Counting on WIC to Care

We are coming up on a year since the 2016 elections. Many folks have been speaking up and acting on issues they care about, having never done so before. Others say they have never paid attention like they are now. Everyday conversations are about current events and breaking news. Unfortunately, most are about a stressful topic, such as racism, immigration, climate change, health care, or the threat of war. When we see people in leadership positions not leading in productive and inclusive ways for the good of the community, we are sorely in need of examples of hope, improvement, and a bright future.

We can be confident and proud that WIC services provide hope for families and communities. WIC staff are leaders who welcome their neighbors. Pregnant women are assured they will have healthy food for them and their developing baby. Bright-eyed infants’ moms get support to provide their nourishing milk. Hungry, growing toddlers get the right start with healthy foods. Young moms and dads can get information they need to be great parents, and also know they have a friend in WIC when they need help with challenges. WIC kids, our future leaders, go off to school healthy and nourished.

WIC is a caring place. It is built into our mission and it is part of our culture. It matters deeply to us that our programs are successful and we serve eligible families. Collectively we are working to update and streamline our practices to ensure value and relevance for young women and their children. We care that children and their families not only have enough food, but that it is healthy. We think about the whole person and family as we provide educational information, make referrals and — most importantly — listen and offer support. WIC co-workers care about each other; in times of celebration or need, we take care of each other.

Thanks for all you do to show that communities can count on WIC to care.
CWA Education Day
(October 4, Sacramento)

We’re excited to gather again with WIC Directors, Managers, and Supervisors for our annual CWA Education Day, focusing this year on Caring Partnerships: Leading WIC into the Future. In the morning, we’ll hear from your peers, and their collaborators in community health centers and emergency food networks, about innovative partnerships often crucial to the well-being of the families and communities WIC serves.

After a networking lunch, we’ll dive into learning how to cultivate Impactful Leadership through a Culture of Caring. Rita Sever, consultant and author of Supervision Matters, will guide us in exploring key leadership practices to build or expand a work environment where caring is explicit in every action. You’ll leave with action steps, ready to have a positive “ripple effect” upon returning to WIC offices and clinics.

Our goal is to provide you with valuable continuing professional education, inspiration, and networking opportunities, so that you return to your agencies feeling supported in leading WIC’s essential work with women, children, and families. If you couldn’t join us this year, stay tuned and plan for next October!

Spring or Fall, it’s always a good time to gather, learn, and network with your peers!

Capital Visits
(October 2, State Capitol)

Making Capitol Visits with state legislators and their staff is a great way to share information with policymakers about how WIC serves young women and their families. Personal visits are highly effective ways of helping legislators understand your WIC program, and they need to hear from the communities they represent. Even though they are busy people, they want to hear from you!

Simply inviting public officials to visit your WIC site, or chatting with them in their office about key WIC and breastfeeding issues, is not lobbying. It’s public issues education, and every WIC employee can do this!

If you couldn’t make visits on October 2, there are other ways to get involved and become a WIC Ambassador. Use your voice to help legislators understand the work you do and the needs and issues important to the communities you serve. Find out more at http://calwic.org/get-involved/become-an-ambassador, or contact Sarah at sdiaz@calwic.org.

Former CWA Ambassador Co-Chair Eva Madrigal visits with staff from Rep. Juan Vargas in DC. Our State Capitol educational visits are just as important!
Educate Your Legislators

One of the most important things we can do to promote continued support and protection of WIC at the federal level is to ensure that our policymakers understand WIC and what it does for their constituents. That’s why, at our Annual Conference last April, we issued a challenge to local WIC agencies to host WIC site visits from their members of Congress. We called it “55 in 25” for the 55 members of Congress and 25 weeks between Conference and November 1.

Several agencies have risen to the challenge! At press time with about six weeks to go, 14 House members or their staff, as well as staff representing Senator Kamala Harris, visited WIC offices within their districts. We give a big shout out to the following local WIC agencies of all sizes, whose staff have been excellent hosts while doing the important work of educating our legislators about WIC.

Congrats on a job well done to:

- American Red Cross
- Community Resource Project
- Contra Costa County
- Glenn County
- L.A. Biomed/SLAHP
- Monterey County
- Northeast Valley Health Center
- Public Health Foundation Enterprises
- Sonoma County

We encourage WIC sites in every Congressional District to host their local policymakers! Check our website for more information about being a WIC Ambassador: [http://www.calwic.org/policy-center/toolkits](http://www.calwic.org/policy-center/toolkits).

