Plumas Rural Services Excels in Primary Prevention Efforts

With a caseload 450 participants spread over four sites, the Plumas Rural Services WIC Program may be small, but their list of accomplishments is long. Director Katy Dyrr and her team work intensively with schools and other community organizations to address the increasing problem of childhood obesity.

Staff give presentations on healthy eating and physical activity to local grade-school children during the year.

The Program sponsored Growing Gardeners, a community garden project at two local elementary schools, that helps children learn to grow foods and encourages them to eat more fruits and vegetables. Students and teachers manage the gardens and WIC families volunteer in them and share in the harvest.

The WIC booth is a strong presence at the Quincy Farmers Market and the Plumas County Children’s Fair. Staff use this exposure to promote physical activity and to engage families in activities that are part of the 5-a-Day “Fruits and Veggies—More Matters” program.

Katy has linked up with Birth Partners, a private program, that provides prenatal and postpartum counseling, home-based breastfeeding support, infant massages, and transportation assistance to women to get to doctors’ appointments. With Katy’s coordination, Birth Partners will soon offer prenatal and breastfeeding classes in two outlying areas of the county.

WIC is the lead agency for the Mountain Interagency Lactation Coalition, and staff persons are active members of the Latino Advisory Committee, and the Health Advisory Committee.

WIC is involved with the Plumas Dental coalition providing Fluoride Varnish clinics twice a year at each of the WIC sites.

Moreover, because three of the four WIC sites are co-located with other health and social service programs, WIC staff can help families get access to a wide array of services, including family planning, immunization, mental health, social services, and public health nurses.

For their strong ties to the community and their successful efforts to get WIC families the health and social services they need, Plumas Rural Services, Inc. received the WIC Best Practices recognition award for Excellence in Health Linkages, Program Promotion and Outreach. Congratulations for connecting the dots and providing such a comprehensive package of services to the mothers and children of Plumas County!

Left to right: Carmen Lopez, WNA, holds a seat as a commissioner for First Five Plumas. Here she is with Katy Dyrr, RD, Debbie Jones, Assistant, Pam Nixon WNA.

For more information, please contact Katy Dyrr at kdyrr@plumasruralservices.org.
Camino Health Center WIC: Staff Development a Top Priority

Director Robin Bradley and Program Supervisor, Janel Rosenbaum looked at their clinic and wondered, “How can we do what we do better?” They envisioned an efficient clinic with satisfied staff and participants who received quality WIC services. Their answer? Staff development! Camino Health Center was, and still is, dealing with an explosive growth in participation (10% in less than two years) and staff vacancies.

It would have been easy to let training take a back seat. Instead they took a stance to make developing their team as stronger professionals and individuals a top priority. With this vision in mind, they decided to make everyone a WIC Nutrition Assistants (WNAs) which created a very cross-trained staff able to work very effectively both with direct client services and as counselors.

The next step was to invest in the WNAs. They made it a top priority to provide their staff with every learning opportunity they could. In fact, you may have met a few of the Camino Health Center WIC Staff at the CWA conference; the whole agency attended! Robin and Janel also noticed a change in the quality of their monthly staff meetings which now include nutrition education in which the WNAs facilitate the discussion. The transition took some effort, but ask them today and they’ll say absolutely the outcome was worth the struggle.

Camino Health Center’s devotion to staff development has provided a win-win situation for both clients and staff. Clients are receiving quality nutrition education and customer service from the moment they call the WIC office and clinic flow is much smoother. Staff feel support and encouragement for their professional and personal development. Staff meetings and training sessions are far more meaningful because everyone can think through and provide feedback on core issues of the program. Criteria for recruiting staff have changed as well. Whereas before the transition they would hire staff with entry-level clerical skills and promote a select few to be WNAs, now every entry-level recruit is capable of completing the WNA training.

These innovative practices won Camino Health Center the WIC Branch Best Practices Recognition award at the CWA Annual Conference for Innovative Career Development. Congratulations!

For more information, please contact Robin Bradley at rbradley@caminohc.org.

Best Practices Award Winners

Antelope Valley WIC Earns Program Evaluation Stars

The team’s efforts in breastfeeding promotion and support, health linkages, integration, and outreach efforts drew high praise from the State WIC Branch.

