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*"We are having
this because
it's healthy..."*



Reaching Out With Nutrition Information...

As President Clinton and the American people work together to make health care more accessible and more affordable, nutrition education can play an important part in making prevention the order of the day.

As health experts remind us, the food choices we make, even as very young children, can affect how healthy we are for years to come. And saving on medical bills is just one potential benefit of being health-smart about what we eat—even greater payoffs are feeling good and having more energy for school, work, our families and friends, and neighbors.

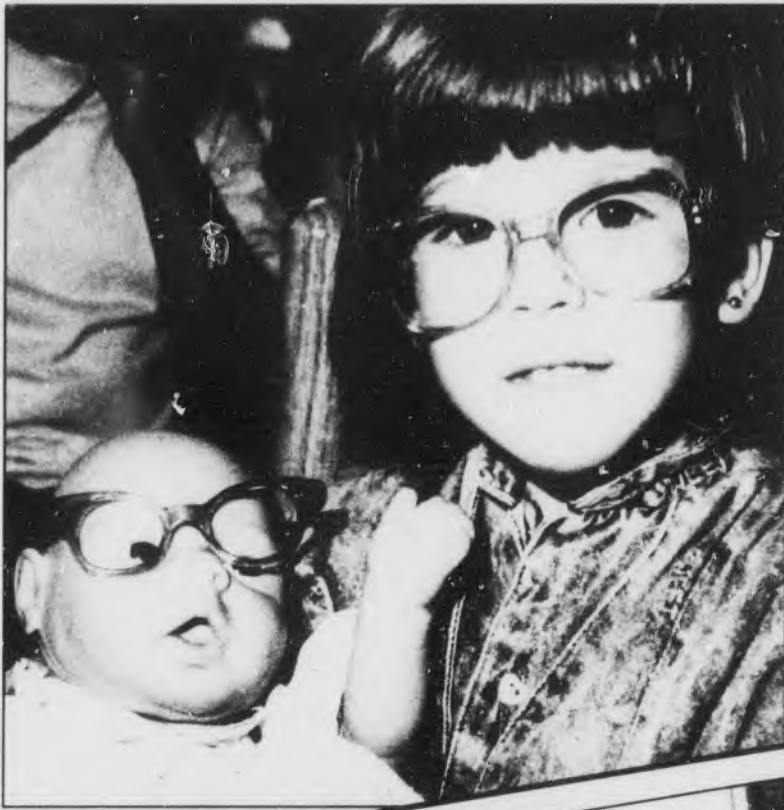
USDA's new Assistant Secretary for Food and Consumer Services Ellen Haas has long been interested in improving the nutrition and health status of American consumers.

Prior to her confirmation on May 28, Haas served for more than 10 years as executive director of Public Voice for Food and Health Policy, a consumer group she founded to promote a safer, healthier, and more affordable food supply.

Her experience also included directing the consumer division of the Community Nutrition Institute and serving as president of the Consumer Federation of America.

"It's a basic right of all Americans to have an adequate, healthy diet," Haas says. "Not only are there too many people hungry, there are also too many people whose dietary patterns contribute to chronic diseases such as heart disease and cancer. Our overall goal is to improve the nutritional status of all Americans."

As Assistant Secretary, Haas oversees the work of the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), the USDA agency responsible for the country's federal food assistance programs. This year the combined budget for FNS programs totals more than \$38 billion. Haas wants USDA and its state and local partners to reach out with both food assistance and nutrition education.



"One of my top priorities," she says, "is improving access to food assistance for all eligible people who are not participating. We can do this through outreach work with community organizations and by simplifying application procedures. It's a travesty that 40 percent of the eligible elderly are not served.

"A second priority is improving the nutritional quality and nutrition education of all of our programs. One of the first projects I was involved with at the grassroots level was improving the school lunch program, and that's still a major concern. There is no higher priority than the health of our children.

"Third, I want to extend government's investment through new partnerships and coalitions. There are limits to what government can do, but there's no limit on the leadership government can provide to public and private sector cooperation."

In this issue of FOOD AND NUTRITION, we look at some of the creative ways people in state agencies and local communities are reaching out to help Americans of all ages—especially children and low-income adults—make more informed and more healthful food choices.

Like our last issue, which was called "Teaming Up for Nutrition Education," our goal is to highlight innovative efforts and share ideas among people working with food assistance and nutrition education throughout the country.

The activities we look at range from teaching small classes of Head Start children in New Hampshire to sending nutrition messages through statewide mailings to food stamp families in West Virginia.

While the settings and the approaches vary, the goal is the same: to bring food and nutrition to life in a way that makes sense to the intended audience.

For example, in our first article, we look at a project called PAN (Program of Assistance for Nutrition) in New York's Rockland County and see how

a very small team of nutrition educators is having a big impact.

Last year alone, these four women reached 26,000 food stamp families and other low-income people, providing individual counseling and referrals to many. Especially interesting is the way they tailor nutrition education activities and materials to the many groups they serve in this very diverse community.

In some other articles, we look at efforts to help improve the nutritional quality of meals served to children participating in the child nutrition programs administered nationally by USDA and operated by schools, child care centers, summer camps, and other sponsors under the supervision of state agencies.

We see how two states—California and Minnesota—are going the extra mile with some projects that are helping schools and child care centers translate into action the advice contained in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

The dietary guidelines, which have generated tremendous interest across the country, were developed jointly by the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services and are designed for healthy Americans over the age of 2.

Among other things, the dietary guidelines recommend: eating a variety of foods; choosing a diet that is low in fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol; eating plenty of vegetables, fruits, and grain products; and using sugars, salt, and sodium only in moderation.

In both California's SHAPE and Minnesota's LUNCHPOWER projects, nutrition education for children and parents goes hand in hand with efforts to improve meal quality. And, as we see, the learning goes both ways—many times it's the kids who become the messengers of good nutrition.

Also in the issue are two companion articles about breastfeeding promotion and education in the Mountain Plains states. The first looks at the work of an interdisciplinary task force in Colorado. The second looks at how Colorado and nearby states are encouraging and supporting breastfeeding of infants cared for at child care centers and family day homes operating USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

Signs of the growing interest in food and nutrition are everywhere. People want to know what they can do to be healthier and to give their children the best start.

And helping them get that information is a worthy goal. As nutrition volunteer Mary Zybura says in our New Hampshire story, there's a lot at stake and plenty of reason to reach out to even very young children.

"I firmly believe that children who are exposed to things at a young age benefit for years," she says of the nutrition lessons she gave to groups of Head Start children.

"...They'll end up healthier in the long run." ♦



.....To Americans Of All Ages.

Serving many diverse groups...

A Very Small Team Has A Big Impact In Rockland County

It's early Wednesday morning at the Haverstraw Soup Kitchen in Rockland County, New York, and more than 50 people have gathered here for a hot breakfast.

Preparing waffles for a crowd is no small job, but the volunteers who run this church basement operation do it cheerfully. They know these people need their help, and before leaving at 8:30 a.m. to go about their daily lives, they will also prepare lunch and dinner.

This morning Rhoda Appel and Nancy Sielecki are here; they have been since 6:30 a.m. Appel, a home economist, and Sielecki, a registered dietitian, come here often to talk about food and nutrition, distribute helpful information, and provide assistance in any way they can.

Their presence is welcome and comfortable. As they engage in easy conversation with people singly and in small groups, Appel and Sielecki strengthen the rapport they have worked hard to establish.

They repeat this scenario every day in senior centers, WIC clinics, soup kitchens, emergency shelters, Head Start centers, supermarkets, and just about any other place they can think of to get across their message about food and health.

Part of a special educational effort

Appel and Sielecki are part of Rockland County's PAN (Program of Assistance for Nutrition) Project. PAN is a comprehensive, well-planned nutrition education effort which targets the demographics of Rockland County for maximum impact.

One of its strengths is sensitivity to the ethnic beliefs and preferences of the low-income families who live there. The smallest county in New York, Rockland is also one of the most culturally diverse. About an hour's drive north of New York City, the county is home to many groups, including sizeable Haitian and Hispanic populations as well as a large Hasidic community. Hasidic Jews practice a form of orthodox Judaism and have strict dietary rules.

Concentrating on the five lowest income areas, PAN's goal is to reach all of the county's food stamp recipients and applicants with information that can help them improve their nutritional status.

Project staff work to increase their clients' understanding of the role of diet in good health, inform them of available food and nutrition programs, and help them develop useful consumer skills. Team members make special efforts to reach those food stamp recipients who are homeless, elderly, or homebound.

Thousands reached in many settings

Begun in 1986, the PAN Project was originally developed in conjunction with a nutrition education campaign initiated by the Governor's office. When the state shifted its

Rhoda Appel (below) is project coordinator for Rockland County's PAN (Program of Assistance for Nutrition) project. Other members of the project team are Harriet Lopaty, Judy Weinberger, and Nancy Sielecki.



At the Haverstraw Soup Kitchen (below), Nancy Sielecki talks with two Rockland County residents. They are among the more than 50 people who have come here this morning to eat the nourishing meals prepared and served by volunteers, one of whom is pictured at right.



focus from nutrition education to outreach in 1989, the Rockland County Department of Social Services decided to continue its nutrition education project as a local effort.

Funded by the New York State Food Stamp Program with federal matching funds from USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), PAN is the only nutrition education project of its kind in the state.