Federal Policy

Our national legislators have a full plate this fall. At press time, Congress is facing key policy decisions around health care, funding, taxes and more.

**Health Care:** Both sides of Congress made several attempts to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act (ACA), with proposals that would have been disastrous to families benefitting from Medi-Cal. At press time, another attempt to repeal the ACA is underway. Stay informed!

**Funding:** Congress returned to session with three big fiscal tasks: increasing the government debt limit to prevent a default and government shutdown; funding relief efforts for hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria; and passing spending bills for government agencies to operate in FY 2018. Despite a cut to WIC overall, funds will be adequate to serve all participants, with a boost to the amount allotted for peer counselors.

**Taxes:** Lastly, the Trump administration and congressional Republicans are promising action early this fall to overhaul the tax code to lower taxes for both corporations and individuals. Be sure to subscribe to the CWA Flash at [www.calwic.org](http://www.calwic.org) to get the latest policy updates.

State Legislation

Working with the California Breastfeeding Coalition and Assemblymember Blanca Rubio, CWA co-sponsored ACR 113, a Resolution to recognize August as Breastfeeding Month in California. Although August is past, these efforts continue to raise awareness of breastfeeding’s role in supporting healthy communities.

While we don’t have the final results for CWA-supported legislation as the WIC Watch goes to press, many bills addressing relevant issues have worked their way through the California legislature, including:

- Paid family leave to bond with a child within one year of birth, adoption, or foster care placement
- Home visiting program for CalWORKS
- Nutrition, including using Medi-Cal to enroll children in school lunch
- School lunch debt assistance
- Emergency CalFresh benefits

**Calling All WIC Leaders!**

The California WIC Leadership Academy is back! Begun over a decade ago as the WIC Leadership Academy, this annual class supported state and local WIC staff on a year-long journey to develop skills as public health leaders. The program transitioned to the Academy for Participant-Centered Leadership, fondly known as APL, led by state WIC staff. Helene Dublisky, management consultant, worked closely with the program during both phases.

CWA is bringing the academy back, starting in Spring 2018. Our local agencies have many new WIC Directors and staff who are looking to lead in their agency and community. They deserve an opportunity to focus on their professional growth and experience their potential. WIC is in a new era and now is the time for leadership!

We’ll post applications for a new class on our website later this fall. Successful applicants will participate in two in-person, all-day workshops: the first on April 29 at the Annual Conference in San Diego, and the second in Sacramento at the Fall Event, likely in October 2018. In between, academy members will meet by webinar and conference call. Participants will be responsible for travel costs, but academy participation will not include a fee.

Look for news in the Flash e-newsletter and monthly WIC Director updates, and consider how you or your staff are called to new leadership opportunities!

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**New Faces, New Places**

CWA is excited to be working with the following Directors who are new to their positions, or have recently moved to a new agency, in the last year or two. Be sure to make them feel welcome if you see them at state or regional meetings. And please tell us if you’re “new” and we forgot to mention it!

- **Community Action Partnership of Kern** — Kathy Lujan
- **Community Medical Centers** — Andrea Weiss
- **Delta Health Care** — Barinderjeet Bambra
- **Mono County** — Amber Hise
- **Native American Health Center** — Nina Ayala
- **San Joaquin County** — Kim Smith
- **Shasta County** — April Jurisich
- **Siskiyou County** — Dana Kent

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**Farm2WIC: Shop Local, Eat Fresh, Bring Your Family**

Summer may be long past, but did you know that hundreds of California farmers’ markets are open all year? WIC families receive Fruit and Vegetable Checks (FVC, Cash Value Voucher) all year, too. What happens when you put these two together? Farm2WIC all year long!

More and more farmers and markets are getting authorized by State WIC to accept FVC, as well as the seasonal Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) checks. This boosts families’ buying power at a fresh, local, fun shopping option, while supporting local growers and building community. Is your market doing this? Find out here: [http://bit.ly/Farm2WICList](http://bit.ly/Farm2WICList).

CWA is expanding its toolkit to help WIC staff and market operators educate WIC participants about Farm2WIC. You’ll find graphics, education materials for staff and participants, and vendor marketing materials on our website at [http://calwic.org/ focus-areas/engaging-wic-families/farm2wic](http://calwic.org/ focus-areas/engaging-wic-families/farm2wic).

While supplies last, we can also print and ship materials for your local WIC agency use; contact Margaret at [maumann@calwic.org](mailto:maumann@calwic.org) to request. And if you have other ideas for materials that would help you promote Farm2WIC and fresh, local produce with your clients, let us know!