Director Pamela Stanley is happy that her last two Program Evaluations have had multiple Areas of Excellence and Noteworthy Activities and not a single Area of Required Action (ARA). It wasn’t always so, and it has taken time to work through the “dings.” Pamela notes that staff training is key: “When there is frequent staff turnover,” she says, “continuity is lost, so it is key to have regular trainings.”

Pamela’s approach has been to tackle a couple of cited items at a time and guide her team to work on them consistently until they are 100 percent successful in doing them correctly. At meetings, staff members are reminded of the items that need corrective action and a question-and-answer session at every meeting helps staff bring problem areas to the fore and get clarification on processes.

Now, instead of dings, Antelope Valley is getting kudos. The Program Evaluation team has taken note of the clinic’s breastfeeding promotion and support, health linkages, integration, and outreach. Antelope Valley’s breastfeeding rates have risen to 14.4 percent (from 12.2 percent)—a reflection of their sustained commitment to provide breastfeeding-friendly services. IBCLCs and Certified Lactation Educators make hospital visits to provide support to new moms, and incentives are given to mothers who breastfeed their babies until three, six, nine, and twelve months.

Antelope Valley WIC, in collaboration with Antelope Valley Partners in Health, hosts an annual “Spring Tea” event around Mothers Day, offering an evening with a panel of health-care specialists who discuss medical, nutrition and mental health issues. The program is well received by low-income women in the community.

As well as participating on numerous community task forces, WIC staff partner with the Antelope Valley Best Baby Collaborative, a clearinghouse for referrals to prenatal services, transportation to medical appointments, and mental health care.

Now when Program Evaluators come to Antelope Valley, Pamela is pleased to show them the sustained excellence of her program operations.

“When there is frequent staff turnover, continuity is lost, so it is key to have regular trainings.”

For more information, please contact Pamela Stanley at Pamela.Stanley@avhospital.org.
Merced County WIC Shows Fun Ways to Promote Fruits and Veggies

Merced County WIC Director Bill Ruth and his team received the WIC Branch Best Practices recognition award for Notable Customer Service Innovations for 2006. And with good reason. He and his WIC team set their sights on getting more of their WIC families to take home fruits and vegetables from the county’s Farmers Market. Thanks to their creative outreach efforts, dedication, and hard work, redemption rates of Farmers Market coupons in Merced County have risen dramatically in the past year.

Bill has always been a passionate supporter of locally grown, fresh produce. When he joined Merced County WIC six years ago, he was dismayed to find the redemption rate for Farmers Market coupons at only 25 percent. Bill learned that neighboring Madera County WIC’s excellent redemption rates for their Farmers Market coupons came from actually stationing WIC staff at the Farmers Market. Taking a leaf from their book, Merced WIC Program Assistant Virginia Murillo developed a creative outreach plan:

Staff handed out tickets that could be exchanged for coupons at the local Farmers Market. Issuing coupons at the Farmers Market site proved an effective strategy. The WIC table there quickly became popular as participants came to claim their fruit and veggie coupons.

The WIC team discontinued the autodialer system of appointment reminders and instead had staff members phone participants to speak with them personally, not only reminding them of their appointment dates but also encouraging them to redeem their Farmers Market tickets at the market for coupons.

Virginia Murillo and Nutrition Coordinator, Judy Harse have worked on making the weekend Farmers Market events fun: they have organized a raffle with prizes donated from community vendors. The “Wheel of Fun Facts”, with nutrition trivia questions is a hit with Farmers Market participants and a great way to promote healthy eating.

Bill and his staff visit the five farm camps in their county to educate families about WIC and enroll eligible women and children.

Appointment no-show rates have decreased, and Merced WIC has maintained a case-load of 100 percent for the past year. Bill has organized outreach efforts with local health providers, faith-based organizations, and Food Stamps personnel. A pastor for 31 years, Bill has truly nurtured a strong group of workers who are committed to providing the best care they can to the families they serve. All these innovations are adding up to healthier eating for WIC families.

“In a year, Farmers Market redemption rates rose from 49 to 86 percent. The team is determined to achieve a 100 percent redemption rate on their fruit and veggie coupons this year.”

