

The HEN Post

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Fall 2013

Hoop Houses Fueling Hospital Recovery and Pro Athletes!

by Lisa McDowell, MS, RD, CSSD

I helped create the nation's first farm on a hospital campus. These eleven words may prove to be the highlight of my career. I've had the tremendous fortune to work at St. Joseph Mercy Health System (SJMHS) in Ann Arbor, Michigan for twenty years. Prior to that, my clinical position was primarily in the intensive care unit taking care of patients who were intubated and receiving nutrition support. Ironically, at this time, I had little interest in food compared to a passion for enteral and parenteral nutrition knowledge.

I pursued advanced education and board certification in nutrition support. I hesitate to admit it, but I rarely paid attention to the meals our patients received. That all changed when my father was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. It felt like I read every research article published related to preventing cancer recurrence with functional food. I was determined to contribute to his positive outcome. He was surgically treated at my hospital and I struggled to find healing foods to help him recover from the Whipple procedure. I found myself running to Whole Foods to purchase his meals. I knew there was an opportunity to implement improvements to support healthy food in healthcare settings.

When I joined SJMHS, the clinical nutrition department was part of the pharmacy department since our primary role is to manage nutrition support patients. Our self-operated food service department shared the results of their Press Ganey patient satisfaction data with us and our executive management team. The results revealed <60% of patients were satisfied with our food. Patient comments included the suggestion of more color, flavor, choice, and fresh produce. Our executive management team was at a crossroad, needing to choose between outsourcing the department versus allowing a novel approach to revamp the patient and employee menus. Our CEO, Rob Casalou, is very committed and supportive of healthy initiatives and he approved the idea to implement a campus farm in January, 2010.

We quickly found and hired our expert organic farmer, Dan Bair, to lead the conversion. The 364-acre campus previously was a farm, but the land had been converted to decorative grass and also used as a staging area for construction. When Farmer Dan surveyed the land, he found very little life. The soil was rocky and it was unusual to spot a worm in the dirt. We actually conducted a special team-building day for our hospital management leaders that involved clearing rocks from the land so the draft horses plowing the field would not cut their hooves. Once the land had been plowed in April 2010 we constructed our first 30x90 foot hoop house, which would allow us to

grow produce year-round in Michigan. Amazingly, we had immediate success and our first hospital farmer's market held in the lobby of the main hospital sold out in less than ten minutes! A second hoop house was constructed in September of 2010. The cost of each hoop house was approximately \$13,000. We rely on staff, student

and community volunteers to help maintain the farm and have a very minimal operational budget. We've employed organic farming practices and over the years, the land has recovered and is thriving with life. In fact, we have needed to purchase lady bugs to help deter the aphids, used left over beer from one of the RD's wedding to deter the slugs, and rotten egg solution to keep the deer at bay.

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Message from the Chair

by Ashley Colpaart, MS, RD

The HEN DPG is home to cutting edge leaders addressing food security and hunger in the United States and abroad. As the holiday season approaches and the issues of hunger and food insecurity capture the hearts and minds of Americans, I would like to remind our members to focus on root causes. Like many issues related to nutrition and food, the system is complex and requires carefully crafted, multifaceted solutions.

According to research by the USDA Economic Research Service, the key drivers of food insecurity in the past decade were increased poverty rates, increased unemployment (and underemployment) rates, and decreased home ownership (ERS 2012). This likely explains the rise in U.S. food insecurity, given macroeconomic conditions that would affect those key drivers.

Measurement of the food environment and its effects on dietary behavior is a relatively new, but growing, field of inquiry. Families may lack consistent access to healthy food, but they are also consistently inundated with unhealthy food marketing messages and easy access to food of minimal nutrition value. It has been hypothesized that making healthful food more easily available in low-income areas will lead to decreases in obesity, however, a report to Congress in 2009, revealed that there is limited evidence that increased access to healthy foods actually reduces body mass index (BMI) because consumers may not decrease consumption of less healthy food when they increase their consumption of healthy foods (ERS 2009). Further, the report says that availability of **all** food, including junk food, might be more of a factor in increased BMI and obesity. The term “food swamp” is being used to describe areas that are dense with fast-food restaurants and convenient stores that stock little to no fresh produce and primarily sell foods that contain high levels of sugar, fat and sodium.