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**WIC is in a new era and now is the time for leadership!**
Coming Soon: 2017 Hospital Breastfeeding Fact Sheets

In partnership with UC Davis Human Lactation Center and California Breastfeeding Coalition, CWA will soon release the annual fact sheets on California’s in-hospital breastfeeding rates. Since producing our first report and county fact sheets a decade ago, the number of Baby-Friendly hospitals in California has grown from just 12 to nearly 100 in 2017.

These reports and fact sheets are part of a multi-year, multi-strategy approach involving many partners to impact policies and practices, ultimately improving health outcomes. This year’s fact sheets will feature 2016 statewide and county hospital breastfeeding data.

Stay tuned for the release in November, and check out previous years’ fact sheets and reports at http://calwic.org/focus-areas/breastfeeding. Help us get the word out about great strides hospitals have made in increasing breastfeeding rates by making this a story in your community! Contact Sarah at sdlaz@calwic.org.

Connect with CWA

Visit CWA on Facebook!
Follow us on Twitter!
Find us on Instagram!

(Search for California WIC Association or calwic.)

Save the Date

2018 Annual Conference & Trade Show

We’re excited to host you in San Diego next spring for another valuable continuing education and networking event! A Conference Planning Committee of your local agency peers will soon start designing all the stimulating workshops you’ve come to expect. Inspiring keynote speakers, a jam-packed trade show, fun wellness activities, and another thought-provoking movie night are in the works, too.

Mark your calendars for April 29-May 2, 2018 and plan to join us! Look for more information in the CWA Flash e-news and on our website; registration will open around December 1.

Using Data to Drive Change: California Continues to Increase In-hospital Exclusive Breastfeeding Rates

Breastfeeding promotion is a vital part of California’s charge to improve short and long-term maternal and child health. For more than a decade, policy-makers and advocates have used publicly reported data to guide, evaluate, and monitor work to improve breastfeeding rates in our large and diverse state.

Together, local and statewide education, interventions, and support efforts have steadily increased in-hospital exclusive breastfeeding rates, bringing the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding to nearly 300,000 California families.

To maintain our current momentum, consistent and comparable data on breastfeeding exclusivity and duration are needed to build on the successes achieved in California hospitals and drive change in medical, workplace, and childcare environments.

October 2016

Produced by the California WIC Association and the UC Davis Human Lactation Center

WIC WATCH  FALL 2017
www.calwic.org
Partnership Feeds Kids, Expands WIC Outreach

When school’s out and kids need to eat, does your WIC agency take action? San Ysidro Health Center WIC did last summer, and benefited from the outreach effort, too. They partnered with a local nonprofit community organization to provide 123 meals to children under 18 through the USDA Summer Food Service Program, aka Summer Lunch.

Heaven’s Windows, which supports East San Diego County residents with hunger relief, education, advocacy, and other community services, provided the food and took care of logistics, training, and finances, while WIC provided the location and a volunteer. The partners distributed flyers in the community and Health Center. Starting with one site to test the feasibility of this effort, they hope to expand next year to more WIC sites.

At the Chula Vista WIC site, a volunteer served a hot or cold lunch two days a week for five weeks, from 11:30am to 2:30pm or until the food ran out. Meals were set up at a table in the lobby or a classroom, depending on office flow, so WIC services would not be interrupted.

What inspired San Ysidro WIC to try such a partnership this year? Rebecca Gills, WIC Director, relates,

“I was reading some information from CWA on the summer meals program and thought it would be nice to show community support by hosting a site. I realized it would benefit our WIC participants while bringing in families that may have fallen off of WIC or never even heard of WIC. It was also a chance to link families to other services provided by SYHC.”

Rebecca Gills, WIC Director, Carmen Gong, Site Supervisor and Arely Castro, Outreach Coordinator, promote summer meals at the Chula Vista WIC site.
Father Appreciation Celebrations

Last June, Planned Parenthood of Orange and San Bernardino Counties WIC staff hosted Father Appreciation Week. The week before Father’s Day, families enjoyed activities ranging from Coloring Day and Storytime with Dad to Picture Day with Dad and Tie Day, where all staff wore ties to work. All dads and their partners and kids were very happy to be acknowledged. For many families, it was the first time they’d participated in activities focusing on dad.