For more information, please contact Bill Ruth at bruth@mercedcaa.org.
The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) handles areas such as disease surveillance, environmental health, health promotion, prevention of chronic diseases, and infectious disease control. The WIC Supplemental Nutrition Program (as we are now officially titled) is within the Department’s Center for Family Health, as are Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health, the Office of Family Planning, and Genetic Disease. It is important to note that WIC, with an annual budget approaching $1 billion, is the largest program in the new Department.

The Center for Family Health is headed by DHS veteran Catherine Camacho, who reports to the Chief Deputy Director of Policy and Programs, Dr. Bonnie Sorensen, who was recently appointed from the State of Florida Health Department, where she oversaw WIC. The first director of the new Department of Public Health is Dr. Mark Horton, former health officer for Orange County. CWA staff and members were thrilled to welcome both Drs. Horton and Sorensen at the Capitol Breastfeeding Walk on August 7, where Dr. Horton presented the Governor’s Proclamation of Breastfeeding Awareness Month. CWA leaders and staff will be meeting with the DPH leadership team again in September to discuss the role and future of WIC as the Department plans innovative strategies to improve the public’s health.
Learner-Centered Education Engages

We all know how difficult it is for nutrition education programs to move families toward healthier eating. Understanding how hard it is for education alone to change people’s behavior, many WIC centers have improved their nutrition services by adopting Learner-Centered Education (LCE) techniques for their individual and group education sessions. In order to find out whether LCE was really a valuable approach, ten WIC agencies, in partnership with the UC Berkeley Center for Weight and Health, have been involved in testing Learner-Centered Education (LCE). The results of a recent evaluation show that LCE is indeed an effective tool.

As we reported earlier, California WIC, in partnership with the UC Berkeley Center for Weight and Health, was awarded a Special Project grant in 2004 from Food and Nutrition Services to use a research-based model to evaluate the impact of Learner-Centered Education.

“"I learned a lot because I said, 'You know what—for my little girl's health, I am going to do it.' It will be more work to do it, but it is for my girl.”

Ten California WIC agencies participated in this evaluation study: five as intervention agencies and five as control agencies. Intervention agencies participated in a year-long training program sponsored by the WIC Branch, called Finding the Teacher Within, to help implement learner-centered education principles and practices throughout their agency. Control agencies continued to use traditional education practices.

The evaluation study focused on a Fruit and Vegetable Class to identify WIC family changes in behavior, attitude, and knowledge related to including fruits and vegetables in their diets. Seven different evaluation tools were used to collect information from agency leaders, teachers, class observers, and participants before and after the institution of the learner-centered class.

Mothers who attended the Learner-Centered Fruit and Vegetable classes adopted newer ways of offering fruits and veggies to their families.
Branch Updates

Moms in Changing Food Habits

LCE Helps Change Behaviors

Overall, the evaluation shows that mothers in the group using the LCE techniques came away from the class with a deeper understanding of the benefits of eating fruits and vegetables and more changes in their behaviors around providing fruits and vegetables to their families.

In follow-up focus groups, intervention group mothers identified specific reasons that information from the fruit and vegetable class was important to their lives. Control group mothers, on the other hand, tended to reiterate general knowledge about fruits and vegetables.

The mothers in the LCE group also seemed to adopt more new ways of offering fruits and vegetables to their families as a result of attending the class compared to control group mothers.

“Before the class, I used to just eat apples, oranges and bananas; we didn’t expand to the other fruits like kiwi. I never had kiwi until after this class.”

WIC Staff Learn New Techniques

The WIC staff teaching the class were also more satisfied with their own experience. Intervention teachers had the chance to give feedback to the class designers while the class was being developed, and they could see the revisions that were made based on their feedback.

Because of the emphasis on open-ended questions in the Finding the Teacher Within class, rather than simple identification of facts, the staff teaching the class became more confident using the types of questions that may not have a right or wrong answer. As a result, staff receiving the training may be more comfortable with class discussions that promote sharing personal experience, problem solving and creative thinking.

Sharing LCE

The evaluation team will be compiling a resource kit for WIC agencies to use as guidelines for implementing a learner-centered approach to nutrition education. Watch for an announcement of these web-based tools available soon.

