

MARWIC

T · I · M · E · S

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

PUERTO RICO WIC PROGRAM RESPONDS RAPIDLY TO EARTHQUAKES RECORDED IN SOUTHERN AREA OF THE ISLAND

The seismic sequence that has been recorded in Puerto Rico, since Dec. 28, has presented damages to the infrastructure and electric power system of the southwest area of Puerto Rico. The earthquake with the greatest impact, a magnitude of 6.4, occurred on January 7, being the highest recorded in said sequence. So far, there have been over 2,000 replicas which has surprised everyone due to the fact that the greatest attention to seismic risks in Puerto Rico occurred in 1918, with an earthquake of 7.1 magnitude, and others of magnitude 6, in the northern area, during different dates of the last century.

According to data offered by the Government of Puerto Rico, more than 8,000 people had to go to shelters, while another undetermined number of them were forced to sleep in tents on the streets, yards or open spaces for fear of the collapse of structures due to continuous replicas. Therefore, the Puerto Rico WIC Program has had to invest greater efforts in the attention of the southern clinics of Guánica, Yauco, Ponce, Guayanilla and Peñuelas, among others.

The previous experience of Category 5 Hurricane María, which impacted the entire Island in August of 2017, leaving it without the basic water, electricity and communication services and thousands of homeless families; has helped us to handle this emergency. The response to the aforementioned earthquakes can be described as organized, fast and successful and even when there is much work to be done as a Program, we are going the extra

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Yauco Clinic Office Clerk Carmen Acevedo (right) working with a WIC participant after the hurricane.



Staff of the Peñuelas and Guayanilla clinics are (left to right) Alvin Álvarez, Blanca Rodríguez, Rosangely Velázquez, Mildred De Jesús, María del Pilar Torres, Herling Roig, Carmen Torres, Sandra Feliciano, Jenny Estrada, Ramona Aray and Sandra Segarra.



Staff of the Yauco and Guánica clinics are (left to right) Carmen Acevedo, Natalia Rivera, Patricia Mayol, Clarimar Velázquez, Felícita Rivera, Nydia Torres, Rosangely Velázquez and María Olan.

MARYLAND LAUNCHES "DEAR WIC" ADVICE COLUMN ON FACEBOOK

Why do my nipples hurt after feeding? Is it safe to give crab meat to my child? Why does my baby weigh less a few weeks after birth? Why is my child such a picky eater all of a sudden?

These are some of the questions that participants ask WIC staff on a regular basis. Participants trust WIC to have reliable, accurate information to help them raise their kids. This was an opportunity to create original content on social media. Thus was born "Dear WIC," a monthly advice column published on Maryland WIC's Facebook page.

Questions come in from clinic workers based on what they are hearing from participants and Maryland's team of certified professionals work together to write the answers. When the letters are published on Facebook, local agencies promote them by liking and sharing. The column has been a hit. Facebook's metrics show that new editions of "Dear WIC" are consistently the most viewed posts on the Maryland WIC page.

"Dear WIC" is published on the first Tuesday of every month and can be found on Maryland WIC's Facebook page, @MDWIC, in the Notes section. All are welcome to peruse previous columns and share them. ■

A sample of the "Dear WIC" column on Maryland WIC's Facebook page.



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NEWS FROM THE USDA: HAPPY 20TH ANNIVERSARY, WIC WORKS!

By Kelly Mannherz, MS, IBCLC, USDA Regional Nutritionist

2020 marks the 20th anniversary for the WIC Works Resource System, known by many of us as WIC Works for short. The US Department of Agriculture operates this platform, which serves as an online education, training, and resource center for State and Local Agency staff administering the WIC Program. USDA uses WIC Works to share nutrition, breastfeeding, and public health resources that support the important work that WIC staff does every day to administer our wonderful program.

USDA would like to feature feedback and quotes about WIC Works from various WIC staff to keep the 20th anniversary celebration going all throughout the year.

If you have a message to share about how WIC Works has impacted your work over the years, we want to hear from you! Has it helped you improve your knowledge of breastfeeding, safe sleep, or developmental milestones? Have you enjoyed taking online trainings or appreciated the free nutrition education handouts that you can order?

If you answered yes, please send your anniversary wishes for WIC Works to your State Agency nutrition staff, and then keep an eye out for them in USDA's monthly GovDelivery messages. To receive these messages, visit <https://wicworks.fns.usda.gov/> and enter your email address under "Sign up for Updates" on the bottom right corner of the page. ■



WEST VIRGINIA'S KANAWHA COUNTY WIC SHOWS OFF "JEN'S BOOK NOOK"

Kelsey Rudinski, Nutrition Coordinator, MHS, CLC

In June, actress and WV-raised Jennifer Garner visited the Kanawha County WIC office in Charleston to talk about her new WIC-approved baby foods – Once Upon a Farm.

