



**ENERGIZE YOUR LIFE!**  
**EAT HEALTHY-BE ACTIVE**

This newsletter is produced by the *Nutrition Education Network of Washington* to enhance communication and coordination among those who educate Washington families about nutrition and food. *Energize Newsletter* for *Nutrition Educators* shares brief information about programs and materials that support healthful and enjoyable eating.

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#### SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

*Energize Newsletter for Nutrition Educators* can be sent to you electronically each month. There is no charge. To subscribe or unsubscribe, contact Christa Albice, WSU Puyallup, 253-445-4541, e-mail [albice@wsu.edu](mailto:albice@wsu.edu).

To access past issues, go to <http://nutrition.wsu.edu/take5/index.html>.

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## This Month's Focus-

### *Obesity Prevention: What's Working?*

Most nutrition educators in Washington State have been involved one way or another in efforts to curb the rise of obesity, particularly among children and teens. Our efforts have been diverse: serving on a coalition, developing a program, counseling a client, facilitating a class, participating in a research project, or using the *2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans'* first-ever focus on obesity. For a number of years, we have honed in on our nation's most pressing health epidemic because it has such far-reaching and long-term health consequences. We have heard about the cost of obesity in terms of medical expenses and lost work productivity. There also has been a cost in *preventing* obesity with grants and governmental programs, as well as funding provided by NGOs and the private sector. Although the problem has seemed insurmountable, there really is some good news. In this issue of the *Energize Newsletter for Nutrition Educators* we look at some of the positive signs that collectively we are making a difference in obesity and overweight prevention.

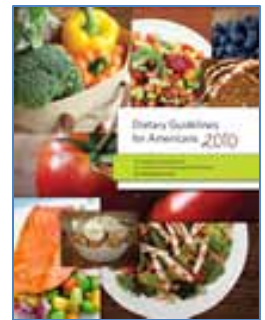


Image Source: USDA

**Local Words of Hope and Encouragement in Preventing Obesity** – Donna Johnson at the Center for Public Health Nutrition at the University of Washington, is upbeat about successes in obesity prevention, particularly in locations where there's a collaborative approach. "Everybody plays a part," she says. The steep increase in obesity rates has slowed down, and there's good reason for cautious optimism. Studies conducted recently show that multifaceted interventions can improve food choices and facilitate physical activity – and reduce body mass index (BMI) in some cases. Donna says that Washington State disproportionately succeeds in obtaining grants addressing obesity prevention because we are collaborative, and also because we have a good track record in meeting milestones and performance measures. "The nation literally looks to us as leaders. In the public health world, we have a stellar reputation," she says. When asked about the emphasis placed on kids, Donna commented, "It's really, really hard to lose weight and the success rates are not good. I have hope across the age spectrum but I'm especially excited about kids. There's more success in preventing excess weight gain and it will make it a whole lot easier for adults." Nutrition educators play an important role in achieving these successes, along with policy-makers, doctors and other health professionals advising patients, restaurant chains labeling menu items, child care providers working with kids and parents, schools offering healthful options, and cities creating walkable communities, just to name a few. (Contact: Donna Johnson, PhD, RD, Nutritional Sciences Associate Director, Center for Public Health Nutrition, University of Washington, 206-685-1068, [djohn@u.washington.edu](mailto:djohn@u.washington.edu).)

**Progress in Reducing Obesity Rates in Kids** – In an article recommended by Donna Johnson (see paragraph above), it appears the best route to reduce childhood obesity is a comprehensive approach throughout a community. Childhood obesity is reportedly going down in the cities of Philadelphia and New York City, and in the states of Mississippi and California. Common threads appear to include tougher standards for school meals, access to healthier foods in low-income neighborhoods, and posting nutrition information in restaurant chains. Many community efforts involve connecting local farms with schools and neighborhoods so that families can buy local fruits and vegetables. It's quite rewarding to read reports on how much progress is being made! (Source: "Declining childhood obesity rates – Where are we seeing the most progress?" Health Policy Snapshot, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, September 2012, accessed at [www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/reports/issue\\_briefs/2012/rwjf401163](http://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/reports/issue_briefs/2012/rwjf401163))

**Local Research on Obesity Prevention and Media Literacy** – In an interesting collaboration between Washington State University and the University of Washington, a multidisciplinary team will develop a media literacy nutrition education program to help prevent obesity. The program will target children ages 9 to 14 and their parents, and will help them understand the impact of the media on their food choices and purchases. Jill Armstrong Shultz, one of the project's co-directors at WSU, commented that child health advocates typically encourage families to limit the amount of time that kids watch television, particularly during mealtime, but the reality is that people will be exposed to media and would benefit by knowing how to deal with its messaging about food. Most TV ads are for less healthy options, and those ads can have a powerful influence on the foods and beverages that children want to consume. The WSU-UW project will address the dynamics between parents, children and the media as they affect children's food selection. Focus groups have been conducted and the next step is to create the program, followed by two years of pilot testing. Jill shared a comment from one parent who said, "[food advertising] causes problems because they [the kids] heard it was nutritious. The TV told 'em that, so it's true." The project with the Murrow Center for Media and Health Promotion Research in the Edward R. Murrow College of Communication at WSU, WSU Extension, WSU Department of Human Development, and UW College of Education is funded by the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture. (Contact: Jill Armstrong Shultz, Extension Specialist in Nutrition and Public Health and Professor in the College of Pharmacy, WSU, 509-335-6181, [armstroj@wsu.edu](mailto:armstroj@wsu.edu) or Erica Austin, Director, Murrow Center for Media and Health Promotions, 509-335-8840, [eaustin@wsu.edu](mailto:eaustin@wsu.edu).)