Last year alone, PAN reached as many as 26,000 food stamp families. That's an impressive number, especially considering the size of the project team. In addition to Rhoda Appel, who is project coordinator, there are two other full-time home economists—Judy Weinberger and Harriet Lopaty. Nancy Sielecki works with the project 20 hours a week.

The PAN team's many accomplishments last year included:

- providing individual nutrition and consumer counseling to 218 people on an ongoing basis;
- making appropriate referrals for more than 1,100 people who needed other kinds of help in addition to nutrition education;
- holding 35 nutrition and consumer skills workshops;
- distributing nearly 44,000 pieces of written information;
- setting up and staffing a nutrition booth at local grocery stores 1 day a week; and
- engaging in a host of other highly visible activities all designed to encourage the county's poorest residents to think in terms of good nutrition and good health.

Not as easy to measure but equally significant is the way the staff tailors activities and materials to the cultural, social, and dietary preferences of each population and to the needs of the individuals they counsel.

Networking gives project visibility

"To begin a project like this, you have to know your county very well," says Appel. "You definitely have to do a needs assessment. Beyond that, you have to develop a network with all the poverty agencies in the county. Because we are a part of the Department of Social Services, we are able to reach out to a lot of people. This is very important."

Sielecki agrees that networking is crucial. "The majority of our clients are either referrals or people we



Visiting Head Start centers, like this one, is one of the ways the PAN team reaches out to young children. Lunch at the center is being served family style, giving the youngsters an active role in making lunch a learning experience. The PAN team also reaches out to children and their parents by visiting schools, shelters, WIC clinics, and other sites.



reach out to in soup kitchens, senior centers, or any of the different places we go in the community," she says.

Networking gives the PAN staff high visibility among other poverty agencies and, more importantly, among food stamp clients. "Clients get used to seeing us everywhere and they start to trust us," says Sielecki. "When they are ready, they will ask for help."

Indeed, gaining that trust is the important first step in counseling. "When we get referrals, it's because the clients want our help," says Appel. "The caseworker or other referral source has told them, 'We have home economists who can help you with budgeting and money management, and we have a nutritionist. Do you want this help?'"

"That's when I will go into the home," says Sielecki, "and people are more receptive because they know I'm coming."

Sometimes counseling includes referrals

Home visits are a way to personalize nutrition education. Approaches vary from client to client, depending on needs and circumstances.

"If there is a clinical problem—for example, if a person is diabetic—you try to get right to solving the nutrition problem," says Sielecki. "But a lot of times, there are other problems that need to be taken care of before you can get to nutrition. So you try to help people with referrals to other places."

Harriet Lopaty recalls working with a mentally handicapped client who was convinced that every time the lights went off in her neighborhood, the power company was turning off her electricity. Once Lopaty was able to show the woman this wasn't the case, she could teach her how to budget her money.

Weinberger had a similar experience working with a family on food stamps. While her goal was to show the parents ways to improve their eating habits, she first helped them secure day care for their children. "Once housing and day care are in place," she says, "then you can teach people about eating right."

Being sensitive to cultural differences is important. With every population, PAN staffers must understand the foundation of the group's diet. "We try to show people that what they are eating is not bad but there are ways they can make it better," says Sielecki.

PAN staffers are also sensitive to shopping patterns that may be preventing families from getting the most nutritional value for their food dollars. For example, one of the challenges they have found in working with the Hispanic community is that many people rely on the bodega, a family

grocery store that is a favorite gathering place and a popular source of credit.

Problem is: at the end of the month, interest is added to the bill and the customer is even more in debt. To help, PAN staff emphasize money management as well as nutrition.

Workshops help reach many groups

In addition to visiting clients' homes and program sites, the staff also successfully reach out through workshops and video presentations.

On average, they hold about 10 workshops per month for groups as diverse as shelter residents, food

stamp and WIC participants, Head Start parents, pregnant and parenting teens, and people from mental health clinics and drug treatment and rehabilitation centers.

The nutrition educators find it helpful to key in on pre-formed groups. "We're more successful going to where the clients are, rather than setting up workshops and having them come to us," says Appel.

To be effective, the workshops must be fun. "We don't just go in there and lecture," says Sielecki. "Clients have to get involved, and the experience has to be enjoyable for them."

The workshops stress the importance of good nutrition, the benefits

"We have fun working in these different communities," says Appel. "We're always changing the program, taking suggestions from the people..."



The PAN team gets the nutrition message to thousands of people throughout the county. In a Hasidic community (below), men and women stop by a booth the team has set up outside a food co-op in their neighborhood. At a WIC clinic (right), a young mother listens attentively during a workshop.





Visits to senior centers offer opportunities to talk with elderly people individually and in groups. Here, men and women at the Nyack senior center (above) and the Martin Luther King center (right and opposite page) look over some materials Rhoda Appel and Nancy Sielecki have brought with them.



of being a smart shopper, and help available through programs like WIC, school lunch, and meal services for the elderly. As appropriate, the staff uses translators.

The workshops also include cooking demonstrations and provide information on preparing low-cost but healthy meals and using consumer strategies, like unit-pricing, when shopping to save money in the supermarket. As incentives to participate, people attending the workshops often get gift certificates donated by local restaurants and supermarkets, thanks to the persistent efforts of PAN staff.

Materials written in several languages

Relying on a well-established network and working through existing program sites, PAN staff members disseminate written materials to every section of the community they serve. Many of these materials, which the nutrition educators develop themselves, go out in a number of languages, including Spanish, Haitian, Yiddish, and, of course, English.

"We gear the materials to the group we are working with," says Sielecki, "whether they are handouts

on infant feeding for teens who have just given birth or ethnic recipes and shopping tips for Hispanic food stamp clients."

They distribute publications by mail as well as in person. "Food Flashes," for example, is a publication that is mailed bi-monthly to food stamp recipients. "Food for Thought" is a bilingual newsletter.

They also give out a directory of county nutrition programs published by Rockland County. It includes information on food cupboards, meal centers serving elderly people, and

information on food stamps, WIC, and school lunch and school breakfast programs.

In a special effort that usually takes place every May, the team visits communities with a "classroom on wheels" known as the PAN VAN.

"We go to the various poverty pockets in the county and set up tables with materials, displays, food, and recipes," explains Appel. The recipes include ones PAN staff have developed for specific cultural groups.

The PAN VAN provides opportunities for audiovisual presentations as well as one-on-one education. "It's a big deal in the communities," says Appel, "and the people look forward to it."

"We also try to link it with other activities. For example, last year local agencies were giving out commodity foods on the same day we were in one community. It worked out very well because we were able to hand out materials and talk about how we could help."

Sielecki (left) and Appel (center) say goodbye to a woman at the Nyack center. Before heading home, they'll also be visiting a nearby elementary school.

And they do even more

The PAN staff is always striving for new ways to reach people. For example, to help those who have difficulty shopping for themselves, they started PAN PALS. PAN PALS are volunteers who shop for and deliver groceries to elderly and homebound food stamp recipients.

In another special activity, the nutrition educators set up booths at selected Grand Union grocery stores, where they provide nutrition information as well as shopping tips. During the last week of each month, the PAN project coordinator and the Rockland county nutritionist spend one morning at each of the Grand Union Chain stores in Rockland County.

According to a New York State annual report, this activity has been well received by supermarket shoppers. A high percentage of shoppers return to the booth each month to ask questions and get nutrition information.

Appel and her team never tire of answering questions. Nor do they run out of ideas or energy.

"We have fun working in these different communities," says Appel. "We never have the same thing happening 2 days in a row. So, when you

ask us what we do, we say: 'We'll do anything that works.' We're always changing the program, taking suggestions from the people we are working for."

The people they are working for—families from many different backgrounds, elderly men and women, and children—mean a lot to the PAN team.

"When I go home at the end of the day, I feel I've done something worthwhile," says Appel.

"The same for me," says Sielecki. "I really enjoy the work. It adds a certain balance to my life."

And what does the team's work add to their clients' lives? A chance to get more nutrition for their food dollars as they buy and prepare their old—and new—favorite foods. ♦

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*article and photos
by Cynthia Tackett*



West Virginia Agencies Team Up To Reach Families

Looking for creative ways to get nutrition information to parents of at-risk children, the West Virginia Department of Education last year joined forces with the state's Department of Health and Human Resources. The combined effort resulted in some appealing strategies.

One of those strategies was the "Ted-E-Gram"—a colorful 3-by-6-inch card which featured a cartoon teddy bear character, Theodore E. Bear ("but most folks call me Ted"). On one side was a nutrition message from "Ted"; on the flip side, some easy-to-use, good-tasting, and nutritionally sound recipes.

A fast, easy way to communicate

Like its namesake, the telegram, the Ted-E-Gram proved to be a fast, easy way to communicate—in this case with the 115,000 people in the state who receive food stamps and/or AFDC (Aid to Families With Dependent Children).

According to Harriet Deel, director of child nutrition programs for West Virginia's Department of Education, the idea for Ted-E-Grams grew out of a brainstorming session in 1991 that focused on how to reach low-income families who normally would not attend local workshops on nutrition or otherwise have access to nutrition information.

"Reaching families (of children in school) is a real challenge," Deel says. "When workshops are scheduled, many of the same people attend every time. Other families who would normally not be attracted to

the workshops are left without any nutrition education for themselves and their children."