In addition, a report describing the findings from the evaluation will be available by the end of the year, and the evaluators will share their results widely through conferences and publications.

“Certain vegetables I didn’t know how to prepare, so now I’m this amazing mom.”

"My children were paying attention to the class and from then on the eldest eats more vegetables. She was a bit more fat, and since then she lost weight. When we shop, she asks me to buy more vegetables and that is what she takes to school—the small carrots."

For more information, please contact Nancy Crocker at Nancy.Crocker@cdph.ca.gov.
Career Corner: Ask Nancy
Nancy Nesa, MA, RD, Statewide Career Development Coordinator

California WIC is working to provide you with the latest information on education programs and resources to help you achieve your career goals in community nutrition. If you would like more information on career development programs, e-mail Nancy at nnesa@projects.sdsu.edu

Q. If I work for WIC, can I get any help paying off my student loans?
A. YES! If you have a Federal Perkins student loan, under certain circumstances you may be able to request that the loan be “discharged/discontinued,” and you will not have to repay the balance. Guidelines include working full time in an agency (like WIC) that provides services to high-risk families from low-income communities. Information is available in the Student Guide, Financial Aid from the US Department of Education, or by calling 1-800-433-3243. You can also access the information on the Web site www.studentaid.ed.gov under “repayment,” or at http://studentaid.ed.gov/students/attachments/funding/DischargeCancellation0708.pdf.

Q. Is ADA changing the requirements for dietitians?
A. No changes have been made yet, although the requirements are still under consideration. A bit of history will explain why. In 2005 the ADA Dietetics Education Task Force presented a recommendation that a Master’s degree be required for an entry-level dietitian. However, in response to ADA members and many organizations across the country, including California WIC programs and the National WIC Association (NWA), that recommendation was not acted upon by the ADA House of Delegates (HOD). Instead, in the summer of 2006, the HOD established a new task force, Phase 2 Future Practice & Education, which is looking at the future of dietetics and the educational requirements (“Vision of Dietetics Practice in 2017”). The task force is working with major organizations like NWA and is made up of a much broader range of dietetic professionals than were on the 2005 task force. The Branch Chief for Nutrition Services at the North Carolina WIC Program, Alice Lennihan, MPH, RD, LDN, is on this Phase 2 Future Practice & Education Task Force and is doing a great job representing the future needs of public health and WIC. The identification of future practice roles is focused on the Dietetics Technician, Registered (DTR), and the Registered Dietitian (RD) to delineate what is needed for entry-level practice. The task force is also identifying the future practice roles of advanced practice RDs.

Here are a couple of key points that are significant to WIC that the task force has already addressed:

• The Community Nutritionist-RD (someone who is culturally competent and able to communicate in languages besides English) will be an increasingly important practice role for the entry-level RD in 2017. As the focus of health care shifts from illness to wellness and disease prevention, there will be more opportunities offering new and expanded roles for RDs and other nutrition professionals in community nutrition and dietetics.
• State-Level Public Health Nutritionist – The RD in this job category will play an important role using specialized knowledge and experience in public health nutrition. These RDs will assess community nutrition and health needs; design and develop nutrition interventions; provide training, technical assistance and oversight to community nutrition program staff; and provide leadership in nutrition in the public health arena.
• Career Ladder - The Task Force is in the process of articulating a career ladder for the profession of dietetics, including the DTR and RDs with various degrees (Bachelor’s or Master’s). California WIC’s career development emphasis uniquely positions WIC to utilize a career ladder for nutrition professionals. California WIC already utilizes a nutrition matrix where nutritional risk of participants determines the type of intervention and the level of professional or para-professional staff to work with them.

For more information about the work of the task force, please view the previous reports posted on the ADA Web site at: http://www.eatright.org/cps/rde/xchg/ada/hs.xsl/governance_10249_ENU.HTML.htm.
Mentoring Program Will “Pass the Torch” to Emerging Leaders

At this year’s Fall Management Conference, we are establishing a WIC Mentoring program. The purpose of the WIC mentoring process is to capitalize on the experience and wisdom of long-time WIC directors; foster networking and communication between WIC directors and supervisors; and provide an opportunity for creative and strategic planning.