Each site also hosted a Father Appreciation Celebration. Carlos Fernandez and Gary Sena took the lead in facilitating each event as well as presenting a food demonstration for a delicious veggie quesadilla! Local business donations — such as ice chests, camp chairs, soccer balls and barbecue tools — were gifted to dads through opportunity drawings. For one activity, the team researched fun facts about dads, then staff and participants passed around a football, and whoever had the ball read a fun fact out loud.

This was a chance to have fun while listening to what dads had to say about their experiences. There were many heartfelt moments throughout the celebrations. When one dad received his certificate at the conclusion, he said it was the first certificate he had ever received. Another dad asked for an envelope so that his certificate would not get wrinkled.

“Sometimes it just takes someone doing something nice for you, so you realize all the great effort that you put into your family that shouldn’t go unnoticed.”

— Carlos Fernandez, PPOSB WIC

“Someone once asked me why I decided to get involved in creating activities around Father Involvement. I thought about it on my way home that night ... the truth is, I decided to do it as a tribute to my dad.”

— Veronica Castillo, PPOSB WIC

An excited staff team worked together to create events and activities to celebrate WIC dads: Carlos Fernandez, Linda Ruiz, Gary Sena, Marlene Ramirez, Vanessa Castillo, Esperanza Suarez, and Koji Motonishi.

“Sometimes it just takes someone doing something nice for you, so you realize all the great effort that you put into your family that shouldn’t go unnoticed.”

— Carlos Fernandez, PPOSB WIC

“These events create a welcoming and safe environment for men. Dads took away some food tips, shared experiences with other fathers, and met male staff members they can identify with.”

— Gary Sena, PPOSB WIC

Dads and families had fun and were grateful for recognition at Costa Mesa, Santa Ana, and Stanton WIC sites.
Public Health Foundation Enterprises (PHFE) WIC has had a longstanding relationship with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS). Eligibility Workers for DPSS are regularly stationed at WIC sites, and more cross-referrals to each other’s programs are occurring.

Many WIC participants are drawn to the local farmers markets every summer. PHFE WIC staff distributed Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) checks on site for the past three years with great success (see graph at right). Many families are also eligible for — but not enrolled in — CalFresh, California’s food stamp program. So, it was fitting that PHFE WIC and DPSS’ CalFresh Outreach team joined efforts this year at 16 farmers markets.

Market Match added the potential for families to double their CalFresh EBT benefits by up to $10 per visit. In fact, some markets will also match WIC benefits or families’ own cash (up to $10) to buy even more fresh produce. And with many markets now accepting WIC Fruit and Vegetable Checks (FVC), it was a win all around. Families were grateful to have increased purchasing power at farmer’s markets week after week, while WIC, CalFresh, and Market Match achieved four shared goals: to encourage healthy eating, increase fruit and vegetable enjoyment, support local growers, and ultimately reduce food insecurity.

WIC families responded in droves! They took advantage of the chance to participate in all three underutilized programs. Eager to support their families any way they could, parents waited patiently in line for WIC FMNP checks and Market Match benefits and to get their CalFresh applications started. While they waited, trusted WIC staff addressed some of the fears families expressed about enrolling in CalFresh. Since most families had Medi-Cal, the CalFresh enrollment process was easy.

PHFE WIC had an incredibly successful FMNP season, with almost 30,000 FMNP checks issued directly at the markets in under eight weeks. In the four weeks that DPSS joined PHFE WIC at the markets, 785 CalFresh applications and 57 Medi-Cal applications were completed — one of their most successful outreach efforts ever!

Early communication and planning with market managers and DPSS partners are critical to success. Each year of experience helps build relationships and get the word out. Market managers are now eager to have WIC staff return, or be at their market for the first time. Having worked well with PHFE WIC over time, DPSS is committed to provide Eligibility Workers at the markets.

PHFE WIC’s efforts to promote both food security and healthy eating will continue all year. They encourage families to continue shopping at year-round farmers’ markets, using their WIC FVC, CalFresh, and Market Match benefits. They work closely with DPSS to reach, inform and enroll more families in CalFresh, especially those already receiving Medi-Cal. And they’re probably already planning for next summer’s market days!

Want to pursue success like this in your community? Contact Denise Gee (denise@phfewic.org) for tips learned from PHFE’s experience. Find out more about the programs mentioned in this article at the following links:

Farm2WIC: http://calwic.org/focus-areas/engaging-wic-families/farm2wic
CalFresh: http://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/calfresh
Market Match: http://marketmatch.org/
In the December 2016 hospital breastfeeding rate fact sheets from CWA and UC Davis, Sutter and Yuba counties ranked 48th and Colusa county ranked 50th out of the 50 counties included in the survey. Between 2011 and 2015, these rankings had not changed.