Helping children by helping parents

As Deel and other interagency task force members point out, there are important reasons to not let these families slip through the cracks.

For one thing, the incidence of diet-related diseases such as obesity, hypertension, heart disease, and some forms of cancer is high in the state. It's important for people to understand that what they eat may help prevent or lessen the impact of many health problems.

In addition, families are the first and most important influence on children's early eating habits, and informed parents stand a better chance of influencing their children in positive ways.

Crucial in the outreach effort, says Mary Kay Harrison, who works with Deel as the assistant director of nutrition education and training for child nutrition programs, was finding the right vehicle for nutrition information.

They knew from experience that whatever was designed had to be easy to read and understand, eye-catching, and present useful information.

Group of educators was asked to help

To assist with the design effort, the interagency council called together a group of educators from throughout the state for a 3-day session to work on a format.

The Ted-E-Gram was the result.

As Harrison explains, it fit all their specifications. It was well written and graphically pleasing. The same size as recipe note cards, it would also be convenient for recipients to store and reuse.

In addition, it could be easily duplicated at the State Department of Education's printing office, so production costs would be low, and it could fit into the envelopes with food stamp coupons and be easily mailed.

While the design process went smoothly for the most part, there were some wrinkles along the way. For example, when the prototype for the Ted-E-Gram bear was sent out for comment, a number of people complained that the bear had no clothes and that he needed to be suitably dressed. So, a second bear was designed, this one sporting attire appropriate to the seasons of the year.

There were also a few extra steps, like contacting Nabisco, the company which makes a cookie product called Teddy Grahams, to be sure that it had no problems with the state's using the similar Ted-E-Gram.

Messages carefully chosen and presented

Throughout the design and production process, the state planners kept the target audience in mind. They carefully selected each lesson, often choosing topics to correspond with seasonal activities or specially designated months.

For example, with spring in full bloom and summer around the corner, the May Ted-E-Gram stressed eating on-the-go, with the emphasis on nutritious foods that can be bagged and carried.

For back to school, September's Ted-E-Gram focused on nutrition and learning and included a recipe for various sandwich makings.

For June, National Dairy Month, Ted Bear encouraged everyone to drink milk, especially low-fat milk. He also pointed out other popular and nutritious dairy products—such as cheese, ice cream, cottage cheese, and yogurt.

People who don't like milk, he advised, should be especially careful

to include other dairy products like these in their diets. The recipe on the June Ted-E-Gram was a Yogurt Yummie. August's Ted-E-Gram recognized National Grazing Month with nutrition information on snacking and a recipe for a salad combining fruits and vegetables.

Other activities reinforced lessons

Knowing that many food stamp families have children who eat school lunches, state staff planned some additional activities that complemented the special mailings.

For example, Nutrition Education and Training Program directors designed messages for the reverse side of school lunch menus. The messages reinforced the nutrition Ted-E-Gram lesson of the month.

Another facet of the collaborative effort involved placing nutrition education materials geared to parents in local offices operating WIC (USDA's Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children) and other Division of Health and Human Services programs.

Some of the materials had been developed by and obtained from the federal government; others were commercially prepared. They includ-

ed nutrition-related videotapes targeted to young children and parents, coloring books, and brochures explaining the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

The two state agencies worked together on practical arrangements as well as planning. As Harrison explains, the Department of Education was responsible for purchasing appropriate videotapes, brochures, coloring books, and crayons, while the Department of Health and Human Resources furnished videotape players and monitors.

Two pilot sites were chosen to kick off the project, a site in Clay County and another in Braxton County, both areas with high concentrations of low-income families.

The intent, says Harrison, was to monitor the use and popularity of the materials with clients to determine which ones were worth using at other sites throughout the state.

Effort helpful in many ways

There were a number of lessons learned from the interagency effort. For one thing, it showed that teamwork pays off: the successful design of the Ted-E-Gram is a case in point. Another lesson was that enthusiasm

is an important ingredient in any nutrition education activity.

Harrison says she noticed early on at the project sites that the success of the nutrition education materials rested in large part with the local office staff.

Bottom line: if local staff took an interest in and promoted their use, the nutrition education materials were more likely to serve their purpose—to inform and motivate people to think more about what they eat and what they're teaching their children.

Theodore E. Bear would have lots to say about that! ♦

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article by Pam Ward

Sporting exercise gear in this Ted-E-Gram from February, Heart Month, Ted Bear talks about avoiding high-fat snacks. On the back, a recipe for low-fat French Toast.

TED-E-GRAM

American kids watch TV an average of 25 hours a week. That's about the same amount of time as they spend in school.

So what's wrong with too much TV? For kids and adults:

- The more we watch, the less we exercise.
- The more we watch, the more we snack.

And those snacks are often high calorie - low nutrient foods.

So, be good to yourself and your family. Turn off the tube. Turn on to fitness.

... and a diet low in fat and cholesterol lessen healthy recipe.



Mix egg whites, skim milk, vanilla and cinnamon and beat lightly. Heat griddle or fry pan until hot and then add oil. Dip bread into the egg mixture and then fry until golden brown, turning once. Serve immediately. Serves 2.

P.S. Watch the added butter.

Pilot test expanded statewide...

Lunchpower Means Healthier Meals For Minnesota Kids

The American "power lunch" may be big in the business world, but for Minnesota schoolchildren LUNCHPOWER is becoming the way to "do" lunch.

LUNCHPOWER is the name of a Minnesota project that's designed to help schools serve lunches that are lower in fat and sodium.

What gives LUNCHPOWER its punch is a set of carefully developed recipes that modifies the way schools prepare children's favorites and goes on from there.

"LUNCHPOWER starts with menu items students know and like, such as pizza, hot dogs, and Italian dunkers (bread dipped in meat sauce)," says Susan Rudberg, nutritionist for the Minnesota Department of Education, which administers the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) in the state.

Originally pilot-tested in four school districts and now being expanded to NSLP schools statewide, the project is also aimed at helping children become accustomed to making healthy food choices.

Helping children by helping schools

Concern about children's health was what inspired Minnesota health professionals, nutritionists, and education officials to begin working together 5 years ago on the project that evolved into LUNCHPOWER.

"We know that eating habits developed during childhood can influence lifetime practices," says Patricia Snyder of the University of Minnesota School of Public Health. "And studies show that dietary patterns affect the

development of cardiovascular and other major chronic diseases. Dietary modification can reduce such risks."

With more than 460,000 school lunch customers daily in Minnesota, Snyder says it was clear that modifying school meals would be an excellent way to reach large numbers of children and have a long-term impact on their health.

Worked together to set goals

Representatives from the University of Minnesota School of Public Health, the Minnesota Department of Education, the American Heart Association Minnesota Affiliate, and the Minnesota Beef Council and other industry groups worked together on the project.

Their goal was to come up with a monthly school lunch menu that would average no more than 30 percent of calories from fat. They began by establishing criteria for maximum levels of fat and sodium. And, to make sure meals would provide adequate amounts of energy, they also established calorie requirements.

For the pilot test, they set a goal of having lunches average—over a 1-month period—no more than 22 grams of fat and 1,000 milligrams of sodium per day. The calorie goal was 550-800 calories per lunch.

The group's decision to focus on reducing fat and sodium is consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans—developed jointly by the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services—and with the improvements in nutritional quality USDA is encouraging NSLP schools to make nationwide.

Recipes collected, modified, and tested

Translating LUNCHPOWER goals into action involved several steps, including:

- modifying school lunch recipes and testing them with students;
- identifying low-fat, low-sodium food products, including products schools purchase from vendors as well as those schools receive free through USDA's commodity distribution program;
- and devising a plan to integrate these recipes and products into school lunch programs.

Working together to do this were staff from the Minnesota Department of Education's child nutrition section; food and nutrition specialists from the University of Minnesota School of Public Health; and food service directors of four diverse school districts—one rural, one small city, and two suburban.

"The food service directors worked with their cook managers to collect recipes currently being used in the



MINNESOTA LUNCHPOWER catches kids' attention with lively graphics and slogans as well as good-tasting, nourishing food. There's even a mascot, pictured here visiting a school. (Photo courtesy of the Beef Council.)

lunch program," says Snyder. "Then, using the microcomputer-based Minnesota Nutrient Data System, the Nutrition Coordinating Center of the University of Minnesota did a computer analysis of 153 school lunch recipes for fat, sodium, and calories."

In each school district, food service directors identified recipes that exceeded the nutrient criteria for fat and sodium, and worked with dietitians and cook managers to analyze and modify them.

"We tapped everyone's expertise to get ideas for modifications," says Snyder. "That's what made it successful. Health professionals looked at one aspect, cook managers knew how changes would affect preparation, and food service directors looked at costs."

The modified school lunch recipes were taste-tested by groups of students, food service staff, and teachers, and 75 were adopted for use in LUNCHPOWER menus.

Team looked at food products

An important part of the evaluation group's work was looking at food products. Project coordinators asked manufacturers to provide nutrient information on the amount of fat, sodium, and calories for approximately 200 school food products.

Although they also asked for specifics on the amount of saturated fat and cholesterol, this information was often not available.

"We believe as more and more schools request nutrient information, vendors will make it available," says Rudberg. "In fact," she adds, "we had some vendors whose products we did not list call and voluntarily give nutrient data."

