



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.

STAFF

Kathleen Manenica, MS, CN
Executive Editor
State Program Coordinator, Food \$ense
253-445-4598
manenica@wsu.edu

Martha Marino, MA, RD, CD
Writer
206-817-1466
martha_marino@yahoo.com

Christa Albice
Circulation Services
253-445-4541
albice@wsu.edu

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.

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

Energize is a publication of the *Nutrition Education Network of Washington*, whose staff is responsible for its content.



This material was funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, contact your local DSHS Community Service Office.

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, political beliefs or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (800)795-3272 (voice) or (202)720-6382 (TTY). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

This Month's Focus- *Growing Groceries*

When people have access to fresh fruits and vegetables, their health is better than those who don't. Research also shows that kids and adults involved in gardening have better health, too. The more hands-on experience they have gardening, the more likely they are to eat the "fruits" of their labor, and they consume more produce than non-gardeners do. As nutrition educators know, diets that include more fruits and vegetables are associated with better nutritional status, less obesity, and reduced risk for diabetes, heart disease, and other chronic illnesses. In this issue of the *Energize Newsletter for Nutrition Educators*, we focus on Growing Groceries, including ways that Washingtonians can grow their own produce at home or in community gardens, and ways that some food assistance programs utilize locally grown fruits and vegetables.

Master Gardeners: Resources for Nutrition Educators – You likely have seen Master Gardener Volunteers (MGs) at a local farmers market or community event helping answer questions about plants, but that's just a slice of the volunteer work that they do. MGs, trained by Washington State University Extension, serve throughout the state and many are involved in programs that serve low-income individuals and families. As one example, in Cowlitz County, MG volunteers helped people build raised beds at their homes to grow vegetables. People were assigned a MG mentor and were required to maintain the garden for three years, attend a class by MG volunteers on vegetable gardening, and do all the work to maintain the garden. It was a great experience for clients who commented that they ate better because they could easily access fresh vegetables. In Island County, MGs distributed seeds or transplants at a food bank and taught people how to plant them at an adjacent demonstration garden.



Photo courtesy of WSU Master Gardeners Program

Nearly 5,000 volunteers have been certified in our state, and may be available to partner with nutrition educators for a program tailor-made for your clients. Tonie Fitzgerald, Master Gardener Program Leader, WSU Extension, says that the MG Program activities vary from county-to-county but with sufficient lead-time, you may explore projects such as MG volunteers teaching at a food bank community garden, assisting with setting up a rooftop garden at a low-income housing facility, doing one-shot or weekly classes, and more. To find a MG in your county, Tonie suggests that you go to <http://mastergardener.wsu.edu> and click on "I want to talk to a Master Gardener Volunteer," click on your county, then "Master Gardeners." Find the coordinator for the county, then get in touch with that person to explore partnership opportunities. (Contact: Tonie Fitzgerald, Master Gardener Program Leader, WSU Extension, 509-335-2859, tjfitz@wsu.edu.)

Community Gardens Grow More than Food and Flowers – People who participate in community gardens not only have access to nutritious, fresh produce, they also benefit socially from the experience. According to Tonie Fitzgerald (see above article), “Community gardens foster increased community involvement and pride among residents, increased neighborhood safety and activity, increased physical activity and a sense of wellbeing, and less isolation among residents. Additionally, community gardens bridge ethnic, economic, and age differences in neighborhoods.” The value extends beyond the gardeners themselves: more than 48 tons of produce were donated in 2012 to food banks or other community support agencies in Washington State. To learn more about community gardens and urban agriculture in your community, the Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington offers helpful resources at www.mrsc.org/subjects/parks/comgarden.aspx.



Photo courtesy of WSU
Master Gardeners Program

Master Gardeners Grow Produce for Food Bank – In the city of Shelton, Master Gardeners (MGs) and community volunteers plan, plant, grow, harvest, and deliver fresh produce to the local food bank, Saint's Pantry. Jeanne Rehwaldt, a Food \$ense Project Coordinator and Master Gardener at WSU Extension Mason County, says that Food \$ense nutrition educators then incorporate those seasonal foods into recipes that they demo for the food bank clients and offer them a taste sample along with the recipe. With donations from local service groups and fundraising efforts, garden plots are leased at Catalyst Park, a city park that was created from donated land. MGs and other volunteers have made a big difference in providing a bounty of healthful, fresh produce for food bank clients: in 2012, the large garden provided more than 2,000 pounds of produce and hundreds of gallons of leafy green vegetables. A new children's garden is being installed this spring and summer. Jeanne says that the great success of this partnership is that food bank clients are excited to try new recipes. She adds that because of the relationship they have developed with the educators that they see each week, a level of trust is built and clients are willing to try new things. (Contact: R. Jeanne Rehwaldt, Extension Coordinator Supervisor, WSU Extension Mason County, Food \$ense Nutrition and Master Gardener Programs, 360-427-9670 ext 688 or rehwaldt@wsu.edu.)