The Tricounties Breastfeeding Alliance (TCBA, including Colusa, Sutter and Yuba counties) and partnering agencies are hard at work to improve these low rates. Public Health Departments, local First 5 commissions, Rideout Health, and the Ampla Health and Sutter County WIC Programs partnered with TCBA to obtain a community grant and hold a local breastfeeding conference last May.

Their goal was to increase local health care providers’ knowledge and skills toward advancing breastfeeding as a cultural norm and developing evidence-based practices. Since it had been six years since an educational forum like this was offered in the region, they searched nationwide for a dynamic and energetic speaker, and found Dr. Todd Wolynn, a board-certified pediatrician and IBCLC from Pittsburgh, PA.

Aiming for at least 100 attendees, the partners invited maternal and infant service providers (pediatricians, obstetricians and supporting office staff, hospitalists, nurses, home health, health clinics, breastfeeding counselors, lactation consultants) and others directly involved with the care of new mothers and infants. Partners promoted the event widely: WIC and MCAH programs printed flyers, and all involved used their mail, in-person, and social media networks to spread the word.

To ensure the event fit attendees’ work schedules, the conference featured sessions in both morning and afternoon for adjunct staff and at lunchtime for medical providers. Collaboration also enabled them to offer continuing education credits for RNs, MDs, and IBCLCs. Rideout Health offered their conference center in Yuba City free of charge.

Although ecstatic at the goal-surpassing attendance (121) and positive evaluations that included many plans to implement better breastfeeding care practices, the partners knew this Conference was just a start. Their “collective impact” forum in June focused on action steps in hospital maternity care practices, community and public health programs and support, and lactation training and advocacy. Other issues needing to be addressed included limited access to breastfeeding support and supplies and lactation accommodation for all moms.

Before and after the conference, partners’ efforts have affected positive change. By late August, the local hospital stopped giving formula-supplied “diaper bags” to new parents. And the latest in-hospital breastfeeding rates revealed a rise in exclusive breastfeeding rates from 44.7% to 50.1% in 2016.

TCBA and partners will continue to collaborate so that, down the road, they won’t come in last again! To see how your county ranks in hospital breastfeeding rates, visit http://calwic.org/focus-areas/breastfeeding/hospital-rates-a-reports. Watch for CWA’s 2017 Hospital Breastfeeding Fact Sheets (featuring 2016 data) in November! (See update on page 5.)
Global Big Latch On!

The Global Big Latch On, celebrated annually during World Breastfeeding Week, gathers mothers around the world to breastfeed their children at the same time. It’s a world-wide effort to normalize breastfeeding, strengthen peer support, and raise awareness of the benefits of breastfeeding for children’s health. Around the globe in 2017, over 50,000 people participated in various locations, including 18,036 mothers who breastfed 17,790 children during the one-minute count!

Last August, North County Health Services (NCHS) WIC hosted their first Big Latch On events in Mission Mesa, San Marcos, and Escondido. Staff were thrilled with the turnout of 124 moms, children and breastfeeding supporters.

Despite the warm and humid weather, those attending Mission Mesa WIC’s event at the New Birth Church enjoyed coming out for a day of bonding with other moms while their children enjoyed playing and making friends. Besides a photo gallery and breastfeeding testimonial display from WIC’s breastfeeding moms, there were healthy cooking demonstrations and raffle drawings. Attendees also received two cookbooks and a participation certificate.

Mothers sharing their breastfeeding challenges and triumphs were the highlight of the event. Angela Pena, NCHS WIC, admired the “honest, heartwarming and inspiring” stories that were shared. Overall, it was a successful way to celebrate and support breastfeeding families!

"It’s clear the breastfeeding mothers were happy and thankful to be a part of a celebration and have the opportunity to expand their support group ... and ultimately realize that they were not alone.”

— Amy Matthews, NCHS WIC

"WIC encouraged me to keep trying and not give up. Breastfeeding is such a rewarding feeling. I’m so happy I never gave up! My baby is healthy and happy!"

— Joanzie, a thankful WIC mom
Celebrating and Sustaining Breastfeeding Families

World Breastfeeding Week/Month is celebrated in August every year in more than 170 countries around the world. The 2017 theme, Sustaining Breastfeeding Together, focused on working together for the common good. #WBW2017 called on breastfeeding advocates, decision-makers and celebrants to forge new and purposeful partnerships to promote and support breastfeeding. Here, we share what some local agencies did to celebrate!