During her visit, she met with staff and inquired about all things WIC. Garner wanted to get a feel for what a WIC appointment really was like and what the Program offered families.

Besides healthy meals, another one of Garner's initiatives is about the importance of education and reading to children. Although our lobby does have toys, she noticed there were no books for the children to read while they waited for their appointment.

When Garner asked staff about how she could help us, the immediate response was "kids like books," so she promised to send us books. In December, we were very lucky to receive a shipment of children's books from Garner.

We were so thrilled, we gave our new book nook her name! ■



"Jen's Book Nook" was created after Jennifer Garner visited the Kanawha County WIC office and sent a shipment of children's books.

Puerto Rico WIC Program Responds Rapidly to Earthquakes from page 1

mile to continue serving our participants successfully.

The Regional Supervisor of Nutrition Services, together with the Nutrition Supervisors of the affected clinics, mobilized to evaluate their respective work areas and carry out inventories of WIC participants placed in the shelters of each town. These participants were taken care of promptly by the staff of the southern clinics so that they could receive the necessary nutrition and breastfeeding services.

The PR WIC Program is extremely grateful for the excellent work of the southern region staff, who, within the emergency situation of their respective towns and many of them also being affected, continue to offer outstanding services. ■

PRECIOUS WHITE GOLD: THOUGHTS FROM A BREAST MILK DONOR

By Vanitha Padma, Business Analyst, Virginia WIC

I am a human milk donor — an experience that has been both deeply rewarding and somewhat bizarre. Soon after I delivered my firstborn, it became clear that I produced more milk than my baby could consume. My over-supply of milk was truly a blessing for my baby. However, bags of breast milk soon took over our refrigerator and freezer.

My baby did not get around to drinking most of what I pumped. I threw some milk away just to free up space in our freezer, but it seemed like a waste. That is when I began thinking about milk donation. I am thankful for my colleague, Jarene Fleming, Breastfeeding Coordinator at VDH, who referred me to The King's Daughters Milk Bank at Children's Hospital (CHKD). CHKD is a nonprofit, hospital-based donor milk bank, established to provide the life-saving benefits of breast milk to severely premature and critically ill infants in an effort to improve their potential to survive and thrive.

It gives me immense satisfaction to know that I was able to feed more than 1,064 ounces of my breast milk to the hospitalized infants in NICUs up and down the east coast. Just one ounce of breast milk can provide up to four feedings for a preterm, one- or two-pound baby. Similarly, just 200 ounces can provide up to 800 feedings!

To become a donor, I had to pass a month-long screening process, which included a phone interview and blood tests for infectious diseases. I also had to release my baby's and my medical records so the milk bank staff could ensure donating would not be detrimental to either of us. I kept my milk medication-free to ensure that it was safe both for my baby and the preemies, who tend to have very fragile systems. I am so grateful for this experience and the milk bank. I encourage other mothers to consider making a donation of their extra milk; many families will benefit from your generosity!



Vanitha Padma's Certificate of Appreciation for her abundant milk donation.



Vanitha's son, Rayansh at 6 months sharing his milk.

Benefits of human milk:

- Since many factors can prevent mothers of preterm or critically ill infants from being able to provide a sufficient supply of their own milk, CHKD has established The King's Daughters Milk Bank to ensure that breast milk is available to the hospital's most fragile babies.
- Each year, preterm birth affects nearly 500,000 babies — that is one of every eight babies born in the United States (www.cdc.gov).
- The risk of premature or sick babies developing devastating and potentially life threatening intestinal infections is 10 times higher if they are fed formula instead of human milk.
- Human milk protects against allergies and contains antibodies to fight disease and growth hormones that help babies develop.
- Many factors can prevent mothers of preterm or critically ill infants from providing an adequate supply of their own breast milk.
- Donor human milk is easily digested and provides infection-fighting benefits and optimal nutrition in the absence of mother's own milk. ■

NEW JERSEY'S VNACJ WIC DISPLAYS SUPERMARKET ADS TO IMPROVE THE WIC SHOPPING EXPERIENCE

By Jennifer Reyes, WIC Nutrition Educator

Shopping for WIC foods can be an overwhelming experience for WIC participants. In the New Brunswick (NJ) WIC clinic, some commonly asked questions from participants are, "Which stores accept WIC checks?", "Which stores have the best sales?", and "Where can I find recipes using fruits and vegetables?" As the Nutrition Educator, I wanted to design a way to help answer all of those questions, so I decided to use a tri-fold poster with useful vendor information to display in clinic. I posted the names of all popular, local, WIC-approved supermarkets on the tri-fold, along with the corresponding weekly store advertisement showing which fruits and vegetables were on sale. I also posted simple recipes using the fruits and vegetables that were on sale each week. Every week I update the board with the current weekly store advertisement and different recipes.