The situation is further complicated by the increased stress that comes from a house-

hold's need to make trade-offs between purchasing nutritious food and other basic needs such as housing, childcare or medical expenses. New research in behavioral economics is revealing that poverty imposes such a massive cognitive load on the poor, that they may have little “bandwidth” left over to do things that may lift them out of poverty. The seminal study was published in the August 2013 journal of *Science*.

As the leaders in sustainable and accessible food & water systems, it is paramount that we frame this discussion strategically. What important policy changes can be made to improve food insecurity and food deserts or swamps? How can the country support a fair income distribution, that allows those at the bottom of the scale to live on their own income? What are some effective evidence based solutions that are working in your community?

This holiday season, most of us will donate, volunteer, and advocate for our emergency food programs. While these programs are essential to meeting the needs of our community in the short term, I believe the safety net programs are not the solution. I think we would be doing our communities an injustice to not highlight the monumental efforts that are taking place across the country (in the private and public sectors) to address the root causes of food insecurity. The time is now.

Peace and Progress,

Ashley Colpaart MS, RD

HEN MISSION

To empower members to be leaders in sustainable and accessible food and water systems

HEN VISION

To optimize the nation's health by promoting access to nutritious food and clean water from a secure and sustainable food system

THE BENEFITS OF HEN MEMBERSHIP INCLUDE:

- Quarterly newsletter with occasional CPE articles and reproducible fact sheets.
- Access to the HEN Electronic Mailing List (EML) that provides the latest information and relevant conferences.
- Subscription to the Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition published by Taylor and Francis.
- Member-only access to articles and resources via the HEN website — www.HENdpg.org.
- Collaboration with food and nutrition professionals across the United States and the world.
- Opportunity to be nominated for HEN awards.
- Notices of related conferences around the country.
- Potential for national and international recognition when working on HEN projects.
- Eligible to vote in HEN Executive Committee election.

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(Hoop Houses Fueling Hospital Recovery and Pro Athletes! continued from page 1)

In one evening, the deer on our property ate all of our broccoli and pumpkins!

In July 2012 we partnered with the Eisenhower Center to construct an accessible hoop house for patients recovering from traumatic brain injury. This third hoop house has wheelchair-friendly trays of plants, a beautiful fountain, fairy herb gardens, and is powered by a stationary cycle that provides a means for exercise and results in watering the plants. We collect all the rainwater from each hoop house and the water is heated by a solar panel connected to the cistern for winter watering. The crops growing inside and outside the hoop house vary from year to year. We have found great success with multiple varieties of tomatoes, peppers, garlic and herbs in the summer and spinach, beets, kale, collard greens, Swiss chard, radishes, and carrots in the winter.

Patient satisfaction data has remarkably increased from a low of 60% to benchmarks exceeding our expectations. The registered dietitians are engaged in providing input to optimize seasonal recipes incorporating produce from the Farm. The staff has also connected with our ministry program to provide produce to families who cannot afford to shop at our market. We have donated thousands of pounds to the local food bank. In the past, the staff would not hesitate to recommend a manufactured nutritional supplement to patients who were not eating well. Today, we critically evaluate each recommendation, understanding the significance of our consults. Consumers can only change the landscape of the unhealthy food environment by voting with their dollars. We have seen so many examples in our own institution. For example, it was previously impossible or cost-prohibitive to purchase milk and meat without hormones. This rapidly changed with consumer demand. We proudly evaluate our purchasing decisions and deeply investigate best choices. Our hospital has signed numerous pledges that

promise to improve the food served in our hospital and to purchase locally, when possible.

The Farm cannot fulfill the produce volume needed to feed staff and patients but it can absolutely fulfill a tangible example of food change. We are definitely leading by example and providing education, sometimes without direct realization this is happening. For example, we have created numerous recipe cards for simple preparation of produce grown at The Farm. Our interns actually bring in recipe samples for tasting during the market in the lobby. This hands-on approach engages the community, staff and patients to enjoy fresh food. Our farmer's market is timed around patient discharge so patients will have exposure to the market on the way out. Our hospital is part of a Health System and other members of the Health System are looking to reproduce our idea. One physician's practice is actually building a garden structure and will dispense organic vegetables like a prescription (farm vs. pharmacy).

