



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.

To order or unsubscribe contact: Christa Albice, WSU Puyallup, 253-445-4541. Fax 253-445-4569, e-mail albice@wsu.edu.

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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: *Farmers and Our Food*

The important work of farmers, ranchers, fishermen, and others who produce our food supply is interwoven with our work as nutrition educators. These men and women, together with their families, provide us with healthful foods to put on our plates. This month's issue of *Energize Newsletter for Nutrition Educators* focuses on the roles and struggles of these important people. When talking with nutrition educators to prepare this issue, it was fascinating to find that many grew up with farm experiences. One woman drove a combine on her family's wheat farm in the days before they were self-leveling to shape to the contours of the land. Another is teaching her 20-something friends the canning skills she learned on her family's farm so they can preserve the delicious produce they buy at farmers' markets. A third educator picked berries and sorted apples every summer for spending money. Finally, one educator mentioned that her father would wake the family early in the morning to light smudge pots to protect their orange orchard from cold temperatures. People with experiences like these have a first-hand understanding of where our food comes from. Nowadays, with the increasing number of farmers' markets, we and the people we serve can connect with the families who grow our food, even if we can't be on farms ourselves.



Women in Agriculture – Women face unique challenges growing viable businesses in farming and ranching, according to

Margaret Viebrock, Washington State University

Douglas County Extension. They often are not taken as seriously as men when seeking loans and insurance, may feel unwelcome at predominantly men's farming meetings, and often need off-farm income which requires working during the day and farming on evenings and weekends. To help women, Viebrock runs the statewide program for women involved in agriculture, which provides risk-management and financial management education, and guidance in mitigating problems in running their businesses. Why a gender-specific program? Viebrock explains that women learn differently than men: they like connecting with other women farmers and enjoy sharing resources. Their situations differ from those of men since they generally have responsibilities with children and their availability for classes is more limited. Viebrock is coordinating a statewide conference February 11 for women in agriculture, which will be available in 15 locations simultaneously. If you know a woman farmer or rancher who could benefit from this, do connect her with Viebrock. She says the number of women in agriculture grows every year – women are natural nurturers and are interested in providing the foods that people want and need. Women she knows through this program raise turkeys and sheep, make cheese, grow vegetables for CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture), produce hay for feed, manage orchards, and make value-added farm products and much more. (Contact: Margaret Viebrock, 509-745-8531, viebrock@wsu.edu.)



Photo by Hillary McMullen, courtesy of Viva Farms

Immigrant-Owned Farms – In Washington State the number of farms owned by Latinos is rapidly growing. According to Sarita Schaffer, Northwest Latino Program Coordinator for Washington State University Skagit County Extension, a huge percentage of our state's agricultural labor force are Latinos, and with their experience they are the most skilled population to take over owning and managing farms. Schaffer works to help Latinos start their own farms by providing education, assistance in finding farmland, one-on-one consultation, and collaboration with a "farm incubator." That incubator is Viva Farms, which helps new farmers get started by providing land for them to farm, a multi-farm CSA, and classes in sustainable agriculture and business management. Schaffer says it's rewarding to see people who have worked on other people's farms for 10-15 years successfully start their own farm businesses. For information about WSU's immigrant farmer program for Latino and Hmong farmers, go to <http://smallfarms.wsu.edu/immigrant-farmers/> and for Viva Farms, go to www.vivafarms.org. (Contact: Sarita Schaffer, WSU Skagit County Extension, 206-914-7948, sschaffer@wsu.edu.)



Photo by Hillary McMullen, courtesy of Viva Farms

Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food (KYF2) – The market for locally grown food is growing. Literally! The number of farmers markets has more than tripled in the past 15 years, numbering 7,175 nationally this year. Only two community supported agriculture (CSA) operations existed in 1986; now there are more than 4,000. To strengthen the connection between consumers and farmers, the USDA started KYF2. It aims to help expand markets and access to locally produced foods, and to stimulate food- and agriculture-based economic development in local communities. Go to www.usda.gov/knowyourfarmer.

Commodity Foods in Schools: Better Than You Knew – USDA commodity foods have improved dramatically in the past couple of decades, but the way the public views them has not. To promote accurate and interesting information about USDA Foods, now called "Healthy Choices. American Grown.", there's a website to help dispel myths about foods provided to nutrition assistance programs: www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/commodityfoodfacts.htm. This new six-minute video shows consumers' perceptions and shows nutritious commodity foods in schools: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CTe1TGD8II&feature=share>.