The feedback that I received has been very positive from both customers and staff. The Nutritionists in our office have commented that they always direct the participants to the poster whenever clients need guidance with food shopping and recipe ideas. The participants really enjoy the display because it removes the obstacle of searching through store ads and comparing sale prices. Another positive outcome is that participants and their children are consuming more fruits and vegetables, and clients often ask for copies of the recipes so that they can prepare them at home.

At WIC, we try our best to improve the food shopping experience for our participants and the display board has been helping us achieve that goal. ■



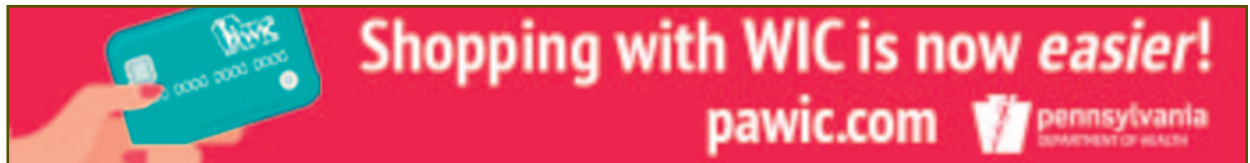
PENNSYLVANIA ROLLS OUT eWIC CAMPAIGN

By Bonnie Mellott, State Outreach Coordinator

Pennsylvania initiated a statewide media campaign in September to promote the roll out of eWIC and to bring families to WIC. We wanted the advertising to be situated closely to the WIC offices to promote the roll out of eWIC and to let participants know eWIC is at their clinic, hopefully discourage no-shows and to encourage old participants to return to WIC.

The deliverables included billboards, bus shelters, digital streaming and radio ads, which were rolled out by region. September and October resulted in spikes to our hotline and online pre-applications! This leveled off in November and December, which is typical around the holidays. Our last phase was implemented the beginning of January and we expect increased calls and pre-applications in the beginning months of the year.

The digital streaming has generated 2.5 million digital impressions and over 3,500 clicks to the website. Broadcast TV and radio advertisements are airing statewide through April. The campaign has helped tremendously in getting the word out... eWIC is here! No more paper checks! ■



These new digital banners and posters are getting the word out about eWIC in Pennsylvania.

MID-OHIO VALLEY WIC PROVIDES RESOURCE BAGS FOR NEW MOMS AND GUARDIANS

By Shannon Hedrick, MOV WIC Outreach Collaborator

West Virginia's Mid-Ohio Valley WIC collaborates with community partners to give local resource bags to each new mom and/or guardian in our nine-county region. These bags contain information, resources, and supplies to help new moms and/or guardians transition to life with an infant. Our hope is that the new moms and/or guardians feel supported and cared for by MOV WIC.

Representatives from MOV WIC, home visitation programs, support groups, health care agencies, foster care, Family Resource Network and other entities provide informational items in the bags for monthly distribution.

In Calhoun, Gilmer, Jackson, Mason, Roane, and Wood counties, the resource bags are handed out by the local hospitals. In Pleasants County, the resource bags are handed out by the Family Resource Network Director. In Ritchie County, the resource bags are handed out by the TLC Pregnancy Center and in Wirt County, the resource bags are handed out by the local health care center.

We are thrilled and thankful to collaborate with so many community partners in our region to provide support to our new moms and guardians. ■



Representatives from Family Resource Network, MOV WIC, Foster Grandparents Program, Westbrook Health Services, Coplin Health Systems, Supportive Services for Veteran Families and WVU Extension Service of Wirt County spend the afternoon together to provide information to local moms.

NEW JERSEY'S NEWARK WIC MAKES A MEAL FOR PARTICIPANTS TO TRY

On Nov. 22, 2019, the WIC Department in Newark (NJ) prepared a delicious well-balanced meal for their participants to try. Adaly Interian, one of the department's nutritionists, provided a pasta salad food presentation to their clients to help encourage nutritious home-cooked meals. The ingredients included whole wheat pasta, fresh peppers, mixed steamed vegetables and cheese which are all honored on the participants' WIC checks. The meal took about five minutes to prep and 20 minutes to cook and serve.