In addition to patient clinics, we have shared our program with our pediatric obesity patients, eating disorder program, and elder programs. Patients receiving chemotherapy and radiation have also been supported by donations from The Farm. Our new partnership with traumatic brain injured patients has raised tremendous interest in other areas of our rehabilitation program. We will continue to develop integrating patient therapy and meals into our daily routine at The Farm.

Another exciting connection with The Farm comes with fueling sports performance. Many of the vegetables contain phytonutrients and



antioxidants that have been shown to provide an edge in sports. I work as the team RD for the Detroit Red Wings and we are always looking for functional food to integrate into meals. For example, beets and dark leafy greens are high in nitric oxide, which has been shown to improve time to fatigue. The Farm has been very popular with the players and some have even volunteered time to help tend the garden. As a sports RD, I prefer to use real food over supplements and have found the produce grown at The Farm to be the highest quality as well as the best tasting.

Finally, the collaboration with our graduate students and dietetic interns has been most remarkable. Our student interns are forging new ground helping me shape what I call a sustainable agriculture rotation. They contribute their time and expertise during both clinical and farm rotations at the hospital. I never would have predicted this return to the basics for myself because I was so clinically focused. However, it's difficult to heal a community where the healthy food choices are limited. This realization has resulted in my keen interest in prevention and improving quality of life by going back to our roots with healthy soil, produce, and meals. Ultimately, this leads to healing so our patients will not find themselves of needing to be a patient again. Never underestimate the contributions you can make. It may seem overwhelming and the problems are vast, but start somewhere and make a difference.

Dietitians are well positioned to be leaders in change. Most health systems have a commitment to wellness programs. Utilizing a formal structure of a collaborative practice team to determine goals and objectives for the wellness team provides structure and authority to execute a plan. For example, if unhealthy vending or sugar-sweetened beverages are on your list to improve, partnering with a physician dyad is imperative to implementation. Recognizing that hospital structures vary, here are examples of specific steps to consider when forging ahead:

(continued on page 4)



HEN POST DEADLINES AND SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Submission Guidelines: The *HEN Post* features viewpoints, statements and articles that provide perspective on domestic and international food security, food production and environmental food issues. We also publish descriptions of programs, community intervention, research, legislation, websites or curriculums of interest to our members. We especially seek submissions from our members. These viewpoints, statements and other information do not imply endorsement by HEN and the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Articles may be reproduced for education purposes only after obtaining written permission from HEN, the copyright holder of all published materials unless prior agreement was made.

Submission Deadlines

March 15, 2014 –
Spring 2014

June 15, 2014 –
Summer 2014

September 15, 2014 –
Fall 2014

For more specific guidelines on article format, length, referencing and additional information that must accompany articles, see the HEN website – www.hendpg.org. Log in as a member, click on HEN Post and click on Submission Guidelines.

(Hoop Houses Fueling Hospital Recovery and Pro Athletes! *continued from page 3*)

- Find an ally with a strong voice. Understand your executive management hierarchy and connect with those who seek opportunities to improve the campus environment. Possible areas of improvements can be anything: patient meals, employee meals, vending, local sourcing, sugar-sweetened beverages, access to exercise, fair-trade, healthy options, etc.
 - Become involved with wellness initiatives and community events to raise awareness and volunteer to share your expertise on a small scale.
 - Develop social media skills. We started a farm blog and created a presence on our local employee infonet site.
 - Connect with experts in the field. We aligned many initiatives with activities happening in our state. For example, the Michigan Hospital Association was leading a campaign targeted at Healthy Food in Hospitals. We utilized all of their resources and enjoyed the publicity of meeting the standards. In addition, Michigan is leading a Good Food Charter, which asks large institutions to source 20% of food purchases to local suppliers by the year 2020. Our CEO was happy to support our Governor by signing this pledge. We also partnered with Health Care Without Harm, who provided extensive case studies and procedural suggestions to implement change. Their website, <http://www.noharm.org/>, has extensive supporting materials.
 - Rely on the excellent resources from Partnership for a Healthier America and the American Heart Association.
 - Aim for cost neutrality and creatively find funds. For example, we submitted for grants and also contacted a local grocery store who sponsored a community shopping day with proceeds going to our Farm. Look for additional sources of revenue. For example, we created a brand with our logo and continue to enjoy the profits from the sales of recyclable shopping bags, hats, coats, shirts, Nalgene water bottles, etc.
 - Partner with local community college programs to offer practical experience. For example, culinary students can develop simple ways to incorporate fresh produce into existing recipe rotations.
 - Accept the dietetic interns looking to gain experience or volunteer hours and plan projects that will help implement defined goals. The projects should not be dependent on a single individual. The structure of the project should provide the detail needed to allow interchangeable students working on the task.
 - Engage with the community by sharing your stories and hosting events.
 - Be patient and understand not everyone shares your values. Find common ground and begin to nudge others in the direction that will lead to a healthier campus environment. This could include incentives when enrolling for health care insurance if certain health parameters are met or something as simple as a campaign to take the stairs or drink more water.
 - Offer to help the Food Service Director with projects that include the sourcing of food. Share in performance goals to improve patient satisfaction and employee health.
 - Connect with other HEN members to learn about successful projects, innovative changes, and new methods of thinking. We have so many brilliant members who are willing to share specific procedures that have worked.
- Positive food change is possible through our leadership. I'm proud to say that our Farm at St. Joseph's is proof of that.