Farms Help Sustain Rural Communities – Rural communities are hit hard when farmers are unable to keep their farm business running. It's hard work, and income may be slim. As farmers age and their adult kids choose not to follow in their parents' footsteps, small towns begin to lose their viability. To help keep these communities alive, the USDA offers resources to explore options such as agritourism, value-added agriculture, tips on attracting young people, and educational information to new farmers and ranchers. (Logo courtesy of USDA) See more at <http://ruralcommunitybuilding.fb.org/2011/07/08/usda-value-added-producer-grants-for-farmers/>.

Parking Strip Gardens – Seattle was an early pioneer in urban agriculture, beginning with allowing residents to grow vegetables in the parking strips between the sidewalk and the street.

(Source: <http://www.seattle.gov/council/conlin/attachments/20110707foodaction.pdf>.)

The Aging Face of Farmers – US farm production is shifting to larger operations, while the number of small commercial farms and their share of farm sales continues its slow but steady decline. One of the reasons is that many operators are 65 years or older, and they are leaving the farms as they age, with their younger generation not continuing to farm. Although the number of US farms remains roughly constant – about two million – very large farms' share of production has shifted from one-fourth to about one-half. Income from the farm may not be enough to support a family, and many need off-farm income which can be low-paying in rural communities, or rely on social security, loans, and federal assistance programs. Yet farming requires a commitment of full-time labor, particularly vegetables, fruits, tree nuts, and dairy, making it a challenge to also seek income in off-farm jobs. (Hoopes, R, "US farm structure: Declining but persistent small commercial farms," www.ers.usda.gov/AmberWaves/September10/Features/USFarm.htm)

Preserving an Old Tradition: Canning and Freezing – With the growing interest in home gardening and farmers' markets, more people are experimenting with canning and freezing to enjoy these foods into later in the year. For those new to home food preservation, or trying to resurrect how they did this as a kid with mom or grandma, the results might be tasty or not, safe or not, depending on their use of current information. The National Center for Home Food Preservation offers useful resources: www.uga.edu/nchfp, fact sheets on canning various foods www.uga.edu/nchfp/publications/nchfp/factsheets.html, and USDA's Complete Guide to Home Canning http://www.uga.edu/nchfp/publications/publications_usda.html. Also helpful are a video by the University of Nebraska <http://vimeo.com/27889226> and the site of the manufacturer of Ball canning jars www.freshpreserving.com.



Photo courtesy of the National Center for Home Food Preservation

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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IN THE MEDIA

Parents Say Their Influence May Be Greater than School's – As school kids headed back to the classroom and cafeteria this month, a new survey shows that parents point the finger at themselves more than at school food service for kids' nutritional health. When asked who is responsible for issues related to childhood obesity, 91% of parents ranked themselves as the main culprit: "Parents, for buying unhealthy foods". Further down the list (58%) was "Schools, for unhealthy foods in school lunches". How about positive forces? Again, nearly 100% ranked themselves as the most important influence in fighting childhood obesity, with schools a distant second. When asked what would help kids eat healthier meals, 43% felt teaching kids about nutrition is most important, which builds a case for our work as nutrition educators. Only 16% indicated that more healthy meal options in school cafeterias would help kids eat more healthfully. Key findings from *Allrecipes' 2011 Back to School Consumer Survey* can be found at <http://freshbitesblog.com/2011/08/back-to-school-lunch-trends.html>.

Food Insecurity Isn't Improving – In data just released for 2010, the number of American households that had difficulty at some time during the year providing enough food for all their members remained essentially unchanged from 2009. Last year 14.5% of US households (17.2 million) were food insecure. Of these, most households (59%) indicated that in the previous month they had participated in one or more of the federal food and nutrition assistance programs. The rates of food insecurity increased markedly in 2008 when the economic recession began and has remained relatively flat since then. The report by the Economic Research Service, "Household Food Security in the United States in 2010" can be found at www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/ERR125/ERR125.pdf.

DID YOU KNOW?

Less than 1% of Americans classify their occupation as "farmer or rancher," and about 2% actually live on farms. (Source: www.epa.gov/oecaagct/ag101/demographics.html.)

EAT TOGETHER EAT BETTER – Family Meals Focus

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

Dairy Council of California launched a Facebook page this month encouraging families to pledge to eat together more often. http://www.facebook.com/mealsmatter.org?sk=app_278482078831778&utm_source=Facebook&utm_medium=MCT&utm_campaign=EBET.



A study of Latino children found that if they ate breakfast, lunch, or dinner with their families at least four days a week, they ate more fruits and vegetables, less soda, and fewer chips. Breakfast with their families was particularly connected with fruit and vegetable consumption. (Source: Andaya, AA, EM Arredondo, JE Alcaez, SP Lindsay, and JP Elder, "The association between family meals, TV viewing during meals, and fruit, vegetables, soda, and chips intake among Latino children." *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, 43(5):308-315, September 2011.)

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