The food presentation inspired WIC participants to try new and wholesome foods. ■



Pasta salad – before and after – courtesy of nutritionist Adaly Interian.

WEST VIRGINIA'S BLUEFIELD WIC SERVES UP FISH FUN

By Diane Landy, TSN/WIC Outreach Coordinator

Bluefield, WV WIC Nutritionist Ashley Dowell enjoyed allowing local Head Start students the opportunity to go fishing for prizes at a free, family camping-themed event called "Under the Stars" on November 1. The event was held at Maple View Church of Christ.

Dowell joined other Head Start community partner agencies in creating a fun event for children. Children appreciated receiving goodie bags, books and snacks while participating in making exciting crafts, and playing little-tyke camping games such as Fishing with WIC! This game allowed children to fish for different prizes, including free meal coupons and various toys.

The event had an excellent turnout. The children happily left with both a good time and armed with a full tote bag of goodies. Of course, Dowell shared the wonderful benefits that WIC has to offer and was also able to get a few new participants in Mercer County. Well done, Ashley!

The TSN/WIC Program enjoys partnering with the local Head Start CASE program in providing pleasurable events like this for children to attend. ■



Nutritionist Ashley Dowell helps son Eli play 'Let's Go Fishin'.

NEW JERSEY'S NORTH HUDSON WIC PROGRAM CELEBRATES THE HOLIDAYS

By Rodrigo Vilchez, Coordinator Assistant

Before closing the 2019 year at the New Jersey's North Hudson Community Action Corporation WIC Program, we had a special guest pay us a visit – Santa Claus! Santa Claus actually made a pit stop to our office to drop off gifts for our young participants.

Santa made a brief detour to our corner of New Jersey to ensure our children were sent off with gifts and joy on their faces. Helper elves were plentiful to keep the unexpectedly long lines in order and organize the many pictures taken with Santa. We were very proud to host such a popular guest and all the children were thrilled to receive a gift and take a photo with Santa!

We want to thank North Hudson Community Action Corporation Foundation for donating 500 presents and helping bring a smile to 500 children. ■



Santa and his elves delivering toys to North Hudson Community Action WIC participants.

DELAWARE WIC HOLDS STAFF HOLIDAY DECORATING CONTEST AS TEAM BUILDING ACTIVITY

By Maria Shroyer, MS, RD, LDN, Consultant Dietitian, Delaware WIC Program

Delaware WIC had a clinic pumpkin decorating contest in each of its seven full-time clinics.

In addition, the technology and breastfeeding sectors joined the fun. Staff used creative materials from the office or materials purchased from a dollar store in executing their original ideas. Themes included Cinderella and her pumpkin carriage, WOW system tech robot, breastfeeding, and various baby and Halloween designs.

Voting occurred on Facebook. WIC participants, WIC staff, and friends of WIC had fun deciding their favorite entry in the contest.

The winner was the Hudson clinic. Their pumpkin featured ghosts made of tissue paper. The description of their pumpkin read, "Fangs for the Memories! We are Hudson WIC. We love skin to skin and creepy crawlers. Fangs for letting us ghouls give you treats, and not tricks. Spider babies need food too!"

The Hudson clinic was presented with a certificate to proudly display. Delaware WIC is planning to hold more clinic contests to continue to boost employee morale. ■



The winner was Hudson clinic!!!!



Honorable mention



Honorable mentions



NEW JERSEY'S TRINITAS SHARES JOY OF THE SEASON

Santa visited Trinitas WIC in Elizabeth, NJ, on December 18, bringing gifts and treats to more than 100 children and their families. Toys were provided by the generous donation from Amerigroup Managed Care and Trinitas Foundation. Families enjoyed taking pictures and celebrating the joys of the season. ■



RANDOLPH ELKINS WV WIC PARTICIPATES IN HEALTHY TRICK OR TREAT

By Sierra Yoder

WIC staff in West Virginia's Grant and Randolph counties joined with many other community agencies to promote safe and healthy Trick or Treat options for local children.

The Petersburg WIC office participated in the yearly community Trunk or Treat hosted by the West Virginia Extension Agency on Thursday, October 31. Staff members, nutritionist Sierra Yoder and office assistant Tammy Alt got into the spirit by dressing up as a scarecrow and a farmer to help promote the office's theme of "Fallin' for Healthy Food." They gave out toothbrushes to the local trick or treaters as a healthy alternative to candy and other sugary treats. Approximately 200 toothbrushes were distributed throughout the local community.