If products were too high in fat or sodium to be included in LUNCHPOWER menus, team members worked with the manufacturer to identify other alternatives. "We looked for lower-in-fat chicken patties and we found them as well as lower-in-fat cheese-and-sausage pizza, chicken nuggets, and potato products," says Rudberg.

Pilot testing was successful

LUNCHPOWER was tested in 34 elementary schools in the 4 participating districts during 5 months in 1991—with good results.

"The kids didn't see a big difference and participation stayed about the same," says Mounds View School food service director Mary Anderson.

"But parents raved when they saw the menus and read about our program to improve nutrition. We proved it's possible to have a tasty lower-in-fat and lower-in-sodium school lunch."

Pilot schools did not report a significant increase in the cost of food or production. But a few parents said

they wouldn't mind paying more for the healthier meals. "I don't care how much you raise prices," said one. "I like the menus."

After the pilot testing, the project team assembled a manual that outlined how any school could adapt LUNCHPOWER to its own situation. The Beef Industry Council printed 10,000 copies of the manual and is distributing it, free of charge, to schools and other organizations interested in improving meals served to children.

How do kids like MINNESOTA LUNCHPOWER meals? Just fine, say these students at Mounds View Elementary and Chippewa Middle School.



Education agency enhances project

"The pilot LUNCHPOWER project was so successful," says Margaret Drey, director for the Minnesota Department of Education's child nutrition section, "we decided to enhance it and encourage all National School Lunch Program schools in the state to adopt it." They named the effort MINNESOTA LUNCHPOWER, or MLP for short.

In enhancing LUNCHPOWER, the state staff included a number of recommendations to help schools achieve the goal of having no more than 30 percent of calories from fat.

For example, one recommendation was to serve more fruits and vegetables and more whole grains. "We specified two to three sources of fruits and vegetables and two to three sources of whole grains," says Drey.

They also adjusted the calorie requirements from 550-800 calories—used in the pilot test—to 600-750 calories and recommended that approximately 55 percent of these calories should come from carbohydrates.

In addition, they changed the maximum daily average for fat to 20-25 grams per lunch (it had been 22 grams in the pilot test). And they advised schools to pay attention not only to the amount of fat, but also the sources of fat, avoiding saturated fat as much as possible.

"Our original goal was to set a limit of no more than 10 percent of total calories from saturated fat," says Rudberg. "However, we had to hold off on this when it became evident that not enough nutrient analysis data was available from vendors."

Helping schools make the switch

In working with schools, project coordinators explain that MINNESOTA LUNCHPOWER takes the "good food, bad food" idea out of menu planning.

"The nutritional quality of the MLP diet is not defined by any single food or meal, but by what is eaten over time," says Rudberg.

"Using this averaging, all foods,

including some student favorites which may be higher in fat or sodium, can be included in the total nutritious menu planned around the Dietary Guidelines.

"The key is to remember that over a 1-month period, school lunches should average no more than 20-25 grams of fat per day, no more than 1,000 milligrams of sodium per day, and contain between 600-750 calories per day."

To make it easier for schools, department of education staff have compiled a manual which guides food service workers step by step in adopting the MLP project for their lunch programs.

In addition, although the project can be put into place without a computer, the department's technical staff have also customized a Hopkins Technology software package, called "Sante," for easy use.

The software provides a cycle of MLP menus and also can analyze

recipes and menus. It holds a database of the nutrient values of foods, including USDA commodities and food products schools commonly purchase from Minnesota vendors. (The department of education will be providing annual updates of the nutrient analysis of USDA-donated and vendor-supplied products.)

To familiarize schools with the project, state staff have held a series of workshops. The workshops include step-by-step demonstrations of how to modify recipes and add them to the database. More than 60 percent of Minnesota school districts have participated in the classes and received the free training manual and software package.

"LUNCHPOWER hasn't affected the way kids accept the foods," says Mary Hunn, child nutrition specialist for the Minnesota Department of Education, pictured here leading a workshop for school staff. This young lunch customer (right) seems to agree.



Part of effort is winning support

The training is designed to win support for MLP goals as well as teach people how to carry them out. "It's very important to win support of parents, students, school administrators, teachers, and the community," says Drey.

"We give teachers a brightly colored MINNESOTA LUNCHPOWER factsheet to be sent home with students, reproduced in school newsletters and local newspapers, or distributed wherever the message could win support."

One part of the MLP manual gives suggestions for working cooperatively with administrative and teaching staff. Drey feels that educating students, staff, and parents is critical to implementing the Dietary Guidelines and essential to changing children's knowledge, attitudes, and behavior.

"Eating right is a nutrition lesson in itself," she says, but it's helpful to reinforce that lesson with interesting and lively nutrition education activities.

"Nutrition education lends itself to a multi-disciplinary approach," she says. "Science, math, health, basic writing, physical education, home economics, and other subjects can be used to teach children about food and nutrition."

To help schools, state staff have developed and are distributing a number of educational materials.

The materials include seven large colorful posters illustrating MINNESOTA LUNCHPOWER goals as well as two guides for use with children in grades K-5 and 6-12. Each guide contains fun activities to increase children's nutrition awareness. Every NSLP school in the state will get the posters and the guides.

May be a model for other states

MINNESOTA LUNCHPOWER is gaining popularity and winning accolades. "It's excellent," says Theresa Bowman, director of child nutrition

programs for the Food and Nutrition Service's Midwest region. "As adapted for the National School Lunch Program in Minnesota, MINNESOTA LUNCHPOWER can be a model for other Midwest states and for the nation.

"We are pleased that Minnesota has taken the initiative to get an early start on helping schools follow the Dietary Guidelines." ♦

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article and photos
by Mary Jane Getlinger

LUNCHPOWER! RAPS

*I'm L.P. LunchPower! I'm here to say,
You'll get great foods on your school lunch tray.
Yes, healthy foods low in salt and fat,
Give you LunchPower! - you can't beat that.*

*I'm L.P. LunchPower! Here is my song,
Your lunch had healthy foods all along.
Fresh fruit is what I'm talkin' about,
And veggies, too - make me jump and shout!*

*I'm L.P. LunchPower! I'm telling you,
Your lunch has foods so tasty and new.
New kinds of foods you'll love to try,
That give you LunchPower! my oh my!*

*I'm L.P. LunchPower! Here is my line,
If you've got LunchPower! you'll feel fine.
Eat healthy foods, help your body grow,
And you'll have energy to go, go, go!*

*I'm L.P. LunchPower! I'm here to say,
You'll get great foods on your school lunch tray.
Healthy foods that taste so fine.
Take a plate and get in line.*

*I'm L.P. LunchPower! - here's what I say,
School lunches are great in June and May.
Then summer is here so don't forget,
Low-fat foods are your best bet!*

*I'm L.P. LunchPower! - hear me shout,
Summer is coming, school's almost out!
When it's warm and sunny I like to eat,
Ripe peaches and plums so juicy and sweet.*

*I'm L.P. LunchPower! - here is my tune,
It's springtime now, summer's coming soon.
That's when I swim in the swimming pool,
And drink cold fruit juice to keep my cool.*

*I'm L.P. LunchPower! - shake my hand!
My low-fat lunches are really grand.
Now don't forget in mid-July,
About those low-fat lunches you used to buy.*

Kids are getting the message...

California Children Get An Early Start Being "Health Smart"

It's 11:30 a.m., and six little pairs of hands are washed and ready for lunch at Kids Kingdom Day Care in El Cerrito, California. Today's menu includes mini-pizzas on whole-wheat English muffins with tomato sauce and parmesan and jack cheeses; lightly steamed carrots with mild seasonings; fresh tangerines; and milk.

And almost every healthy bite will quickly disappear.

These 3- and 4-year-olds are already building the foundation for a lifetime of healthy eating, thanks to getting the right start through a California project called SHAPE. They're also becoming little messengers of good nutrition who learn from each other at mealtime and sometimes bring home suggestions for mom and dad as well.

Through SHAPE (Shaping Health as Partners in Education) and its Southern California counterpart SPIN (School Partners in Nutrition), California is exploring ways to help children be healthier through dietary changes and nutrition education.

Part of the state's "Healthy Kids, Healthy California" initiative, SHAPE is funded and coordinated by the California Department of Education. USDA helps support SHAPE through the Nutrition Education and Training Program (NET), which provides federal grants to states for nutrition education for children, parents, teachers, and food service operators.

Serving healthy meals kids like

SHAPE has several goals. An important one is to examine ways child nutrition program sponsors—

such as schools, child care and Head Start centers, and family day care homes like Kids Kingdom—can serve more healthful meals that children will enjoy.

Through regional networks, the schools and child development agencies participating in SHAPE are test-





ing ways to plan and prepare meals and snacks that more closely reflect the Dietary Guidelines for Americans jointly developed by the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services.

Participating school districts and child development agencies are making changes like serving more fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as more legumes (dry beans and peas) and whole grains. They're also reducing the amount of fat and sodium in meals and snacks.

Another goal of SHAPE is to look at the impact of these changes. One consideration will be how well the children adjust to them. For example, do the children like the way food tastes when it is prepared in new ways? And, how difficult or easy is it for them to eat more or larger servings of certain foods?

Nutritional value is another consideration. Project consultants are working with the state and with local food service staff and child care sponsors to analyze the nutrient content of meals served at participating sites. Using computer analysis, they are looking at how well meals and snacks provide the nutrients children need for development and good health.

