



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* shares brief information about programs and materials that support healthful and enjoyable eating.

Tell Us What's New...

What's new with your organization? To submit news to *Energize*, call Martha Marino 206-817-1466, e-mail martha_marino@yahoo.com.

Deadline for submission is the last day of each month.

Subscription Information

Energize can be sent to you electronically each month. There is no charge.

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Energize is a publication of the *Nutrition Education Network of Washington*. Content of newsletter is up to the discretion of *Nutrition Education Network of Washington* staff.

For more information about the *Nutrition Education Network of Washington* or to access past issues of this newsletter, see <http://nutrition.wsu.edu>.



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

Information provided by Washington State University Extension's NEN of WA. This material was funded in part by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). SNAP 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.

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This Month's Focus: Family Meals

Way back in 1996, a coalition of agencies and organizations called the Nutrition Education Network, shepherded by Washington State University, embarked on a program to encourage food stamp families with young children to eat meals together. To our knowledge, this was the nation's first social marketing campaign promoting family meals. Why family meals? We conducted focus groups with parents with children ages 6 to 11 who received food stamps, asking what they would like in nutrition education. They wanted guidance on eating together, what to prepare, how to make food last throughout the month, and what to talk about. One mom said, "When we all eat together, we eat better." The phrase *Making the Most of It: Eating Together, Eating Better* became the title of our campaign.



Courtesy of Nutrition Education Network of WA

In 2009, the Statewide Nutrition Action Plan, another body of food-related governmental agencies, decided to support updating *Eat Together, Eat Better* because evidence exists that when families eat together, they consume more fruits, vegetables, and dairy foods, and less fat and processed foods. Washington State University Extension staff is in the process of pilot testing a program on this topic, and materials have been developed in cooperation with the Washington State Dairy Council.

In this month's issue of the *Energize Newsletter for Nutrition Educators*, we begin with an update on the new look of *Eat Together, Eat Better*. We also provide information that reflects the support that the concept of family meals now enjoys among health professionals and child advocates.



Logo for Eat Together, Eat Better campaign, 2000 to 2010, used with permission by Washington State University



Eat Together, Eat Better Campaign beginning 2010, used with permission by Washington State University Extension, Washington State Dairy Council, and USDA SNAP-Ed

Eat Together, Eat Better Activity Modules Are Pilot Tested –

A set of three modules for parent and youth programs are being pilot tested in Washington State. The activity modules are designed around three themes: Cook Together, Talk Together, and Celebrate Together. Designed for leaders to use with parents in low-income families, the modules include recipes, a leader's guide, handouts, and fun items such as a "talk about it bowl" with conversation starters for various age levels. For each theme, there are separate lessons for adults, youth, and families. The modules are being created by Shirley Broughton, Kathleen Manenica, and Drew Betz, all from Washington State University Extension. (Contact: Shirley Broughton, WSU Extension, 360-385-0843, sbroughton@puyallup.wsu.edu.)

Eat Together, Eat Better at Society for Nutrition Education Conference – Kathleen Manenica, *Food \$ense* State Coordinator for WSU Extension, will showcase *Eat Together, Eat Better* at the national convention of the Society for Nutrition Education

(SNE) in July. Her presentation will be part of a session on family mealtime that will include an overview of the research and a panel presentation of effective nutrition education programs. Zena Edwards, Food Safety and Nutrition Faculty at WSU Extension, will serve as moderator. It is an honor to receive national recognition for our local program. (Contact: Kathleen Manenica, WSU Extension, 253-445-4598, manenica@puyallup.wsu.edu.)



Used with permission by Washington State University Extension, Washington State Dairy Council, and USDA SNAP-Ed

New Eat Together, Eat Better Materials – The many benefits of eating together are featured in colorful new materials with the *Eat Together, Eat Better* logo and its three themes: Cook Together, Talk Together, Celebrate Together. A handout includes simple tips to eat together more often and real-life quotes from parents and kids. On the back of the poster there is a black-and-white duplicating master of the handout so photocopies can be made. A magnet of the logo serves as a cheerful reminder that when families eat together, they eat better. A set of four coasters includes conversation-starters on the reverse side to get everyone at the table talking. Artwork reflects ethnic diversity. These materials were developed in a partnership between Washington State University Extension, Washington State Dairy Council, and USDA FNS SNAP-Ed. (Contact to order: Washington State Dairy Council, 425-744-1616 or www.eatsmart.org.)

Washington WIC and Family Meals – The Washington State WIC Nutrition Program developed a module about family meals to be used at local WIC agencies. It was designed to meet the needs of both staff (background information, tools, outlines for group sessions) and clients (handouts, coloring sheets for kids, banners, bookmarks, and more). The program worked! After the first six months of the program, there was a significant increase in the number of times that families ate dinner together compared to WIC clients not participating in the program. Their resources can be downloaded for free (these use the same logo as the early *Eat Together, Eat Better* program through WSU) at http://depts.washington.edu/tvhealth/healthy_habits_materials.htm. Evaluation of program: DB Johnson, D Birkett, C Evens, and S Pickering, "Promoting family meals in WIC: Lessons learned from a statewide initiative." *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior* 36(3):177-182, May 2006.

2010 Dietary Guidelines and Family Meals – In the new Dietary Guidelines, one of the key consumer behaviors that professionals such as nutrition educators are encouraged to address is: "Cook and eat more meals at home, instead of eating out." One of the listed potential strategies is "Cook and eat at home more often, preferably as a family." See <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/DGAs2010-PolicyDocument.htm> page 63.