The Elkins WIC office also participated in the fun by using the theme "The Three Little Pigs" for their local Safe Trick or Treat event sponsored by the Family Resource Network. Their staff included office manager Jodi Rader, breastfeeding counselor Laura Weeks with her son Riley Weeks, and office assistant Serena Wiseman. The Elkins staff handed out approximately 950 toothbrushes to children in their local area.

Both events were well received by children and parents. Simple alternatives such as toothbrushes can be used to promote the healthier well-being of children. ■



Petersburg WIC staff members scarecrow Sierra Yoder (left) and farmer Tammy Alt got into the spirit.



Their trunk was full of treats.



Elkins WIC staff members (left to right) Jodi Rader, Laura Weeks and Serena Wiseman, with the big bad wolf Riley Weeks.

WEST VIRGINIA'S VALLEY HEALTH CELEBRATES THE HOLIDAYS WITH WIC FAMILIES

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

A few years ago, Jessica Crouse, a WIC office assistant, envisioned an outreach event to help WIC families leave holiday worries behind and provide families a special time together. In addition, her goal was to provide each child attending the event with a Christmas present.

All WIC staff pitch in and spend countless hours preparing for this annual event. Clara Cremeans, the Cabell WIC office manager, uses her creative powers and provides an awesome theme and multiple decorations for these Breakfast with Santa events. This year's theme was a Christmas train.

The event has grown each year. We recently celebrated our third annual Breakfast with Santa event which was attended by more than 60 people. At the event, families were served breakfast prepared with WIC-approved foods, led by Denise Eagan, MA, RDN, LDN, Nutrition Education Liaison. Activities included story time, temporary tattoos, ornament decorating, and a visit with Santa. Each family was given a recipe book, kitchen items (donated by the Dairy Council), food bag, blanket and a stack of books to read together. Each infant and child WIC participant received a toy, a filled stocking and pajamas. Door prizes were given, including gift certificates from many local businesses.

This event is a success because local businesses provide ongoing support through donating food, gift cards, blankets, and free binding of recipe books. Financial support has been provided through grants and donations from our local Wal-Mart and The Mountain Health Foundation. Without partnerships from our local community and the hard work of staff to put extra special touches on the event, it would not be possible. The smiles on the children's faces and watching families sit down and eat together provides WIC staff with the satisfaction that we have completed our goal to provide families an event to make memories that will last a lifetime. ■



Rachel Miles Hoopes, MS, RDN, LD, CLC, EP-C reads a holiday tale with a mom and child.



Santa's visit really excited the kids.



Valley Health's Breakfast with Santa created memories for all!

NEW JERSEY'S PLAINFIELD WIC CELEBRATES WORLD FOOD DAY

By Karolina Bar, Plainfield WIC Nutritionist

While yogurt has been a great addition to the WIC checks, employees at New Jersey's Plainfield WIC Program found that some moms were having difficulty trouble incorporating yogurt into their diet.

Taking their feedback, WIC nutritionist Karolina Bar decided to have a food demonstration during three nutrition education classes and made simple yogurt breakfast



WIC nutritionist Karolina Bar passes out yogurt cups for clients to try. Delicious yogurt cups are easy to prepare.



cups using WIC foods. These breakfast cups are perfect for the clients since they are easy and quick to whip up but also are a healthier alternative to sugary cereals or frozen waffles. The recipe contains just three ingredients: Honey Bunches of Oats cereal, low-fat vanilla yogurt and some fruit. Put it all together into a mini cupcake pan and stick it in the freezer until the yogurt becomes frozen. In the event that some clients did not already own cupcake tins, we also made yogurt smoothies with frozen fruits and vegetables. The clients especially liked this since it was a great way to sneak in some vegetables for some of the pickier vegetable eaters.

Our moms are always on the go, so these recipes can be prepared the night before and be ready to go in the morning for breakfast, a quick snack or even a dessert! ■

NEW JERSEY'S TRINITAS WIC PARTICIPANTS SHOW THE LOVE DURING NATIONAL HEART MONTH

Rosa Tamayo, Assistant WIC Director for NJ's Trinitas WIC, coordinated educational sessions with Stephanie Paneca-Navarro, Community Health Educator of Amerigroup on February 5 to focus on heart health.

During the interactive presentation of "Foods Good for Your Heart Health," children and parents all joined in by placing decorated hearts on a display. Guidelines for MyPlate were presented with examples on how to include more fruits, vegetables, legumes and whole grains into your daily meals. Portion sizes were discussed, and participants declared "Love Your Heart Goals."