This information will be helpful to federal, state, and local program managers interested in assessing the feasibility of using nutrient standards (instead of the traditional USDA meal patterns) as a basis for planning and serving meals to children participating in the child nutrition programs. (For more background on USDA meal patterns, see sidebar on page 19.)

USDA, the California Department of Education, and the local agencies participating in the project are collaborating in this effort.

USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) authorized a waiver from the standard child nutrition meal patterns to allow schools and child care

agencies participating in SHAPE to explore practical methods of incorporating the Dietary Guidelines into child nutrition program meals.

Changes carefully planned and made

In planning meals and snacks, SHAPE participants follow what's called the California Daily Food Guide (CDFG). Developed by three state agencies working together (the California departments of health services, education, and aging), the guide contains specific dietary recommendations, including guidance on healthful meals and snacks for children.

Like the federal Dietary Guidelines, CDFG emphasizes balance, variety, and moderation. Reflecting California's rich diversity of cultures and food preferences, it allows for flexibility in planning nourishing, wholesome meals and snacks.

Using the guide, schools and child development agencies taking part in SHAPE are making specific changes in three key areas. They are:

- increasing the number of servings of foods high in complex carbohydrates — fruits, vegetables, grains, and legumes;
- choosing low-fat and lean choices of protein foods, especially animal foods, such as meat and dairy products;
- controlling the amount of fats, sugars, and high-calorie foods and beverages of low nutritional value.

Teaching children to choose well

Another goal of SHAPE is to help children get an early start in learning to make healthful food choices.

"We really want to get good food habits started early," says Paula James, nutrition program manager for the Contra Costa Child Care Council, which sponsors the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) for 600 family day care homes in this northern California county, near San Francisco.

For the past 2 years, four of the family day care providers who participate in CACFP under the council's sponsorship have been adjusting

It's snack time at Kids Kingdom Day Care in El Cerrito, California, and the children are hungry after playing outside. Kids Kingdom is one of four family day care homes participating in SHAPE under the supervision of the Contra Costa Child Care Council.

their menus through SHAPE under the supervision of the organization's nutritionists.

"SHAPE in the family day care setting is about helping both providers and the children they care for make better (food) choices," says James.

Susie Fox, director of Kids Kingdom Day Care, is one of the four Contra Costa family day care home providers participating in SHAPE. She's been operating CACFP under the council's supervision for more than 3 years and serves breakfast, lunch, and morning and afternoon snacks to the six children in her care. The children range in age from 10 months to 5 years.

Project makes a difference

For Fox, SHAPE means paying a little extra attention to her menus. Participating in the project, she says, has made a difference in the way she plans, shops for, and prepares meals.

"I'm more aware of what vitamins and minerals foods have and how much fiber," she says. She also thinks more about how to prepare the foods she serves—for example, what kind of oil she will use and ways to cook with less fat, such as steaming vegetables instead of cooking them in oil.

SHAPE guidelines recommend providers increase servings of breads, bread alternates and legumes, and use whole grains and fresh fruit and vegetables as much as possible.

For example, the traditional CACFP meal pattern for breakfast calls for 1/2 cup of milk, 1/4 cup of vegetable and/or fruit, 1/2 slice of bread or 1/4 cup of bread alternate.

SHAPE guidelines, as they're currently written, call for 1/2 slice of bread and 1/4 cup bread alternate, or the equivalent to 1/2 slice of bread and 1/4 cup of bread alternate combined.

While this might not sound like a big change, over several days, it can be significant in what a young child eats. Project coordinators say

SHAPE guidelines may be modified as the project develops, but they are a valuable starting point for testing ways to make improvements.

In another variation from the traditional USDA meal patterns, child care providers have more flexibility in serving what's called the "meat/meat alternate component." Under SHAPE this may be spread out between breakfast, lunch, and snacks. With the traditional meal pattern for preschool-age children, the emphasis for that component is placed on lunch.

In addition, they recommend limiting use of processed foods, especially items high in fat and sodium, such as certain coldcuts and hot dogs.

Creative menu planning helpful

As James explains, some of the changes are easier for children to adjust to than others. And children's reactions vary.

"For example," she says, "it can be difficult to get the children to actually eat all the breads and bread alternates we're offering. Some kids eat more of them, some don't, but the important thing is that they're offered." Creative menu planning, she adds, is the key to getting kids to eat more of what is offered.

Providers need to look at the meal planning process from a new perspective, James says. "They may need to offer non-traditional combinations of foods to include enough



Susie Fox, director of Kids Kingdom (above), says participating in SHAPE has made a difference in the way she thinks about and prepares meals. Fox serves breakfast, lunch, and morning and afternoon snacks to six children ranging in age from 10 months to 5 years.



servings of grain products and other items, and they may need to offer a variety of these to appeal to different tastes. What works well one day for some kids may not work well for others."

To help providers, James and her staff and others involved with SHAPE are developing recipes based on items that kids will eat. They also encourage providers to try new items several times to give the kids time to get used to them.

"I try something new at least once a week," says Fox. "Sometimes the kids like it, and sometimes they don't, but they're really very willing to try."

"We're having this because it's healthy..."

The children learn from each other at mealtime and sometimes surprise their parents by asking them to serve new items they've tried at day care.



Planning meals for children...

To allow schools and child care agencies participating in SHAPE more flexibility in meal planning, USDA's Food and Nutrition Service authorized a waiver from the standard meal patterns used in the child nutrition programs. For a better understanding of how SHAPE differs from this traditional approach, here's some background on the standard meal patterns:

USDA's largest child nutrition programs include the National School Lunch, School Breakfast, and Child and Adult Care Food Programs. Because these are national programs that affect millions of the nation's children, USDA sets high standards to make sure they provide children with balanced meals.

USDA achieves this standard by requiring that child nutrition program sponsors follow specific meal patterns, which are designed to ensure that children receive the right types of food in the appropriate amounts.

The meal patterns stress serving a variety of foods to reach nutrient goals. They are designed to provide, over a period of time, approximately one-third of students' Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDAs) for key nutrients.

For example, schools participating in the National School Lunch Program must offer each student five items: a specific amount of meat or meat alternate; two or more servings of vegetables or fruits: whole-grain or enriched bread or bread alternate; and fluid milk as a beverage.

There are five USDA school lunch meal patterns. They include

two for preschool, one for kindergarten through grade 3, one for grades 4 through 12, and one for grades 7 through 12. If schools do not adjust portion sizes, they follow the Group IV pattern, which is the one for grades 4 through 12. Many schools follow this pattern.

In the Group IV pattern for lunches, the meat or meat alternate might include one of the following: 2 ounces of lean meat, poultry, fish, or cheese; one large egg; 1/2 cup of cooked dry beans or peas; 4 tablespoons of nut/seed butter, such as peanut butter or almond butter; or 1 ounce of nuts or seeds, which can be combined with another meat alternate to make up a 2-ounce requirement.

The Group IV pattern also requires two or more servings of vegetables or fruits (the equivalent of 3/4 cup), eight servings a week of whole-grain or enriched bread or bread alternate, and 1/2 pint of fluid milk.

Schools and child care providers participating in SHAPE continue to use the appropriate meal patterns as a starting point for planning and serving meals that meet USDA nutrition standards.

However, using the California Daily Food Guide, they are making specific modifications that test ways to bring meals more closely in line with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

For example, they are serving more fresh fruits and vegetables, and more legumes (dry beans and peas) and whole grains. They are working to reduce the amount of fat and sodium through creative menu planning and changes in food preparation techniques.

And, says Fox, they seem to be getting the message that the food they're eating is healthy. "They say things like, 'I know we're having this for snack today because it's healthy,' so you know it's getting into their minds while it's getting into their bodies."

Parents tell her that kids ask for fruit for snacks and seem to accept good nutrition messages at home more willingly as well.

James says this shows the council and providers are accomplishing several goals under SHAPE, including involving parents and the community as well as teaching children.

But, she says, not all parents have enough information on good eating habits and nutrition, and sometimes ask providers to feed their kids in ways that contradict the goals of SHAPE.

"We tell the providers to explain to parents that 'the nutritionist says to do it such and such a way.' It removes some of the pressure from the provider, and hopefully parents will listen to the 'authority'."

To help, the Contra Costa Child Care Council provides handouts to CACFP providers to pass along to parents. It also puts out a monthly newsletter that goes to all 600 of its family day care home providers, including the four participating in SHAPE.

