Maryland WIC's Farmers' Market Cookbook, 2021 edition.

## PENNSYLVANIA AND WEST VIRGINIA WIC COLLABORATE ON SPECIAL PROJECTS INNOVATION (WSPi) GRANT

By Mary Ann Tonrey, MS, RDN, LDN, Contractor-Nutrition Program Manager, Bureau of WIC, PA Department of Health

The Pennsylvania WIC Program and the West Virginia WIC Program are working in collaboration to increase local WIC agencies access to state Health Information Exchange (HIE), the creation of a document sharing portal to allow potential participants and/or referring physicians to upload required documentation prior to certification appointments and establish Medical Liaisons to provide education and outreach to primary care providers.

These collaborative efforts will increase the amount of health information available to WIC staff prior to certification appointments, allowing staff to provide more tailored nutritional information during the initial certification appointment and reducing the length of appointment times. ■



## WEST VIRGINIA'S TSN/WIC TEAMS UP WITH LOCAL PARTNERS TO PLANT COMMUNITY GARDEN

By Diane Landy, TSN Outreach Coordinator

The TSN/WIC agency in Southern West Virginia reached out in June to the L.E.A.D. program, a program dedicated to leading, educating, assisting, and developing youth, with a special summer project focused on transforming an empty residential lot in downtown Bluefield, WV into a beautiful community garden.



*Sherree Farmer, Southern Highlands Greenhouse Supervisor*

After learning about the garden project from L.E.A.D. Director Kyle Harris, TSN/WIC Director Elva Clemons decided that the agency would like to contribute in some way to this project. Sherree Farmer, Supervisor of the Southern Highlands Community Mental Health Center Greenhouse (SHCMHC), was contacted to see what plants might be available to purchase for the garden. When Farmer learned that the plants were to be planted in the L.E.A.D. community garden, she offered to donate herbs and asparagus plants to the WIC Program to be planted in the garden.

"I think the WIC Program is an awesome program, just like our program here at SHCMHC, which gives the mentally challenged the opportunity to contribute to and be an active part of their community," Farmer said.

After receiving the donations, Clemons then purchased soil for the raised beds, and with the help of Administrative Services Assistant Meagan Rotenberry, visited the community garden and filled the raised beds with fertile soil and the fragrant and beautiful donations.

"The community garden is a perfect match for the WIC Program. We promote and provide healthy foods and so does this garden," said Clemons. "I am very impressed with Kyle's vision for the project and glad that we can be part of it." ■



*TSN/WIC Director Elva Clemons with L.E.A.D. Director Kyle Harris.*

## BRINGING FIELD EXPERIENCE TO THE STATE OFFICE: VIRGINIA WIC WELCOMES MURRAY WOOD

On August 10, the Virginia WIC State Office welcomed its newest staff member. After years of working directly with WIC participants, Murray Wood joined the State Nutrition Services Team as a Nutrition Liaison where he now will work with local agency staff.

Murray is a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist and holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Health, Physical Education and Recreation from Virginia State University. Murray completed his Dietetic Internship with the Virginia Department of Health in 2014 and earned the credential of Registered Dietitian Nutritionist in 2015.

Murray has more than 13 years of WIC experience. He previously worked in the Henrico County Health District WIC Program as a Nutritionist Supervisor. When he is not working or studying nutrition, Murray enjoys spending time with his family, participating in and watching sports, fishing, and working out. Congratulations Murray! ■

*Murray Wood*





Although the pandemic has wrought a lot of havoc in many ways all over the world, it has also brought some good in its wake. Extended family members may have been kept at a distance for safety reasons, but nuclear families have been brought closer together. Parents and caregivers have become, among other things, teachers, instructing their kids in a curriculum they themselves may have never learned. They have become creative in many ways, and this creativity has extended to different aspects of life, including the kitchen. Food has been scarce; families have had to make do with what is at their disposal.

We decided to follow the 2021 National Nutrition Month theme of 'Personalize Your Plate,' using WIC-approved foods in creative ways, taking into account the different nationalities and ethnic backgrounds that work in this local agency, and that we serve.

During each week of the month of March, CPAs, sometimes with assistance from support staff, had food demonstrations in the office using recipes that can be derived from WIC foods. The staff gladly contributed towards these and made presentations of the following dishes:

- Smoothies with oats, fruits, milk, and peanut butter
- Haitian rice and beans with sides consisting of vegetables and barbequed chicken wings
- Peruvian-style breakfast of chicken tamale and a quinoa-based hot beverage to go with it
- Caribbean Chow Mein with chicken and mixed vegetables
- South Indian vegetarian breakfast of Dosa and Sambhar
- African American meal, vegetarian southern style, with black eyed peas, whole grain corn bread, and vegetarian collard greens
- Nigerian/African Fried Rice and Moin Moin, a beans-based cake that can be a part of any meal (breakfast, lunch, or dinner) or eaten by itself
- Ecuadorian Chicken Stew (Seco De Pollo)

We used healthy recipes and ensured that food items from each food group were included to meet calcium, protein, fiber and vitamin requirements.

We also gave out wellness bags to our three- and four- year-old participants to promote movement during the spring/summer months. The bags included tips and recipes for healthy eating when the weather warms up, a child-size water bottle and pedometer with the East Orange WIC logo.

Please go on the Facebook page @East Orange WIC Program to watch videos of the different meals, recipes, and methods of preparation and try some new dishes. Enjoy! ■



Marqueline Val, WIC Nutritionist, explaining how to make a breakfast smoothie using WIC approved foods.