Innovative Farmer Partnerships with Bellingham Food Bank – While the donations of nonperishable foods from food drives help fill the shelves at food banks, it can be a challenge to provide nutritious fresh fruits and vegetables. Mike Cohen, director of the Bellingham Food Bank, says that two programs have been particularly successful there. The Small Potatoes Gleaning Program utilizes volunteers who pick unused tree fruit and other produce from local farms that have partnered with the food bank for this purpose. These orchardists typically grow Asian pears, plums, apples, and pears. On 24-hour's notice, volunteers head to the orchards where they may harvest in two or three locations a day during peak season. Homeowners can also offer their bounty, as many of the houses in Whatcom County have been built on former orchards. Last year Small Potatoes volunteers brought in 200,000 pounds of food that otherwise would have rotted, been plowed under, or otherwise wasted. With its Food Bank Fresh program, the Bellingham Food Bank contracts with nine local farms to guarantee the purchase of specific vegetables. Over time, the Food Bank has identified food crops that their customers like and that have a longer shelf life, including beets, cabbage, carrots, kale, spinach, turnips, and winter squash. A unique aspect of this program is that these foods are not “seconds”: they are grown expressly for the food bank, and the guaranteed contract benefits farmers, food bank, and hungry people. (Contact: Mike Cohen, Director, Bellingham Food Bank, 360-676-0392, mike@bellinghamfoodbank.org, www.bellinghamfoodbank.org. For a well-written guide for growing vegetables, see www.bellinghamfoodbank.org/documents/2013_Growing_Guide-1.pdf.)

Growing Groceries with Volunteers – Responding to dramatic rise in calls to WSU Snohomish County Extension from people interested in community and food bank gardens coupled with an increase in people seeking food at food banks, staff developed a volunteer program called Growing Groceries. Modeled after the Master Gardener program, it educates, guides, and advises people who want to start community gardens or gardens at churches, schools, or food banks. Sharon Collman at WSU Snohomish County Extension says that she encourages their trained volunteers to reach out to low income audiences. A second program, Growing Groceries with Families, targets limited-income, culturally diverse parents and preschool kids in the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP). This program spans the growing season from February to October, and teaches how to grow, care for, and prepare foods from home gardens. Families replicate the garden and nutrition activities at home, and have grown produce such as herbs, lettuce and strawberries in container gardens. Bick Hang, also at WSU Snohomish County Extension, says that parents enjoy that the program helps create a sense of community and a social network, and provides for enjoyable interaction with their kids. (Contact: Sharon Collman, 425-357-6025, collmans@wsu.edu, and Bick Hang, 425-357-6022, bickhang@wsu.edu, both at WSU Extension Snohomish County; info at <http://growinggroceries.wsu.edu>.)



Photo courtesy of WSU Snohomish County
Growing Groceries Program

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.

Please Copy This Newsletter! Feel free to copy any or all of this newsletter to share with others. We only ask that you credit the Nutrition Education Network of Washington and please let us know if you have made copies and to whom you distributed copies.

* Listing of products and goods in this newsletter does not imply endorsement.

Cornucopia of Best Practices Linking Food Banks and Farmers – In a brand-new section of the 2012 edition of the Washington Food Coalition's (WFC) manual of best practices by hunger relief organizations, nearly 60 pages are devoted to innovative program ideas to bring fresh and healthful foods to hunger relief agencies. These include a broad range of solutions such as victory gardens, building connections with local growers, obtaining donors to purchase fresh produce, backyard gleaning, encouraging gardening groups to plant a row for the hungry, and much more. Each tried-and-true endeavor is described in detail so that others can successfully replicate the program. The book produced by WFC called *Best Practices: Innovations and Solutions Developed by Hunger Relief Agencies in Washington State* can be ordered at www.wafoodcoalition.org/resources, available in print format or on Kindle. (Contact: Julie Washburn, Executive Director, Washington Food Coalition, 206-729-0501, Julie@wafoodcoalition.org, www.wafoodcoalition.org.)

Gardening in WIC – To increase fresh fruit and vegetable consumption among participants in the WIC Nutrition Program, several local project sites created gardening components in their educational efforts. To read about these and to consider trying a similar project, go to <https://sites.google.com/a/uw.edu/wic-local-projects-grants/home/local-project-spotlights>. Those that included community or home gardening were: Ellensburg, Klickitat, Okanogan, Pacific County, SK-Sea Tac, SK-White Center, and Wahkiakum. The projects were funded by a USDA grant for WIC Fruit and Vegetable Community Partnerships. (Contact: Sandy Cruz, WIC Nutrition Program, 360-236-3660, Sandra.cruz@doh.wa.gov.)

Food Stamps for Seeds and Seedlings – SNAP benefits (also known as Food Stamps or Basic Food) can be used to buy seeds and plants from any authorized SNAP retailer or farmers' market, which produce food for the household to eat. For information and to request posters see www.snapgardens.org.

WASHINGTON GROWN

Fresh This Month – Hurray! Most farmers markets around Washington State are now open! We now have 150 markets throughout our state. To find one near you, just use the handy map on the Washington State Farmers' Market Association website, www.wafarmersmarkets.com. In season now are herbs, asparagus, green beans, potatoes, radishes, rhubarb, spinach, and many varieties of greens and lettuce.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Master Gardener Program, which now is in most counties in Washington State, in every state in the nation, and in some countries around the globe, began in Seattle! In 1973, the first program began, and is part of WSU Extension. Hats off to such a worthwhile program that has "taken root" so many places! Read all about it at <http://mastergardener.wsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/MasterGardenerProgramHistoryrev2009.8.pdf?9d7bd4>.

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.

Please Copy This Newsletter! Feel free to copy any or all of this newsletter to share with others. We only ask that you credit the Nutrition Education Network of Washington and please let us know if you have made copies and to whom you distributed copies.

* Listing of products and goods in this newsletter does not imply endorsement.