**Community Medical Centers WIC** hosted nearly 500 pregnant and breastfeeding families at their 4th annual WIC Breastfeeding Celebration. Adults enjoyed receiving gifts that support breastfeeding, and learning about topics like safe baby wearing or how to successfully breastfeed and return to work. WIC children enjoyed face painting and an arts and crafts station. Healthy snacks and ‘luau’ décor were part of the fun!

**San Francisco Department of Public Health WIC**, as part of the SFDPH Lactation Collaborative, co-hosted a unique WBW celebration at City Hall with Supervisor Katy Tang. Nursing mothers and their babies featured in professional photographs were guests at a private lunch reception, while the photo exhibit was open to the public throughout August. Supervisor Tang championed San Francisco’s newly-passed Lactation Accommodation Ordinance — the most sweeping lactation policy in the nation. The Collaborative consists of leaders from throughout the city, including WIC, and works to address economic and racial disparities and to improve breastfeeding rates in San Francisco.

**Solano County WIC** actively supported the Solano County Breastfeeding Coalition’s 20th Anniversary when the Coalition hosted a Community Open House, Health Fair and a Donor Breast Milk drive to celebrate World Breastfeeding Month. Over 150 pregnant and breastfeeding families and community partners took pictures at the fun photo booth, rode a smoothie bike to create their own snacks, and received bags of fresh produce from the Food Bank! All activities focused on showcasing breastfeeding as an essential component of nutrition, health and well-being for families and the community.
Impactful, Fulfilling Careers Helped Families

Edie Wiltsee

In anticipation of her October retirement as Monterey County WIC Director for the past 15 years, Edie Wiltsee shares some of her WIC journey with us here.

“How to begin to sing the praises of WIC and the immense impact it has on so many lives? It touches me most when I meet new colleagues who were WIC babies or participated as parents when starting their own families. WIC is one of the most successful federal programs — there when needed, providing nutrition and parenting education, breastfeeding help and, for many, a path to future achievements.

My path to WIC was not obvious. After my degree in German, I earned a master’s in Public Health Nutrition because of my keen interest in healthful eating. I worked in hospitals and conducted university research, then moved on to outpatient cardiac rehabilitation. After a 15-year hiatus from the field, I moved to California. That decision opened unexpected opportunities: I got married and soon was managing Nutrition Services for Monterey County Health Department.

Monterey County WIC enjoys a reputation for innovation; my predecessor established an on-site library branch and farmers’ market. I am proud of how we raised program quality. We went from 14 findings in my first program evaluation to none in six years. We have used our funding wisely to upgrade facilities for the comfort of both participants and staff, including commissioning colorful, engaging murals by local artists to depict breastfeeding and farmers’ markets in our community.

Working at WIC certainly has its challenges but I remind staff at the end of a particularly difficult day that we are fortunate to see how much we have helped families. We’ve also had a lot of fun! Who will forget sewing fruit and vegetable costumes to perform The Garden Song at the 2009 CWA annual conference, or wearing our slinky little halter tops to promote Going for Platinum?

What lies ahead? My husband and I are downsizing our home. I want to continue home exchanges with people from other countries, improve my language skills, travel, take classes I never had time for, and find meaningful volunteer work.

I appreciate the support from our agency from the State and CWA; serving on Task Force and the CWA Board and being a WIC Ambassador were valuable experiences for me. No director can do this work without the dedication and support of staff and supervisors; we have a talented group of people who can rise to any occasion. Kudos to all for the important work we do. We are fortunate to serve people whose needs we can meet and to lead them to a brighter future.”

Mary Jane Kiefer

When Mary Jane Kiefer reflects on her career she can be confident that she made significant contributions as a public health nutritionist. With Contra Costa County WIC since 1987, she helped create foundational materials and tools for nutrition education that have been recognized and used by national organizations.

Understanding the importance of a holistic approach to health, Mary Jane created programs to address breastfeeding, smoking cessation, screen time, economic security, physical activity and most recently, perinatal depression. Mary Jane also volunteered to assist with the original training for the current, and soon to be replaced, WIC MIS system.

In addition to WIC, Mary Jane spent several years working for Cooperative Extension, the California Department of Education, and several local school districts. In this work spanning five states, she truly got a grounding on the status of nutrition needs and food insecurity for low-income families.