One father shared that he feels bad that his son has been asking to go to the park. He works at night and is too tired during the day. Now he will make time to run around in the park with his son. Another client said he smokes and is cutting down on the amount of cigarettes and will call his insurance for more information on smoking cessation options. Other clients indicated they would cut down on fatty foods, sweet drinks, while increasing physical activity.

Nutritionist Amanda Conover created a display, "Know Your Numbers," regarding cholesterol and blood pressure. Other nutritionists were sharing the same message with other families during individual education visits. Over 92 households attended. ■



Stephanie Paneca-Navarro, Community Health Educator of Amerigroup (left) and Rosa Tamayo, Assistant WIC Director for NJ's Trinitas WIC prepare for their Heart Month educational sessions.

NEW JERSEY'S TRINITAS WIC CELEBRATES THANKSGIVING

Trinitas WIC, located in Elizabeth, NJ, donated three Thanksgiving baskets to the community. Senior Registrar Stefanny Vargas Masis coordinated the project. Maribel Solano, Ephoeta Jerome, and Masis made the home deliveries to families in Elizabeth and Roselle. ■



HOLIDAYS IN WEST VIRGINIA'S KANAWHA COUNTY WIC: WELCOME TO WHOVILLE!

By Kelsey Rudinski, Nutrition Coordinator, MHS, CLC

This year, West Virginia's Kanawha County WIC's third annual holiday celebration was Grinch themed. The staff dressed as characters straight out of Whoville with Nutritionist Mary Huffman dressing as the Grinch herself.

Clients were treated to Grinch kabobs (green grapes, banana slice, strawberry and mini-marshmallow, on a toothpick), Santa hats (cucumber slice, Greek yogurt veggie dip and cherry tomato), and green tortilla chips with tomato salsa.

Our youngest participants had the chance to play "pin the heart on the Grinch" – a game like pin the tail on the donkey. Clients learned about heart-healthy foods, to help their hearts grow strong like the Grinch's did. It was a great Who-Bilation for all! ■

Guests enjoyed themed snacks including Grinch kabobs and Santa hats.



Valley Health WIC staff in costume are (left to right) Jane Barber, IBCLC, Lactation Consultant; Karen Dillard, Nutritionist; Mary Huffman, Nutritionist; Morgan Teeters, RDN, Nutrition Education Liaison; Janie Collins, CLC, Peer Counselor and Mary Caldwell, VH Director.

NEW JERSEY'S GATEWAY COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP OPENS NEW CAMDEN OFFICE

By Ed Hilt, Planning Department, Gateway CAP WIC

Gateway Community Action Partnership celebrated the opening of its new Camden (NJ) WIC office location at 2881 Mt. Ephraim Avenue with a ribbon-cutting event on October 17.

"The opening of this new WIC center in Camden is what makes our work so meaningful. To provide a valuable resource to the community in a bright, new, clean, convenient and inviting space is what makes our efforts so rewarding," said Albert B. Kelly, Gateway President and CEO "It is not merely a matter of putting a WIC center in a community, but more a goal of putting a center we are proud of, that we would recommend without hesitation and that is a beacon in that community.

"Our staff worked with dedicated community partners and developers as well as members of the State WIC office to create an open and inviting space in which families receive the essential services our children need ... and deserve ... to grow up healthy and lead productive lives. That's what's meaningful about the opening of this new center," Kelly continued.

In addition to a program and ribbon cutting, the event included tours of the new 6,175-square foot, state-of-the-art facility and light refreshments.

The new Camden WIC office includes two waiting areas, six nutritionists' offices, a height and weight room, nutrition education room and eight intake areas. The office annually serves close to 10,000 low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum women and children under age five who are at nutritional risk.

"Gateway has always done an outstanding job of helping those who need our services," said John Washington, Gateway's Board Chairman. "We do everything we can to help people help themselves. This new center is just another example of that. Our staff is going to do a great job here for the people of Camden County. Of that, there is no doubt."

"This is a momentous occasion. This took a lot of imagination and vision for this to happen. We have vision, and this is what materialized. I thank Jaya (Makukha, Gateway's VP in charge of WIC) and her staff for making this happen," said Edward Bethea, Gateway's Executive Vice President and COO.

Dr. Makukha thanked everyone for attending, including Gateway's WIC partners, and reminded everyone that Gateway WIC is always seeking collaborations that will strengthen the Program in serving the community.