View a video about the Farm at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital at

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JBLqBdgXnyg&feature=youtube_gdata_player

HEN Highlights from Houston

by Rebecca Finkel, MA, MS, RD, CD

The Hunger and Environmental Nutrition (HEN) Dietetic Practice Group offered a range of events to engage members and non-members at the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Food & Nutrition Conference & Expo (FNCE®) in Houston, Texas. Beginning on Friday, October 18th, members were invited to join the Executive Committee meeting along with dinner at the Houston Arboretum & Nature Center. Close to 30 members joined this lively discussion to forecast the year ahead for the HEN DPG.

On Saturday the HEN food systems bus tour explored the food landscape in Houston. The group started the day by meeting urban farmers at The Last Organic Outpost, visiting a refugee farmer training program at Plant It Forward Farms, and exploring nutrition and garden education with Recipe for Success. The multi-stop tour allowed participants to appreciate the evolving local food system in Houston and gain perspective on the challenges and successes of these ventures. Breakfast was provided by our generous HEN sponsors, Stonyfield Farms and Clif Bar, and we were joined once again by Mary Kennedy of Stonyfield Farms and Regina Beidler a dairy farmer from HEN sponsor Organic Valley Cooperative, who spoke about their work and how it aligns with HEN's mission and values. Finally, the group was treated to an "eat where your food lives" interactive cooking demo with Chef Monica Pope, a James Beard nominee and Top Chef Masters competitor, and enjoyed lunch and laughs at her restaurant, Sparrow Bar + Cookshop.

On Sunday evening, the annual HEN Film Festival was held at the Asia Society of Texas. Attendees had the opportunity to socialize, network, eat and drink before sitting down to watch the important documentary, *A Place at the Table*. The film was projected around the room on four screens, and was followed by a lively discussion with panelists, Helen Costello, MS, RD of the New Hampshire Food Bank, Silvia Fabela, Senior Campaign Coordinator at Making Change @ Walmart, United Food and Commercial Workers, and Cynthia Torres, former Institute for Agricul-

ture and Trade Food and Community Fellow and photographer.

Monday marked the DPG Showcase, where HEN highlighted the work of its members to all Academy members, and presented DPG initiatives such as the *Teaching Food Systems and Sustainability in Nutrition Education and Dietetic Training: Lessons for Educators* curriculum, sharing the value of membership with prospective members. In the afternoon, the HEN spotlight session, a joint collaboration with Dietitians in Integrative and Functional Medicine DPG, "Food Water and the Environment: What's Women's Health Got to Do with It?" The session was moderated by HEN Chair Ashley Colpaart, MS, RD, and featured a presentation by HEN member Kim Robien, PhD, RD on the history and science of common endocrine disruptors in the food system. DIFM Chair Elizabeth Redmond, PhD, MMSc, RD, LD discussed dietary approaches to eliminating toxins from the body. Both presenters posted slides on the DPG websites. Learn more details about this topic in the Winter 2014 issue of *The HEN Post*.

The variety of HEN events at FNCE provided multiple opportunities to meet and engage new and veteran HEN members. Kudos to HEN Chair, Ashley Colpaart, MS, RD, the HEN Executive Committee and HEN presenters for a job well done. Mark your calendars for FNCE 2014 in Atlanta, GA (October 18-21, 2014).

Read more about the film, A Place at the Table, in the Spring 2013 issue of The HEN Post.