Seasoned WIC Directors will be paired with “rookies” for an ongoing mentoring relationship in the coming year. The mentors will act as informal guides and allies for their WIC mentees, with a goal of assisting, inspiring, and challenging new or recent WIC executives to become confident managers and creative leaders.

One of the most valuable assets your career can have is a good mentor. A mentor can show a protégé the ropes, help her/him to decode organizational policies, sort out political realities, and be a non-judgmental sounding board for work-related problems or ideas. Newer WIC directors and supervisors may be so busy with tactical issues (day-to-day challenges of running clinics, staffing, managing caseload, and ensuring compliance) that they haven’t had time to spend on more strategic thinking. Mentors can help emerging managers to be “more strategic”. Strategic actions reflect one’s ability to consider the big picture, recognize important trends or patterns, anticipate issues, and formulate contingencies – these are skills a really great WIC manager needs!

MENTORING CHECKLIST

If you are a mentor, expect to...

- Spend time establishing a relationship with your partner. This will probably evolve through in-person meetings or telephone conversations in which you learn about their background and current challenges.
- Share your background and experience, the challenges you’ve faced, and the ways in which you’ve overcome them.
- Work with your partner to establish goals for your mentoring relationship.
- Prepare to do a lot of listening and provide input, suggestions, or perspective, based on your partner’s situation. Ask for feedback from your partner about the value of your mentoring.

If you are a mentee...

- Be prepared to share your background, your job and life experience, and your challenges with your mentor.
- Set aside time for a combination of in-person meetings and telephone conversations.
- Prepare for your mentoring conversations, listing topics you want to discuss, situations in which you’d like another perspective, or areas in which you’d like help.

See the complete Mentoring Guide by Helene Dublisky on our website at www.calwic.org.

From the WIC Grapevine...

- Departing WIC Directors: Goodbye and heartfelt thanks for your dedicated service to WIC families: Susan Garcia, Del Norte Clinics, Sheila James from San Benito Health Foundation, Linda Malcolm from Placer county, Emma Arroyove from Marin County, and Tracie Barrow from Medocino County, Lynda Young, Ventura County, Gueidi Beltran from La Clinica de la Raza, Carol Kronberg from Sonoma County and Marianne Hutton from Sonoma County Indian Health

- Welcome Aboard, New WIC Directors: Rose McIsaac, Del Norte Clinics, Kelly Irwin, San Benito Health Foundation, Karen Klamann, Placer County, Gueidi Beltran, Marin County, and Katie Rowe, Ventura County.
vent the Republican holdouts (their votes are needed on fiscal bills). The negotiations are focused on expanding medical coverage to nearly all of the 4.9 million Californians without it. The plan would require all Californians to have insurance and would give subsidies to those unable to afford coverage. It would also address the problems of the private insurance market and require healthcare providers to reveal the costs of their services to foster competition. To keep up with the fast-moving process, log on to wwwhttp://calhealthreform.org,

**CWA-SPONSORED BILLS:**

**SB 22 (Migden)** Breastfeeding Promotion and Support. This bill would allow California WIC to expand our successful Breastfeeding Peer Counseling programs to include more local sites and asks DHS to simplify the MediCal reimbursement policies for lactation support and breastpumps. CWA worked with the powerful CA Hospital Association (CHA) on amendments regarding training staff in hospitals with low exclusive breastfeeding rates, in order to gain their support. There currently is no money specifically designated in the bill, but we will be working with the Governor’s office on that issue. After a bit of a tussle between bill author Senator Migden (D-SF) and Appropriations Committee Chair Mark Leno (D-SF), who is challenging her in an upcoming primary, SB 22 got out of Assembly Appropriations on August 30. The bill will go to the Assembly Floor for concurrence.

**AB 420 (Wolk)** was also being sponsored by the 100% Campaign. This bill clarifies previous legislation (SB 437, Escutia), requiring WIC sites with high numbers and high need to participate in the WIC gateway system only to the extent funding is available for these activities. The bill would permit all other local WIC agencies to use the WIC gateway system at their option. This bill is now a two year bill and we are working with our co-sponsors on all of our options to address this important policy. Disappointingly, the Governor also blue-pencilled funding for early feasibility work on the WIC Gateway, effectively stalling any progress on this issue for the coming year. Dead for year, possible revival if Health Care Reform Bills pick it up.