Dr. Nancy Scotto-Rosato, the New Jersey State WIC Director, thanked Dr. Makukha and Bethea for their "perseverance and leadership" in making this new center possible. Also attending were representatives from the offices of US Senator Cory Booker and US Congressman Donald Norcross. Each read proclamations recognizing the importance of the new center to residents of Camden County. In addition, Dr. Paschal Nwako, the Camden County Public Health Officer, attended. ■



Interior of Gateway WIC center in Camden.



Gateway leadership, staff, and program supporters cut the ribbon to ceremoniously open Gateway's WIC center in Camden. From left, Pam Ryan, Gateway WIC; Dr. Paschal Nwako, Camden County Public Health Officer; Alyssa Williams, Gateway WIC; John Washington, Gateway Board Chairman; Dr. Jaya Makukha; Gateway VP/WIC; Dr. Nancy Scotto-Rosato, NJ State WIC Director; Edward Bethea, Gateway Executive VP/COO; Manjula Malladi, Gateway WIC.

MARYLAND'S HOWARD COUNTY WIC PROGRAM BEGINS TELELACTATION

Maryland's Howard County WIC Program began offering telelactation services to participants. When a participant is unable to visit a WIC clinic in person or needs a quick answer, she now has the option to schedule a video call. Using a smartphone or computer, participants can engage in a virtual chat and receive breastfeeding assistance from either a breastfeeding peer counselor or International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC).

WIC workers know that unless they can assist a participant while she is having breastfeeding difficulty, she is likely to reach for a non-breast-milk source at that moment. Many participants have difficulty reaching a counselor due to transportation barriers, and some may need help in a more timely fashion than public transit will allow. Even when a participant is able to meet with WIC breastfeeding staff at a later date, the introduction of the breastmilk substitute in the interim negatively affects the participant's breastmilk supply, thus reducing the participant's chance for successful continuation of breastfeeding. Howard County WIC's innovative approach of using telelactation allows participants to more easily access breastfeeding support staff during those times of need.



WIC staff demonstrates the use of telelactation services.

Telelactation allows better service than a phone call because WIC staff not only hears what the situation entails, but they also are able to view the breastfeeding mom and/or baby. That picture adds more information for the staff providing assistance, giving a better understanding of the issue. In addition, having the visual allows WIC staff to show the participant, as well as verbally tell her, the information deemed necessary. Combining both picture and words leads to better, clearer communication.

Mothers today are very savvy using their phones and computers to access information, and many prefer these avenues to get information. Howard County WIC staff is offering the option of meeting these participants in the way they most prefer.

"Our WIC Program proudly maintains a breastfeeding initiation rate above 80%," said Health Officer Dr. Maura Rossman. "In a continued effort to encourage more families to breastfeed, this program reduces barriers and makes it easier for moms to receive the support they need." ■

NEW JERSEY'S FIRST MATERNAL CHILD HEALTH AWARENESS DAY AT TRINITAS WIC

By Anita Otokiti

New Jersey is the first state in the nation to designate a day calling for action to raise public awareness about maternal health and promote maternal safety. Governor Phil Murphy issued a proclamation recognizing the day. In New Jersey, pregnant women and new mothers die at a rate above the national average, according to the United Health Foundation's America's Health Rankings. The New Jersey Maternal Mortality Case Review Team found that African-American women are five times as likely as their white counterparts to die from pregnancy-related complications. Eliminating disparities in maternal health outcomes requires expanding existing programs and a systems-wide approach that encompasses a network of healthcare and social services providers such as WIC.

The leading causes of pregnancy-related death include cardio-vascular disease, pregnancy-related heart failure, embolism, septic shock and cerebral hemorrhage. Factors that may contribute to maternal deaths include obesity, chronic health conditions such as diabetes and hypertension, lack of prenatal care, and drug use.

A Department of Health initiative called Healthy Women, Healthy Families coordinates services through a single point of entry, integrating care for women and families in high-risk communities. This model provides access, screening and referrals for clients and draws upon community health workers to recruit and provide case management. NJ WIC shared information regarding this model initiative during a WIC administrative training in November 2018. NJ WIC Services Director Nancy Scotto Rosato explained that several WIC agencies offer on-site enrollment services and explore ways to receive referrals from the Healthy Women, Healthy Families grantees.

How does WIC help? The WIC nutritionist will assist with appropriate referrals, health assessments, nutrition education, and breastfeeding education, WIC food vouchers, on-site referrals for SNAP, health coverage and Nurse Family Partnership/Healthy Families. All guests attending the Trinitas Health Centers, WIC, Labor and Delivery Units and Nursery were gifted newborn gifts that included onesies.