Called "Nutrition Edition," the newsletter is packed with information on nutrition and food preparation, as well as recipes and activities providers and parents can do with young children. SHAPE participants and other CACFP providers alike say the newsletter keeps them focused on the food program and has great

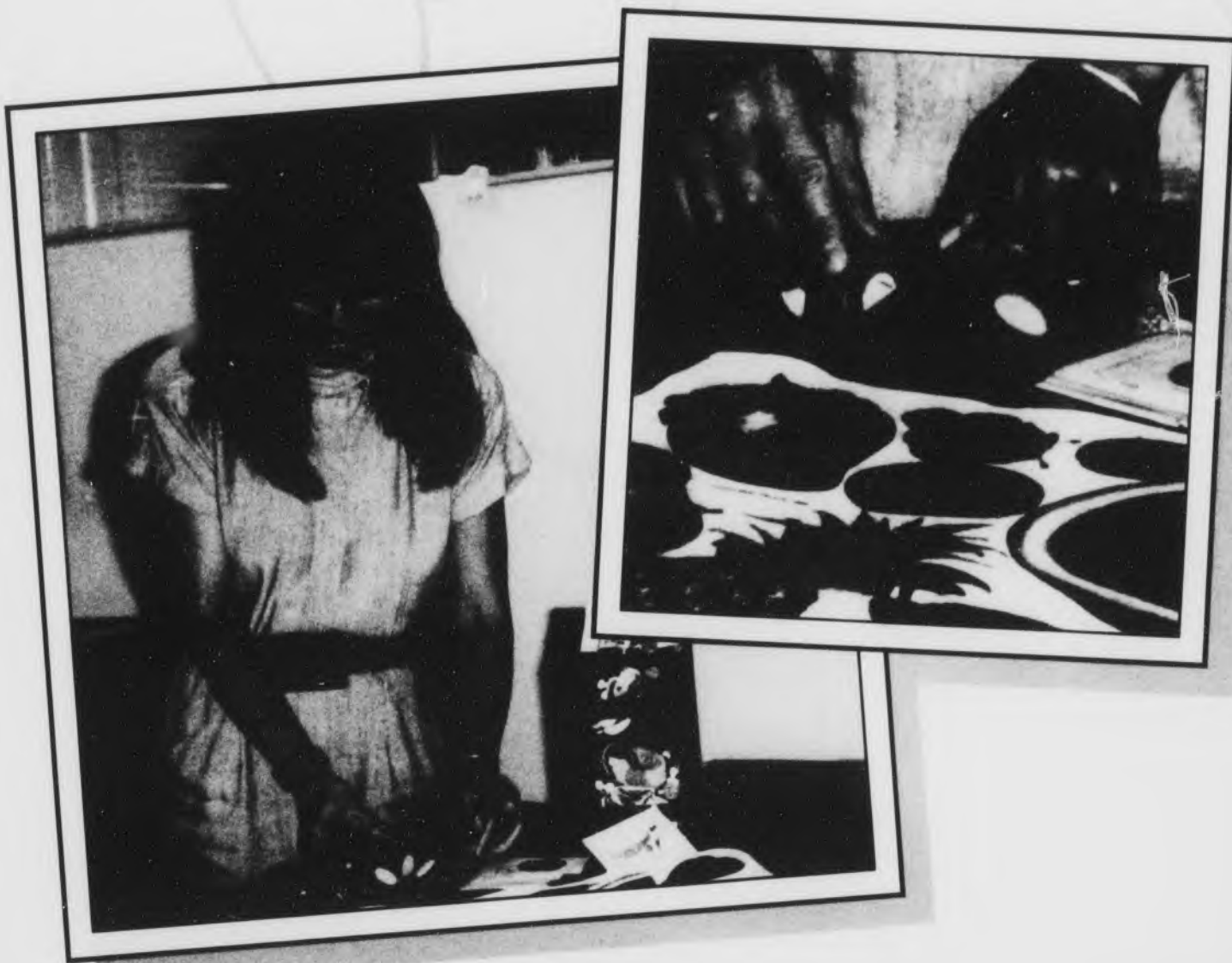
ideas they can incorporate into their activities.

"I love the recipes," says Fox. "I use them, and pass them along to the parents and to friends. Even my husband loves to read the newsletter."

Minimal impact on food costs

How have the changes affected food costs? As James explains, although the quantity of some components has been increased, those components are generally lower-cost items, like bread and vegetables, so the overall impact is probably mini-

Nutritionist Janet Jue (below) worked closely with Susie Fox and other family day care providers as they learned to follow SHAPE guidelines. Here, she puts together a nutrition lesson for children with colorful wooden blocks shaped like fruits and vegetables.



mal. Some providers take advantage of warehouse-type supermarkets to increase their purchasing power.

The California Department of Education and some SHAPE participants are looking at ways to increase the availability of items that are consistent with the Dietary Guidelines and California Daily Food Guide. This includes working with processors to develop healthier food items for child nutrition program markets and getting better product information.

James says she would also like to work with area retailers and wholesalers to convince them that local child care providers could be a market for more whole-grain, low-fat, and low-sugar items. Her goal, like state efforts, is to help increase availability and hold down costs.

James says she feels the project, which is nearing completion, has been a success. The providers have

been able to make most of the menu adjustments while maintaining adequate or better levels of key nutrients, such as iron and calcium, and keeping percentages of fats and cholesterol at or near target levels.

And the children are catching on. "Hopefully, by making healthy food choices available early," says James, "the children will be used to eating according to the California Daily Food Guide and won't think twice about eating the healthy food they get at the school cafeteria." ♦

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*article and photos
by Dee Amaden*



Colorado Helps Babies By Helping Mothers Breastfeed

When it comes to encouraging new mothers to breastfeed—and to continue breastfeeding until their babies are at least 6 months old—Colorado has reason to brag.

The state is a leader in promoting and supporting breastfeeding as the healthiest choice for babies, and the state's breastfeeding rates—both of mothers initiating breastfeeding at birth and continuing for several months—are among the highest in the country.

It's no accident. The state has developed a number of successful breastfeeding promotion and education activities, many of them sparked by the work of an active interdisciplinary task force.

Brings together many groups

One of the reasons for the group's success is its diversity. Task force members include:

- state and local health department staff, including those who operate USDA's Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children, commonly known as WIC, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP);
- doctors, nurses, and representatives from hospitals and health maintenance organizations;
- lactation consultants and representatives from groups like La Leche League and Nursing Mothers Counsel, Inc. (a telephone support group for breastfeeding women).

Also on the task force are people who bring other helpful perspectives and skills—a day care provider, a journalist, and an attorney.

Representatives from the medical community come from a variety of specialties. Among the doctors, for example, are pediatricians and family practice physicians as well as an obstetrician. In addition to obstetrical nurses, there are local public health nurses who deal with prenatal and well-child clinics. There is also a hospital dietitian.

A number of these people are involved in education as well as delivery of health services and are, therefore, in a good position to help shape young professionals' attitudes and knowledge. Two of the task force pediatricians, in fact, have already added a breastfeeding component to the curriculum for pediatric residents at the University of Colorado's medical center.

The task force is co-chaired by Patricia Daniluk, chief WIC nutritionist for the state department of health, and Cathy McCool, the department's breastfeeding project manager. Vee Ann Miller of the Food and Nutrition Service's Mountain Plains staff is FNS' liaison to the task force.

Identifying barriers an important step

One of the task force's goals is to draw upon many community resources in reaching out to and teaching women. Often working in smaller subgroups, members address a variety of issues ranging from hospital practices and policy development,

to using the media, providing training, and dealing with employers.

As Daniluk points out, even though Colorado is a national leader in breastfeeding promotion, the group has much work to do.

While the state enjoys a high overall rate of breastfeeding initiation—72.6 percent of new mothers were breastfeeding when their babies were born in 1991, compared to the national rate of 53.4 percent—that rate is lower among low-income groups, including WIC participants, teenage mothers, and minority women.

"In addition," says Daniluk, "it's a big problem keeping women from 'dropping out' before they reach their personal breastfeeding goals."

Although Colorado's 6-month duration rate (of mothers still breastfeeding after 6 months) was 31.1 percent in 1991, compared to the national rate of 18.2 percent, it is still far from the goal of 50 percent.

There are many reasons for this.

As hospital stays become shorter, there is less time for women to learn to breastfeed. Without postpartum support, many give up at the first sign of problems. Short maternity leaves from work (often less than 3 months) and the complicated logistics of work and day care may also make it difficult for mothers to continue nursing.

In addition, mothers may not have more than one affordable day care alternative available to them, and that one provider may not be supportive of breastfeeding. If the mother has a non-office job, lunch and rest breaks may be short and a private area for pumping milk may not be available. Even in an office setting, making these arrangements may not be easy.

Group looks for creative solutions

The Colorado task force is exploring these barriers as well as ways to encourage women who have not yet made up their minds to breastfeed.

According to task force members, some possible incentives for mothers might include sliding-scale fees for trained lactation consultants, Medicaid reimbursement for lactation counseling, and availability of pumps

for women with a short-term need who cannot afford to purchase them.

Another task force concern is making sure there are enough trained lactation consultants available to help mothers who choose to breastfeed.

Local health agencies are in a special position to reach low-income women through the WIC program. In fact, encouraging participating mothers to breastfeed is one of the WIC program's national goals. To enable local WIC staff to help mothers breastfeed successfully, the Colorado Department of Health is encouraging special training in this area.

As a result, even though money isn't available to hire additional lactation specialists, state managers say, at least a basic capability will exist as WIC staff increase the amount of breastfeeding support they provide to participants.

To help in this effort, Cathy McCool and Colorado WIC breastfeeding promotion coordinator Sarah Scully worked together on developing a WIC breastfeeding handbook for clinic staff.

The handbook includes material adapted from a Tennessee WIC manual. It details ways to provide support to prenatal as well as postnatal clients, and offers suggestions for first and second visits.

Approaches are tailored for women who know in advance they will breastfeed, those who know they won't, and those who are undecided prior to delivery. The manual is a handy resource and tool.

Colorado also uses the best materials it can "borrow" from other states. The "Best Start" materials originally developed in the Food and Nutrition Service's Southeast region are a prime example.