Expert Committee Recommends Family Meals to Prevent Obesity – Representatives from 15 national health care organizations agree: eating family meals can help prevent obesity in children and teens. The committee analyzed evidence to discern what works in preventing and treating the multi-faceted problem of obesity. One of the seven specific behaviors that the committee recommended that clinicians advise their patients and families is "encouraging family meals in which parents and children eat together (family meals are associated with a higher-quality diet and with lower obesity prevalence as well as with other psychosocial benefits)." (Sources: 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*, December 2007, 120(supplement 4):S164-S192, and Davis, MM, B Gance-Cleveland, S Hassink, R Johnson, G Paradis, and K Besnicow, "Recommendations for prevention of childhood obesity," *Pediatrics*, December 2007, 120(supplement 4):S229-253.)

Family Meals Protects Against Eating Disorders – Family meals not only protect against obesity but they also protect against disordered eating, particularly in teen girls. In a large longitudinal study (more than 13,000 children aged 9 to 14 at the start of the study), researchers looked at the frequency of family meals, then a year later assessed for disordered eating. Compared to female teens who ate family dinner "never or some days," those who ate dinner most days were less likely to initiate purging, binge eating, and frequent dieting. Similar findings were seen for teen boys, but the numbers weren't high enough to be statistically significant. An interesting finding was that there was no connection with certain parental variables, such as the importance of the teen's weight to the parents, the frequency of parents' comments to the teens about their weight, and mom's dieting practices. The authors recommend that health professionals and community leaders encourage families to eat together as a way to prevent youth from engaging in disordered eating behaviors. (Source: Haines, J, MW Gillman, S Rifas-Shiman, AE Field, and SB Austin, "Family dinner and disordered eating behaviors in a large cohort of adolescents." *Eating Disorders* 18(1):10-24, January 2010.)

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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Photos of Family Meals – If you need free photos for your educational efforts promoting family meals, take a look at the SNAP-Ed Connection's photo gallery. A variety of families of various ethnic groups and ages are shown eating at the table, preparing food in the kitchen, and picnicking outside. See http://snap.nal.usda.gov/foodstamp/photo_gallery.php?mode=mealtime. For permissible ways to use the images, see http://snap.nal.usda.gov/foodstamp/photo_gallery.php.



USDA, FNS, SNAP-Ed Photo Gallery

New Book on Family Meals – An excellent book encouraging families to eat together includes realistic tips to establish and maintain this beneficial family routine. Author Laurie David (TV producer for *An Inconvenient Truth*) includes quotes from dozens of celebrities supporting family meals. The book goes beyond meal planning. It includes: discussion topics and book selections, ways to say grace, tips for divorced parents to establish food traditions, as well as the author's own musings about raising her busy daughters to enjoy the family meal. (Source: *The Family Dinner: Great ways to connect with your kids, one meal at a time* by Laurie David, November 2010, published by Hybrid Nation, Inc.)

Online Resources or Family Meals Promotion – There are many, many resources to promote family meals. Here is a brief sampling:

- WIC resources from around the country: http://www.nal.usda.gov/wicworks/Sharing_Center/gallery/fam_meals1.htm#fm15
- Meal planning guide from Dairy Council of California, although not specific to family meals, includes recipes and tips to make dinnertime run more smoothly: <http://www.mealsmatter.org>
- National Restaurant Association offers healthful suggestions for family meals at restaurants: http://www.restaurant.org/pdfs/advocacy/eatingtips_brochure_201102.pdf
- The Huffington Post emails a weekly discussion topic for family dinnertime conversation tied in with current events. Topics are emailed Friday afternoons; written in partnership with Laurie David. Current example http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/04/15/this-weeks-huffpost-famil_n_849880.html?utm_content=FullStory&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=112410&utm_source=Alert-food&utm_term=Dinner%20Download To sign up (free): <http://link.huffingtonpost.com/signup/386?optin=1>
- Alaska WIC Program has brochures, poster, culturally relevant recipes, and other materials to promote breastfeeding with family meals: <http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dpa/programs/nutri/WIC/WICEducation.htm>

IN THE MEDIA

As President Obama and members of Congress calculate the changes in the federal budget, another group has been calculating individual and family budgets. The non-profit organization Wider Opportunities for Women, which works with low income women and families, released its charts showing the minimum income that workers need in order to achieve basic economic security. This differs from the federal poverty calculations. The index includes basic monthly expenses: housing, utilities, food, transportation, child care, basic personal and household items, health care, and taxes. It does not include amenities that people consider "middle class" such as movie tickets, going out to a restaurant, cable TV, or vacations. For a family of two adult workers and two young children, the average minimum income needed for economic security is \$67,920 or \$16/hour for both workers. This is nearly double the minimum wage in Washington State, which is \$8.67/hour, the highest minimum wage of any state in the nation. (Source: *Basic economic security tables for the United States*, Wider Opportunities for Women, 2010. <http://wowonline.org/documents/BESTIndexforTheUnitedStates2010.pdf>.)

WASHINGTON GROWN



Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Fresh This Month – Is anyone else tired of all this rain? Washington farmers sure are! Soggy ground is hard to plow and prepare for planting, so some crops may be late this year. Asparagus and rhubarb, our typical "firsts" of spring are a couple of weeks behind schedule, but both are beginning to show up at local markets. If you enjoy fava beans, buy them this month and next – although they are available in the summer they can be starchy but are sweet now. Local salad greens, peas and pea vines, green onions, radishes, and herbs are available this month.

DID YOU KNOW?

Sometimes we hear the phrase "dinner companion." The origin of the word *companion* gives special meaning to eating together. In Latin *com* means *with*, and *pan* means *bread*. So, a companion is someone with whom you break bread.

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