Knowing that the best results are possible when a community works together, Mary Jane established collaborations with hospitals, health centers, child care centers and preschools. She trained and engaged nurses, medical providers, mental health specialists and community advocates. And, most importantly, she collected data and looked for outcomes and improvements.

CWA joins many in thanking Mary Jane for her embodiment of leadership as a public health nutritionist.
An Unexpected Journey

When people ask Cristina Morales how to get into lactation, often they are concerned that they lack related work experience. She assures them, “I was in the same boat” and they will gain experience over time. But most of all, she reminds them to never underestimate the skills learned from other jobs. Her own experience as a bank employee for eight years — and then being laid off — helps her every day as a manager. It also boosted her courage to pursue a career change.

Cristina was an unemployed mom of a toddler when starting the Grow Our Own lactation consultant course in 2012, and worried about ever getting a well-paid job. Fast forward to today: as mom of two breastfed children and an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC), she says, “I am doing better than ever and I love what I do.”

As she completed Grow Our Own, Cristina began working for the Welcome Baby Program at Northridge Hospital Medical Center. With more college coursework, three years’ experience as a Peer Counselor, and her IBCLC, she became Program Manager of Childbirth Education and Lactation Services in 2016. Her first day as Manager was “insane,” as it coincided with the Baby Friendly Hospital Survey. But with gracious auditors, help from the outgoing Manager, and some corrective action, they passed in November 2016.

As the only bilingual lactation consultant, Cristina is reaching out to the 40% of patients who speak Spanish. Childbirth and lactation classes, maternity tours and a Spanish support group are steadily growing, thanks to the hospital being open to changes. She also promotes more skin-to-skin NICU care, better breast care knowledge among family practice residents, and correct documentation of lactation support services. All this, while working on a master’s program in Health Administration at California State University Northridge, with plans to graduate next spring.

“I would not be where I am without the Grow Our Own course and instructor Kayellen Young. When I started the class, I could not have imagined my career path moving this quickly and so positively. I always encourage people to follow their dreams.”

Part of CWA’s work is to support lactation workforce development, especially for WIC staff, and cultural and linguistic diversity in the IBCLC profession. That’s why we help promote the Grow Our Own Lactation Consultant courses offered by Riverside University Health System. The next class starts March 15, 2018 in Riverside; visit http://calwic.org/events/grow-our-own-lactation-consultants for details.

In Memoriam

JoAnn Vasquez

After 33 years of dedicated State Service, JoAnn Vasquez retired in 2015 from her position as Chief for the Policy Section at the California WIC Program. Just two short years later, she passed away last January.

JoAnn is remembered as a strong breastfeeding supporter who lived and breathed family values. Called a stellar wife and mom to all children, she had a taste for good cooking and a smile that shed warmth to all. She dedicated her life to helping her son excel in his educational pursuits; she was tutor, mentor, organizer, and cheerleader to Danny, who became a star student despite learning challenges.

State and local WIC agency colleagues miss her dearly, saying “Joann worked as she did for her family, as if we were family.” They are grateful for the chance to have known her, and feel her positive example lives on in the lives of many.
Recertification Realities

Wendt it be awesome if achieving wellness had a simple, one size fits all instruction manual? In reality, everyone has a different starting point, motivation level, and goals. We spend countless hours working, commuting, and taking care of family, but not always taking care of ourselves. That’s where WIC Worksite Wellness (WWW) can help! We hope the stories shared here inspire your agency to embrace employee wellness. Find out more at http://calwic.org/focus-areas/wic-worksite-wellness.

The Resource Connection WIC

Worksite Wellness program goal is to support our ‘work family’ to participate in realistic, healthy wellness practices while at the office. And maybe even take some of these newly learned skills home, too! Started in 2010, our WWW program has had many successes and struggles.

One recent success was our 2016 ‘Cultivating an Attitude of Gratitude’ challenge. All nine staff members enthusiastically learned about and encouraged each other to focus on the ‘good’ in our lives: not as easy as it sounds. In gratitude journals, staff wrote about positive things in their lives and included photos of things that make them smile. At least one staff person continues this practice a year later, and took up morning yoga to aid in her positive, mindful thinking!

Like many other agencies without funding for wellness activities, coming up with new, engaging ideas without equipment or incentives has been our biggest struggle. Staff also burn out on the idea of being ‘well.’ Our small office has tried to overcome these challenges by having fun (see photos), asking for suggestions for new wellness challenges, and using donated items for incentives. Managers also encourage wellness activity breaks.