This series of 10 pamphlets addresses such areas of concern to new mothers as handling embarrassment and gaining dad's cooperation. Posters supplement the brochures, and continuously repeating videotapes reinforce the message in some WIC clinic waiting rooms. A motivational tape produced by the Texas WIC program is also often used.



Many interesting efforts underway

While WIC agencies have a key role in encouraging and helping low-income mothers, Daniluk stresses that breastfeeding education and support is a community responsibility that needs to be shared. "After all," she says, "WIC can't do it all."

That's one of the reasons Daniluk and other task force members are excited about the group's accomplishments and future plans.

During its first year, the task force provided training for hospital personnel and public health nurses, doctors, and nutritionists. As a result, several local task forces have mobilized to promote breastfeeding within their own specific populations.

One such program has been put into place by Denver Health and Hospitals in the Denver metro area. Originally stimulated by WIC's mandate to promote breastfeeding, this coalition also surveyed hospital policies and practices, developed educational materials, and directed efforts toward raising the public's awareness about the benefits of breastfeeding.

Results of the survey were released in conjunction with World Breastfeeding Week, August 1-7, 1992.

Task force efforts have also included working with family day care home sponsors, day care center directors, and community colleges that train day care directors. The goal is to train 5,000 day care home

providers and 300 day care center directors by September 1993, using conferences, workshops, newsletters, and handouts to providers and parents.

In addition, they'll target employers, beginning with large ones such as the state government and perhaps the telephone company and local firms such as Coors and Manville. They have developed promotional materials that stress the potential benefits to employers—particularly the reduced frequency of a mother's absences to care for a sick child.

(Because of natural immunities in their mothers' milk, babies who are breastfed are less likely to experience early-childhood health problems. Medical experts point out, for example, that babies breastfed for at least 3 months have fewer ear and respiratory infections and less gastrointestinal distress.)

To get the word out to the general public, the task force's media work group tied breastfeeding interviews into a series of local "Baby Your Baby" television spots.

They also worked with local newspapers to get articles published, providing among other things dramatic photos of stacks of baby bottles and formula cans to illustrate the environmental benefits of breastfeeding. Task force members also staffed information booths at fairs focusing on child health.

Task force efforts have also included working for changes in legislation and hospital practices. One goal is to have legislation mandate breastfeeding support as part of postnatal care under home health care laws. Another is to find ways to increase a mother's chances of breastfeeding successfully despite very short hospital stays.

One result of task force efforts in these areas is the addition of language to proposed legislation specifying postnatal home health care visits for Medicaid clients (many of whom are also WIC participants). Several task force members have worked to make such support routinely available in their own hospitals.

In addition, as a result of contacts made during a hospital survey project, several hospitals have begun to issue "breastfeeding discharge packs," replacing or supplementing standard "formula packs" issued to postpartum women.

State recognized for its success

The renowned Dr. Marianne Neifert, known nationally as "Dr. Mom," is a member of the task force. "It's time," she says, "that we recognized Colorado is a leader in this area of mother/baby health care."

As the task force steams ahead full speed to advance that goal, the work of the interdisciplinary group is winning support and recognition from high levels. For each of the past 3 years, for example, Colorado Governor Roy Romer has proclaimed the week of Mother's Day as "Breastfeeding Awareness Week."

And nationally, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services selected the Colorado Department of Health to receive one of four SPRANS (Special Projects of Regional and National Significance) grants for breastfeeding promotion.

Following Colorado's lead, maybe more states will use an interdisciplinary approach to spread the good news about breastfeeding. ♦

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article by Joanne Widner

Helping Mothers Breastfeed... The Child Care Connection

Mountain Plains States Reach Out To Child Care Agencies And Providers

"Breastfeeding isn't just a good nutrition practice — it's good business for child care center and family day care home providers," says Colorado Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) administrator Kathy Brunner.

"When women who are breastfeeding are deciding on infant care, they're more likely to look for centers and homes that will work with them."

CACFP is one of several child nutrition programs administered nationally by USDA and operated by state and local agencies. The program provides USDA-donated food, financial support, and technical assistance to help participating child care centers, family day care homes, and after-school care programs serve nourishing meals and snacks to children.

(CACFP also provides support for meals served to impaired and elderly adults in nonresidential care centers.)

Across the country, CACFP is assuming a growing role in encouraging and supporting breastfeeding of infants cared for at participating facilities. Here's a look at some interesting activities initiated by Colorado and four other states in the Food and Nutrition Service's Mountain Plains region—Missouri, Iowa, Montana, and North Dakota:

COLORADO


In Colorado, CACFP falls under the supervisory umbrella of the state's Department of Health, which also administers WIC (USDA's Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children). Kathy Brunner is on the Colorado Breastfeeding Task Force (see accompanying article) and is part of the group's child care subcommittee.

The state agency is working in a variety of ways to help child care center staff and home care providers learn more about breastfeeding and ways they can be supportive to mothers.

For example, the agency's "Bits and Bites" newsletter for centers has included articles on breastfeeding in the child care setting and on storing and handling breastmilk.

The state also plans to train home providers and center staff through sessions incorporated into its annual workshops. One workshop in Thornton, Colorado, included a session on working with breastfeeding mothers along with sessions on infant care and feeding, and recordkeeping.

Last fall, Colorado began working with nutrition instructors at six community colleges that help train people to become certified child care center directors.



In another effort, the state is working to build a network of trained people. As a first step, Karen Runner of Colorado's CACFP staff and Paula Peirce from a local organization that sponsors family day care homes' participation in CACFP were sent to a lactation training course conducted by staff from the University of California at San Diego.

In turn, Runner and Peirce are spearheading training for sponsoring organizations' field representatives and will also train center personnel. Colorado's goal is to train 5,000 family day care home providers and 300 child care center staff by September 1993 using conferences, newsletters, and handouts.

MISSOURI

In Missouri, the Department of Health has developed a series of brochures that include information on benefits of breastfeeding and how to address needs of mothers who plan to return to work. As Missouri's CACFP director Deborah Markenson explains, the three brochures are:

- "Feeding Infants in the Child and Adult Care Food Program," which targets providers and includes a section outlining why breastmilk is the best food for infants.
- "Breastfed Infants and You," a manual for child care providers that covers helping breastfeeding mothers and storing and using breastmilk.
- "Breastfeeding and the Working Mom," for women planning to return to work. This includes guidance in choosing a child care facility; tips for continuing breastfeeding after returning to work; and advice on expressing, handling, and storing breastmilk.

In addition, Missouri includes breastfeeding as a topic in its annual workshops for sponsors and centers.

It included an article on the advantages of breastfeeding in the state's "Building Blocks" newsletter.

IOWA

In its newsletter for child care providers, Iowa has also featured information on caring for breastfed babies in child care, helping mothers, and storing breastmilk. The state is also producing a guide for providers with additional information.

There are some interesting local efforts, too. For example, in Marshall County, the Marshall County Child Care Services (a private nonprofit child care organization that operates three centers) promotes breastmilk as "the optimal food for babies" and encourages mothers to continue to nurse after returning to work—either in a quiet place at the center or by having their babies fed expressed breastmilk during day care hours.

MONTANA

In Montana, CACFP and WIC—both under the Montana Department of Health—are working together in a number of ways.

For example, a WIC presenter was featured at Montana's 1992 summer workshop for organizations that sponsor family day care homes' participation in CACFP. In addition, CACFP has provided WIC with a list of participating centers and homes.

In some other efforts, state staff are taking a look at how receptive centers and homes are to helping infants be breastfed. A random survey was done with the cooperation of Montana State University to measure willingness of providers to support breastfeeding in homes and centers. When results have been tallied, they will be compared to a repeat survey to be done at the end of the year.

According to state CACFP supervisor Peggy Baraby, Montana WIC clinics will soon begin contacting

providers. "The providers will furnish referral cards to WIC clinics, which can be given to parents needing child care," she explains. WIC clinics will also answer questions on breastfeeding, regardless of whether or not the mother and baby are WIC clients.

Montana makes available a variety of materials, including pamphlets and a poster for display in centers and homes. In addition, the state's CACFP newsletter has discussed breastfeeding support as part of infant care.

NORTH DAKOTA

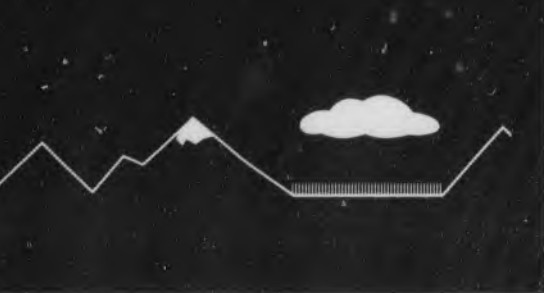
North Dakota began a cooperative effort 2 years ago by adding a WIC presenter at its May 1991 workshop in Bismarck for family day care home sponsors.

According to Maggie Anderson, child nutrition specialist with the Department of Public Instruction, approximately 35 to 40 representatives attended the sessions. Since sponsoring organizations don't change much from year to year, she says, the presentation should go a long way in keeping providers across the state informed.

OTHER STATES JOIN IN...

By this spring, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Wyoming had also joined the Mountain Plains breastfeeding initiative. Like their neighboring states, they have started including articles on breastfeeding in their state agency newsletters. They've also begun to invite speakers to talk about breastfeeding at their workshops.