**Recommendations to Hasten Progress in Obesity Prevention** – Making headway in obesity prevention indeed does take a collaborative approach. A consensus report by the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, identified five recommendations: 1) Integrate physical activity every day in every way, 2) Market what matters for a healthy life, 3) Make healthy foods and beverages available everywhere, 4) Activate employers and health care professionals, and 5) Strengthen schools as the heart of health. The IOM writes, "On their own, accomplishing any one of these might help speed up progress in preventing obesity, but together, their effects will be reinforced, amplified, and maximized." (Source: "Accelerating progress in obesity prevention: Solving the weight of the nation," IOM Consensus Report, May 8, 2012, accessed at [www.iom.edu/Reports/2012/Accelerating-Progress-in-Obesity-Prevention.aspx](http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2012/Accelerating-Progress-in-Obesity-Prevention.aspx))



Image Source: USDA FoodTracker

**SuperTracker** - Nutrition educators have a terrific resource to help the people we serve keep track of their food and exercise intake, and to manage their diets to achieve a healthy weight. The SuperTracker by USDA was designed to help people apply the healthy eating patterns of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans to eat nutritiously from each food group and manage their weight. As we know, self-monitoring is an important behavior when working toward behavior change and can have a powerful effect on weight management and overall health. The SuperTracker is an ideal tool for this. Here are some of its components: Food Tracker allows

users to journal what and how much they eat; Physical Activity Tracker monitors the intensity and duration of exercise, MyJournal is useful to note the location and mood, and MyWeight Manager tracks progress toward weight goals. A new feature allows the user to set calorie intake goals. The old pen-and-pencil food journals could be boring, but using this tool is actually fun! You can see with each food consumed your progress toward meeting your individualized recommendations from each color-coded food group. Looking up foods is easy, and you can save favorite foods you often consume. Using MyReports, the user can print out portions of the tracker to bring to an individual consultation session or class. Best of all it's free! USDA's Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion was delighted to announce in September that in less than a year (the site was launched December 22, 2011) more than a million people have registered as users. Robert Post, Deputy Director for CNPP says that lots of people have made it a regular part of their lives. Check it out at [www.supertracker.usda.gov](http://www.supertracker.usda.gov).

**OUR MISSION:** The Nutrition Education Network coordinates nutrition education efforts to communicate consistent, positive and relevant messages to increase awareness of healthful and enjoyable eating among low-income families. *Energize* is one way that the Network shares information and resources to accomplish this mission.

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## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

**Gifts from the Kitchen** – Holiday decorations and gifts appeared in stores even while they were selling Halloween costumes last month, so it's not too early to start helping our clients with ideas for healthy, low-cost food gifts they can make. For an off-the-shelf program about making healthy holiday food mixes in a jar, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension offers a downloadable Power Point presentation along with a colorful two-page handout that includes recipes and tips. The mixes save people money, help them eat healthier, and make great gifts that can be assembled together with family members. For the free tools called "Food Mixes in a Jar," go to <http://food.unl.edu/web/fnh/food-mixes-in-a-jar>



Image courtesy of University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension

**Holiday Resources for Nutrition Educators** – Wishing someone "healthy, happy holidays" may be easier said than done. Several resources from Food and Health Communications can help. Keeping holiday foods in proportion (and portion) is illustrated in *MyPlate Holiday Poster*. The *Holiday Lights: Survival Tips to Keep Off the Pounds Poster* offers suggestions for exercise and healthy food during this hectic time. A *Holiday Tear-pad* provides simple tips to modify recipes and substitute ingredients for better health. For a presentation to a class of people with diabetes, *Managing Diabetes for the Holidays* includes a ready-made power point presentation. To order these and other holiday-related nutrition education materials, go to [www.nutritioneducationstore.com](http://www.nutritioneducationstore.com) or call 800-462-2352.

## WASHINGTON GROWN

**Fresh This Month – Cranberries!** Holiday meals present a perfect time for cranberries, and chances are the ones we purchase in local supermarkets are grown in our own state. Kim Patten from Washington State University Long Beach specializes in research on cranberry production in our state and says that fresh cranberries in stores in Washington State are very likely grown by the 110 local producers. Those labeled Ocean Spray in particular are from Washington, also those sold under the Safeway



Steve Gray, Long Beach cranberry farmer examining his crop. Courtesy of WSU Long Beach

store brand label may be as well. Canned cranberries and those in dried forms are produced in Washington, although the demand is so high that these products may include cranberries from Oregon and British Columbia. Patten's current research has found cranberry varieties that are more suitable for Washington's growing conditions, and could double or triple production for local growers. For cranberry nutrition information, he recommends [www.cranberryinstitute.org/](http://www.cranberryinstitute.org/) and [www.oceanspray.com](http://www.oceanspray.com). For local cranberry information and to visit the cranberry bogs, see <http://cranberrymuseum.com>. (Contact: Kim Patten, Extension Professor, WSU Long Beach Research and Extension Unit, 360-642-2031, [pattenk@wsu.edu](mailto:pattenk@wsu.edu).)



### EAT TOGETHER EAT BETTER – Family Meals Focus

*Because our readers have told us that Family Meals is a hot topic, in the May 2011 issue we began a small section on recent news relating to this topic and our long-standing signature program, Eat Together, Eat Better.*

**Family Meals Encouraged to Prevent Obesity in Kids** – Since 2007, pediatricians have recommended to parents that they eat meals with their kids to promote a healthy weight. The American Academy of Pediatrics states "Encouraging family meals in which parents and children eat together is an evidence-based way to prevent obesity." Family meals are just what the doctor ordered! (Source: Barlow SE and the Expert Committee, "Expert committee recommendations regarding the prevention, assessment, and treatment of child and adolescent overweight and obesity: Summary Report." *Pediatrics*, 120:S164-S192, 2007.)

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