**CWA-SPONSORED SUPPORTS:**

**Health Access:**

**AB 1 (Laird & Dymally), SB 32 (Steinberg), AB 8 (Nunez), SB 48 (Perata)**

These bills would all ensure that children receive health insurance in California. CWA strongly supports this policy! **All passed Appropriations Suspense File; To Respective Floors.**

**Nutrition and Obesity Prevention:**

**SB 107 (Alquist)** Healthy Foods in Low-Income Communities. Funds retail assistance to increase healthy foods in neighborhood stores. Dead for year. Bill now contained in SB 48. **SB 48 is on Assembly Appropriations Suspense File; Hearing on August 30th.**

**SB 20 (Torlakson)** School Nutrition Funding. Increases meal reimbursements to school and child care programs that provide more nutritious meals. **This bill has been completely gutted and amended to be a bill on Charter Schools. No longer relevant.**

**SB 120 (Padilla)** Chain Restaurant Labeling. Requires chain restaurants, as specified, to provide information on calories, fats and sodium on menus, and calories on menu boards. **Passed Assembly Approps on August 30. Is headed to Assembly Floor for a final vote.**

**AB 898 (Saldana)** Health Promotoras in Schools. Pilot program that utilizes “Promotores de Salud” to deliver nutrition education in schools. Set for Assembly Health April 17. **Dead for year.**

**AB 1472 (Leno)** Healthy Places Act. Requires DPH to provide TA and to community organizations and local health agencies to evaluate land-use planning decisions to ensure they promote health. Assembly Health April 17. **Did not pass Senate Approps Suspense File, but may move forward later this week.**

**SB 24 (Torlakson)** Cigarette “Fees” for Preventive Services. Being amended. (CWA to Watch). Dead for year.

**Hunger and Poverty Prevention:**

**AB 21 (Jones)** State EITC. Establishes a state Earned Income Tax Credit for working poor families. **Dead for year.**

**AB 433 (Beall)** Food Stamps. Requires DSS to rename the Food Stamp Program and establish “categorical eligibility” for the newly-named program among Medi-Cal recipients. **Dead for year.**

**Miscellaneous:**

**AB 834 (Hayashi)** Oral Health. Improves and enhances community dental disease prevention programs operated by county health departments and local partners. Dead for year, unless it gets revived later this week.
Annie’s Fruit Salsa and Cinnamon Chips

INGREDIENTS
- 2 kiwis, peeled and diced
- 2 Fuji/Golden Delicious apples - peeled, cored and diced
- 8 ounces raspberries
- 1 pound strawberries
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 3 tablespoons fruit preserves, any flavor
- 10 (10 inch) flour tortillas
- Butter flavored cooking spray
- 2 cups cinnamon sugar

DIRECTIONS
1. In a large bowl, thoroughly mix kiwis, Golden Delicious apples, raspberries, strawberries, white sugar, brown sugar and fruit preserves. Cover and chill in the refrigerator at least 15 minutes.
2. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C).
3. Coat one side of each flour tortilla with butter flavored cooking spray. Cut into wedges and arrange in a single layer on a large baking sheet. Sprinkle wedges with desired amount of cinnamon sugar. Spray again with cooking spray.
4. Bake in the preheated oven 8 to 10 minutes. Repeat with any remaining tortilla wedges. Allow to cool approximately 15 minutes. Serve with chilled fruit and spice mixture.

By Ann Renzino Page. Taken from AllRecipes.com
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YOU HAVE A STORY TO TELL!
You have a program to showcase!
Contribute to the WIC Watch.
Upcoming Newsletters are already being planned around the following themes:

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<td>Spring 2008</td>
<td>WICONnect: The Shape of Things to Come</td>
<td>March 1, 2008</td>
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Dates Changed!
2008 CWA Annual Conference
WICONnect: The Shape of Things to Come
May 6-8, 2008
(Preconference-May 5th)
Town and Country Resort
& Convention Center
500 Hotel Circle, San Diego

California WIC Association
1107 9th Street, Suite 625,
Sacramento, CA 95814