Jazmine Villafare enrolled Giana, age 3, in the MCH Early Childhood Specialists Services. With just a laptop and a chair, children from birth to 5 years of age are encouraged to use the free developmental screening tools. Jacqueline Ventura and Rose Moise of the enroll families in the program on site at Trinitas WIC. Phone and online support screening for developmental ages and stages is provided to promote developmental health. This parent education program helps get children set for preschool readiness.

Walkiria Castro's goal is to exclusively breastfeed her little champion Ethan Perez for one year. During the WIC visit, Assistant WIC Director Rosa Tamayo, RD, MPH assigned the enhanced breastfeeding food package and at six months of age Ethan will get baby food and cereal. Lactation Services Coordinator Maribel Solano focused on breastfeeding assessment and breastfeeding women are eligible for WIC for one year after delivery. ■



Walkiria Castro (seated with son Ethan Perez), flanked by Assistant WIC Director Rosa Tamayo, RD, MPH and Maribel Solano, Lactation Services Coordinator.



Jazmine Villafare (far left) with Giana (age 3), Partnership for Maternal Child Health representatives Jacqueline Ventura and Rose Moise, and WIC Director Anita Otokiti (standing).



Staff members joined in the unifying message by wearing specially designed t-shirts.

NEW JERSEY'S TRINITAS WIC AND THE 2020 POINT IN TIME SERVICE FAIR AIDS HOMELESS FAMILIES

Each year, New Jersey's Elizabeth Coalition to House the Homeless hosts a Service Fair as part of the national Point In Time count of the homeless required by HUD. The results from the PIT count determine funding municipalities receive from the federal government to support programs aiding the homeless. To ensure an accurate count, ECTHH provides this Service Fair to reach the homeless and near homeless population, while also offering valuable resources and basic health screenings to assist the community.

Miriam Zokner of the WIC Program had a display at the 2020 Point In Time Service Fair, which took place on January 29. There were 38 agencies, mobile units, hearing and health screening specialists.

Unfortunately, we learned from participating in this event that some eligible families do not enroll in

WIC because they lack some or all of the required documents for certification. This presents us with a new opportunity to enhance outreach and networking for this targeted group. WIC offers a special food package for those in homeless situations. There are practices and policies in place to ensure that services (including free health screenings) are provided to homeless families. For identification and address, clients and agencies are encouraged to have a written referral from the homeless agency or other organizations. ■



Scenes from the Service Fair



**MARWIC
TIMES
Calendar**

The deadline for the Summer issue of MARWIC Times is May 8, 2020. 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.

HERE'S WHAT'S HAPPENING AT PENNSYLVANIA'S SHENANGO VALLEY URBAN LEAGUE, INC.

By Lauriethel Ward, RSC/Outreach Coordinator-CIT

Pennsylvania's Shenango Valley Urban League, Inc. WIC Program staff completed a week-long training from July 29 to Aug. 2, in preparation for the rollout of the new PENN MIS system and the implementation of the e-WIC card. WIC staff was eager because they were in the second region for the statewide rollout. After the training, WIC staff returned to the office on Monday, Aug. 5, for a mock clinic day, which presented them with the challenge to hone the skills learned in Harrisburg on the PENN MIS system and the eWIC card.

After 30 years of issuing paper checks, we were very excited to issue the first eWIC card for our WIC agency to Sierra Cogswell and her daughter, Jennica, on Aug. 6!

In October, the Shenango Valley Urban League, Inc. WIC Program in the Mercer County WIC office partnered with Nurse-Family Partnership of the Children's Advocacy of UPMC Jameson Hospital to offer a no-cost breastfeeding class. The class teaches how to breastfeed and is perfect for pregnant women who are considering or planning to breastfeed their newborn. The class is open to the public and the first class was held on Dec. 19, 11am to 1:30pm, with lunch provided. The classes are being held once a month through May at the Shenango Valley Urban League, Inc., Farrell, PA. ■



Lauriethel Ward, RSC/Outreach Coordinator-CI issued the agency's first eWIC card to Sierra Cogswell and daughter Jennica.



Ready to lead the first breastfeeding class are (left to right) Emily Campbell, BFC/PCM-OM; Sarah Irwin, PC; Jeanie Mills, RN, BSN; Falina Lombardi, Lori Kocholek, PC; and Emily Egbert, RN.

The MARWIC TIMES newsletter is now available online at <https://wicworks.fns.usda.gov/>



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