Elin Waithe, WIC Nutritionist, explaining how to make a healthy Caribbean dish using WIC-approved foods.

## PENNSYLVANIA'S FOUNDATION FOR DELAWARE COUNTY WIC PROGRAM PARTNERS WITH LOCAL FARMER

By Susan Buchman, RDN, LDN, Outreach Coordinator/Clinical Nutritionist, The Foundation for Delaware County

Pennsylvania's Foundation for Delaware County WIC Program and Linvilla Orchards implemented a fresh fruits and vegetables pilot to eligible WIC participants during the ongoing pandemic. This pilot was constructed in the Spring of 2020 and was proven a successful way to get fresh produce to our WIC participants safely.

Linvilla Orchards is a local USDA-approved farm which has been serving the community for over 100 years. The Foundation for Delaware County WIC Program staff worked with Linvilla Orchards to improve access to locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables by assembling and distributing \$6 produce bags at each of the three WIC clinics in Delaware County, PA.

The Farmers' Market season runs from June 1 to November 30. The pilot was implemented on the high-volume days of the clinics. Each clinic received 6-10 produce bags on these days. The WIC staff issued the FMNP checks to each participating eligible family member (ages 1-5 and pregnant women).

At this time, WIC staff would offer to accept a FMNP check in exchange for each \$6 produce bag. Program staff then delivered signed FMNP checks to Linvilla as payment for the produce bags. By having the bags at each clinic location, the clinic staff were able to offer nutrition education on the benefits of locally grown produce from the farmers' market and reduce barriers to participants with FMNP such as transportation, time and issues related to the pandemic.

The pilot was successful; a total of 232 bags were distributed. In collaboration with Linvilla Orchards, they're planning to offer more bags this coming year and improve overall FMNP redemption rates. ■



## NEW JERSEY'S NORTH HUDSON COMMUNITY ACTION CORPORATION WIC CELEBRATES WORLD BREASTFEEDING WEEK, "PROTECT BREASTFEEDING: A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY"

By Karen Lazarowitz, MS, RD, IBCLC, WIC Coordinator

On Friday, August 6, New Jersey's North Hudson Community Action Corporation (NHCAC) WIC Program held its annual Breastfeeding Week celebration. We are happy to announce that we returned to an in-person celebration in the park. Pregnant WIC participants and their families were invited to enjoy a relaxing day in the park overlooking the Manhattan skyline, while learning about breastfeeding, meeting other mothers and taking home presents for themselves and their future babies.

The WIC participants were excited to participate in all activities. Lali the Clown kicked off the event by dancing with our moms, dads and kids, followed by having their faces painted. The pregnant women then headed to have their photos taken in a huge chair with festive decorations and an incredible scenic background. There were plenty of healthy foods to enjoy, including receiving a beautifully wrapped box filled with trail mix, carrots, crackers, guacamole and water. Everyone had the opportunity to talk to WIC Breastfeeding staff and nutritionists, along with representatives from NHCAC health center and social programs, the Partnership for Maternal & Child Health of Northern NJ, and Palisades Family Success Center. Finally, the most exciting part of the event was the raffles. All WIC participants left with breastfeeding-themed gifts for themselves and their future babies!

We are thrilled NJ Department of Health Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Coordinator Wamaitha Mirie, MPH, IBCLC, joined the celebration. We would like to thank the many sponsors who helped make this day a huge success – Amerigroup, 7-Eleven, Bambi Baby, Extra Supermarket, Robert Wood Johnson Barnabas Health, General Mills, Trader Joe's, and BJs Wholesale Club for their generous donation of food, car seats, diapers and breastfeeding aids to raffle. ■



Lactation Instructor Ana Velazquez and her son, Michael, provided breastfeeding information and prepared breastfeeding footprint certificates for our breastfeeding infants.



Breastfeeding Peer Counselors Monica Coronel and Liz Velazquez prepared and led the raffle table.



## WEST VIRGINIA STATE OFFICE MONITOR COMPLETES CERTIFICATE OF TRAINING IN PEDIATRIC AND ADULT OBESITY

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

Angel Cunningham, MS, RD, LD, is a Registered Dietitian who joined the West Virginia WIC state agency as the Local Agency Nutrition Monitor in February 2020. She has transitioned into the Program Integrity Coordinator covering Monitoring and Civil Rights. She is the current chair-elect for the Maternal & Child Health (MCH) Council of the Association of State Public Health Nutritionists (ASPHN) and is now serving as the first Diversity Liaison on the West Virginia Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (WVAND) Board.

Prior to coming at WIC, Angel was the Director of a childcare center, a personal trainer and most recently, a clinical Dietitian in Charleston, WV. Angel believes her unique background has provided her with technical skills she can apply to her new role. Having a love for new learning opportunities, she recently completed her Certificate of Training in Obesity for Pediatrics and Adults. The intensive four-day virtual course focuses on foundational concepts in weight management science and evidence-based practice to build knowledge, skills, and competence in pediatric and adult populations. Her plan is to continue encouraging a healthier environment in West Virginia through education promotion of nutrition and health. ■



Angel Cunningham

## WEST VIRGINIA WIC WELCOMES RESEARCH SPECIALIST

Lesli Taylor, MA, is the new Research Specialist for the West Virginia WIC office and plans to research innovative ways that allow us to continue providing our participants with the best resources to achieve a healthy lifestyle.

She is excited to be a part of the WIC team and hopes that during her time here she can help bridge the gap between what we learn from our research and the real-world application of our findings. ■



Lesli Taylor and friend



**MARWIC  
TIMES  
Calendar**

The deadline for the Winter issue of MARWIC Times is October 22, 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.