Federal program managers in FNS' Mountain Plains regional office (MPRO) are proud of what these states are doing to offer breastfeeding as an alternative for mothers who need to return to work or school but would like to continue breastfeeding their infants.



Reaching out to Head Start children...

Nutrition Volunteer Makes Learning About Food Lively And Fun

So other states can benefit from these efforts, MPRO staff are sharing with other FNS regions the materials Mountain Plains states have developed. ♦

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article by Joanne Widner

Mary Zybura, food program specialist at the Food and Nutrition Service's Concord, New Hampshire, field office, has had a busy week.

On Monday, she worked on authorizing food stores to accept food stamps. Tuesday, she reviewed food stamp quality control cases. Wednesday, she met with representatives from farmers' markets. Thursday, she conducted store visits.

It's Friday morning now, and Zybura is talking about her experiences as a volunteer last year for a project sponsored by the American Home Economics Association (AHEA). The project places nutritionists, dietitians, and home economists in Head Start centers to provide nutrition education to young children.

Administered by AHEA throughout the country, the volunteer consultant program is an outstanding example of cooperation between private and public institutions. Through it Head Start and the AHEA work together to improve children's nutritional well-being. And volunteers like Mary Zybura demonstrate that individual contributions and personal commitment can make a difference.

One of 18 volunteers in New Hampshire

Zybura, a registered dietitian with a master's degree in elementary education, was 1 of 18 volunteers working in New Hampshire Head Start centers last year. She and the other volunteers were recruited and trained by Valerie Long, a cooperative ex-

tension specialist in food and nutrition, who began the project in her state 3 years ago by writing a grant request to AHEA headquarters in Washington, D.C.

As Long explains, the project grew out of a need for more nutrition education at Head Start. "Nutrition is an integral part of Head Start," she says, "but the program cannot afford to pay for nutrition education consultants. So Head Start entered into an agreement with AHEA whereby AHEA would develop a training curriculum and recruit professionals.

"AHEA receives funding for the project from the private sector," she adds, "so there is no cost to Head Start."

When AHEA approved Long's request, she began accepting applications. "It was a selective process," she says. "I looked at education, volunteer experience, and what an applicant hoped to get out of the project. I was looking for people who were interested in working with the low-income population and who were creative in dealing with limited resources in a program like Head Start."

Long says that in the project's first year in her state, approximately half of the volunteers were dietitians with traditional, clinical backgrounds. The other half were home economics teachers. The second year, there were far more dietitians. While the project is not operating in New Hampshire this year, Long hopes to see it start up again in the future.

Recruits received special training

After selecting the volunteers, Long would conduct a 2- or 3-day training session. The training, for which volunteers received professional credits, acquainted them with the project and Head Start and focused on the nutritional needs of children, ways children like to learn, strategies for working with parents, and creative teaching methods.

After the training was completed, Long would match up volunteers with Head Start centers, usually by geographic area. The volunteers would then contact their assigned centers to set up appointments with the directors. In joining, volunteers committed themselves to 30 hours of teaching. They visited their assigned centers to conduct nutrition sessions approximately once a month.

"We weren't interested in people who just wanted the professional development credits provided as part of the training," says Long. "We recruited people who wanted to help, who had good skills, and who could give a lot to the program—people like Mary Zybura.

"Mary was perfect. She has wonderful skills. And the project gave her the opportunity to work directly with clientele—she is the typical profile of someone who has a very interesting job but one that doesn't provide this direct contact."

Zybura was indeed an ideal volunteer for the program. In the 1970's she taught first through third grades in Rhode Island. In 1978 she became a registered dietitian and, since joining FNS in 1979, has worked with USDA's food assistance programs, including the Food Stamp Program. This was especially helpful for her as a volunteer because the families of many Head Start children receive food stamps.

With the children sitting in a semi-circle around her, Mary Zybura began a lesson on peanuts by asking: "Does anyone know what a peanut looks like?" Using a colorful poster, she showed how peanuts grow underground and named some food products that have peanuts in them. Then she explained how peanuts contribute to a healthy diet.



Beyond that, Zybura met Long's most stringent criterion—she wanted to help. "This was an opportunity to use my expertise as a teacher and a nutritionist to help low-income people," she says, explaining why she volunteered. "Teaching and working with children come very naturally to me, and I've always thought nutrition education needs to begin with little people."

Worked closely with Head Start staff

Zybura and other New Hampshire volunteers worked closely with the staff of their assigned centers. They coordinated their lessons with the instructors; they worked with the cooks on nutrition and food safety

issues; and they planned their lessons to parallel New Hampshire's Head Start nutrition curriculum. They wanted to make sure their teaching was consistent with the curriculum and that the learning experience was a lasting one for the children.

New Hampshire's Head Start nutrition curriculum is divided into months of the school year. Each month concentrates on a specific group of foods, and the volunteers targeted their lessons around those groups.

"March, for example," Zybura says, "is Peanut Month, so during my March visit we had a lesson on peanuts."

With the children sitting in a semi-circle around her, Zybura started by asking if anyone knew what a peanut

looks like. "A number of them raised their hands," she says, "and some did not."

She passed around a handful of unshelled peanuts for the youngsters to look at and handle, then cracked one open and talked about the shell and the nut. Using a colorful poster of a peanut plant, she showed how peanuts grow underground. She also named some food products that have peanuts in them and, in easy-to-understand language, explained how peanuts contribute to a healthy diet.

Lesson complemented other activities

The lesson complemented other activities planned for the month. For example, by the day of Zybura's visit,



instructors had already read to the children a book called "The Lion Who Liked Peanut Butter." They had hung posters of peanuts on the walls and had pointed out whenever a peanut product was being served at breakfast or lunch.

Preparing something good to eat was part of every lesson. After learning about peanuts, the children made peanut butter balls, and everyone got a chance to help. They crushed corn flakes, took turns stirring in honey and peanut butter, and rolled the mixture into small balls, which they ate for snacks that morning.

For each visit, Zybura would spend 3 or 4 hours preparing in advance. This included planning lessons, gathering materials, and talking with instructors. Each lesson included time for the children to make something good to eat.

This, says Zybura, was important. "It's one thing to talk to children about something that's good for them to eat. But it's another thing to involve them in making and eating something from the food. If the children hear about a food, then taste it and like it, they'll remember it."

Making peanut butter balls was part of the lesson on peanuts. With Zybura's help, the children crushed corn flakes, stirred in honey and peanut butter, and rolled the mixture

into small balls which went into the refrigerator for a few minutes before being served for morning snack.

"Three cookie sheets of peanut butter balls disappeared in only a few minutes, and the reviews were all positive," says Zybura.

"The volunteers made things we knew the kids would like," says Long, "then they would give them the recipes. We hoped the children would go home and say, 'Mom, I had the most wonderful thing today,' and then maybe mom would make it."

Volunteers reached out to parents

Involving parents was one of the project's goals, as it is traditionally for Head Start. "Head Start centers like



to have parents come in at least once a month for an information session," says Long. "Some of our volunteers did nutrition presentations for parents at the same time. We also had a newsletter for parents and gave lots of materials to volunteers to pass on to parents."

Some volunteers reached out in other ways, too. "For example," says Long, "some of the volunteers weighed and measured the children to see if they were growing as they should. If there was a problem and the volunteer was a registered dietitian, the volunteer could work individually with parents to help solve it. That's where this kind of volunteer was so valuable."

Because of her professional experience, Zybura offered parents nutrition counseling as well as information on USDA food assistance programs.

"I distributed many USDA publications dealing with budgeting and wise food shopping," she says. "Parents asked a lot of questions about using their food stamps, and that opened the door for me to talk about stretching food dollars and budgeting."

"For example, I explained that instead of buying a cold sandwich for \$3.25 at a deli, they could use the money to buy bread, coldcuts, and lettuce to make four sandwiches."

"Most of the Head Start mothers I worked with were under the age of 25 and had few, if any, cooking skills," Zybura adds. "That's something

I hope to devote time to another year—developing some kind of informational packet or doing on-site sessions on simple cooking techniques. I'd like to teach parents how to put together quick but nutritious meals and snacks for themselves and their children."

In working with parents, Zybura emphasized that their children may like some things they do not. "A lot of



The children made three cookie sheets of peanut butter balls. "They disappeared in only a few minutes," says Zybura, "and the reviews were all positive."

choices parents make at the supermarket are biased," she says. "I explained that just because they don't like apples, it doesn't mean their kids won't. I tried to convince them to buy nutritious foods, if not for themselves, then at least for their kids.

"Little people are great," Zybura continues. "They are honest, open, and at the preschool age, often

aren't closed to trying new foods. They aren't prejudiced against anything yet."

"They'll end up healthier..."

She believes the project had immediate benefits and will also have a long-term impact. "One immediate benefit was that the kids were being exposed to different types of foods and learning where they come from. They were seeing that food is not just a package on the supermarket shelf. Some kids may never have seen a fresh fruit or vegetable.

"Long term, I firmly believe that children who are exposed to things at a young age benefit for years. They may go through stages where

they may not, from a nutrition perspective, make the best choices, but usually as they get older they go back to the way they were taught to eat as a child.

"Get them to learn the best, or the better choices, and it will carry throughout their lives. They'll end up healthier in the long run." ♦

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*article and photos
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*Drawings by Amanda Kronen, age 7,
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