Rebooting our efforts last summer, wellness has extended to the rest of The Resource Connection organization! Guest speaker Jean Steel kicked it off with “Learning to Run Wild: Motivational Wellness Wisdom.” Staff from the food bank, admin office and crisis center now participates in WIC’s monthly wellness challenges. Go team!

A little fun goes a long way toward boosting staff wellness and morale at The Resource Connection.

Several local WIC agencies have offered to mentor their peers in developing and sustaining WIC Worksite Wellness efforts. While this helps them fulfill a requirement for WWW recertification, they also do it because they want to share their enthusiasm, experience, and success! If your agency would like to be mentored – either to get started or to keep going – please contact Margaret at CWA: maumann@calwic.org. Your friendly peers await the chance to work some “wellness magic!”

What are YOU waiting for?
“Wellness for the American Red Cross has been explosive!” A complete re-visioning resulted in our new program, “FitWIC.” Designed solely from staff input, Wellness Leads introduced FitWIC to their peers at Rollout Events in all seven offices last February, featuring a healthy breakfast or lunch, decorations, walking routes, posters, a new program overview, and prizes. This also began a weeklong series of activities focused on walking, financial wellness, sleep, and mental health. Another focus area was encouraging 44 staff in completing their unique wellness professional development goals. These three examples illustrate the power of goals and support at work:

“**My wellness goal was to complete a half marathon in less than two hours. I exceeded it, finishing third in my age division in 1:43. FitWIC pushed me to achieve this long-time personal goal. I’m in the best running shape in years and look forward to running more half marathons!”**

— Haley Golich

“My goal was to add fruits and vegetables to dinner. Working at WIC, I’ve learned more about fruits and veggies and creative ways to include them in meals —many different ones I never would have tried if it were not for my co-workers. I’ve started to feel healthy and my kids eat more fruits and vegetables now.”

— Alondra Hanton

“**My goal was to walk up to three days a week. I’d gained a lot of weight during both pregnancies. This goal has helped me to lose 25 pounds and I look forward to seeing more of it come off. I love taking my walks to unwind, breathing the fresh air, and meeting the neighbors around our office.”**

— Jesabel Soto-Durso

California WIC Association is also a small “agency” with limited time and funds, striving to walk the talk of wellness every day. We used our office move in late 2016 as a chance to revive our WWW efforts. We’ve explored new walking routes, established a healthy snack corner, and focused on nourishing our flexibility — not to mention mental health in these trying times — with yoga breaks in the office common space.

Curious — and disappointed to have missed the workshop at our own Annual Conference — one staff member attended a seminar about the connection between inflammation, immunity, and the gut microbiome. Summarizing it for staff at a lunch-and-learn generated some interesting and supportive discussion about the variety of nutrition messages in our society.

In September, we hosted a wellness webinar on Happiness at Work (listen to the recording here: [http://calwic.org/events/wic-works-webinars](http://calwic.org/events/wic-works-webinars)) to support local agencies in your recertification.

YOU are our inspiration, so keep up the great work and send in your stories for the next WIC Watch! CWA started 2017 with a team-building experience at Sacramento’s Escape Room!
Tell Your Story & Inspire Your Colleagues!

Send us your agency’s article ideas, photos, and best practices any time, and by March 1, 2018 for the Spring Conference Edition.

We’ve moved! Have you? Keep us updated!

To update your e-mail or mailing address, request more copies, or submit article ideas or drafts, contact Margaret Aumann at:

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916.572.0700 phone • 916.572.0760 fax

CNC Scholarships Are Back!

CWA is thrilled to announce the return of California Nutrition Corps (CNC) Scholarships for the 2017-2018 term! As a reminder, applicants may apply once per category, must be currently employed in a California WIC program with at least 6 months of continuous employment at the time of application, and currently enrolled in a dietetic internship, undergraduate, or graduate program. Due to limited funding, we will not be issuing scholarships to every applicant, rather awarding applicants that have compelling essays and demonstrated financial needs.

IMPORTANT DATES:

November 15, 2017 – Applications available at www.calwic.org
January 15, 2018, 3:00 pm – Original applications due in the CWA office
March 9, 2018 – Applicants notified via regular mail

Save the Dates

California Breastfeeding Summit
January 25-27 • Anaheim, CA
californiabreastfeeding.org

NWA Leadership Conference
Feb. 26-28 • Wash. DC • nwica.org

CWA Annual Conference & Trade Show
April 29-May 2 • San Diego
calwic.org/events

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