The HEN Executive Committee: Dianne Lollar, MPH, RD, LD, Stacia Clinton, RD, LDN, Ashley Colpaart, MS, RD, Meg Bruening, PhD, MPH, RD, Lisa Dierks, RD, LD, and Jasia Steinmetz, PhD, RD (left to right)



HEN members visit urban farmers at The Last Organic Outpost



Sarah Trist, MS, RD, LDN and Rebecca Finkel, MA, MS, RD, CD (left to right) about to enjoy okra fresh off the vine



HEN members enjoy a snack at the Recipe House, home to the Farm-to-School program Recipe for Success.



Chef Monica Pope from Sparrow restaurant recruits HEN members from the audience to be her prep chefs.



Garnet Bruell, RD talks HEN at the FNCE member showcase

To view the entire HEN at FNCE slideshow, click [here](#).

HEN Award Ceremony, Academy's Food & Nutrition Conference & Expo (FNCE) 2013

The Hunger and Environmental Nutrition (HEN) DPG honored four deserving dietitians at the Film Festival on October 20 at the Asia Society of Texas in Houston.

HEN Leadership Award: Bettina Tahsin, RD, LDN, CDE



Bettina works as a certified diabetes educator for the Cook County Health & Hospitals System in Chicago. Through her work, she continually supports the mission and values of HEN by raising the issues of food insecurity and food access in regard to the low-income population she works with and how that impacts their overall health and well-being.

When she is not working as a CDE, Bettina is a co-editor of *The HEN Post*, helping to ensure the quality and integrity of

the HEN member newsletter. Bettina also serves on the working group to develop Standards of Professional Performance (SOPP) for Sustainable, Resilient, and Healthy Food and Water Systems.

In the words of her colleagues, "not only is Bettina enthusiastic, passionate, and easy-to-work with, but she has also been an inspirational mentor. Bettina provides practical and realistic recommendations and ideas to support HEN and she never forgets the ultimate purpose and goal of this group. She fully possesses the qualities of a leader, and deserves this award!"

Excellence in Hunger and Environmental Nutrition Award: Meg Bruening, PhD, MPH, RD

Meg brings incredible dedication committing a significant amount of time to planning, strategy development, and research to further the mission of HEN. She brings thoughtful input to all conversations and is always willing to volunteer her time.

As a new faculty at Arizona State University, Meg has published numerous manuscripts, book chapters and research briefs about healthy food access, food insecurity, fruit and vegetable consumption and media influences on children's behavior. In the last ten years she has received many awards including recently being named as recipient of a 2013 NIH Director's Early Independence Award. In addition to currently serving as HEN Delegate, Meg serves on HEN's Standards of Professional Performance in Sustainable, Resilient and Healthy Food and Water Systems Work Group and co-chairs the Standards of Practice/Standards of Professional Performance in the Public Health/Community Nutrition Work Group. Additionally, she is both a member of and advisor to the newly formed HEN Food Security Task Force. In recent years she has skillfully served as treasurer, newsletter co-editor, and as a HEN representative on numerous Academy committees and taskforces.



Excellence in Hunger and Environmental Nutrition: Michelle Berger Marshall, MS, RD

Michelle works as Director of Nutrition of Feeding America, a network of over 200 food banks. In her role, she is "able to bridge the nutritional gap for food banks by providing different nutrition approaches in response to food bank needs."

In addition, Michelle's career achievements include the development of new relationships with industry collaborators such as the USDA, the National Dairy Council and the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Michelle

has also helped create the "Foods to Encourage Framework" in which she has been able to "steer the conversation towards the types of food that should be encouraged within our network, while aligning the network with evidenced-based nutrition standards. Michelle's positive thinking and ability to problem solve, allows her to focus on giving insecure families and individuals more choices in healthful food items, at a time when they may feel that many healthful affordable foods are out of reach."



Special Recognition Award: Jennifer Noll Folliard, MPH, RD

Jenn is an esteemed colleague who continues to be an important resource to the HEN community and is best known for her work with the HEN Public Policy Committee (PPC). Jenn currently serves at the Director of Legislation and Policy at the Academy's Policy, Initiatives and Advocacy office in Washington, DC.

As HEN PPC Chair, Jenn worked with the Committee to better understand the knowledge and experience within our membership and mobilize our DPG. On behalf of HEN, she played a key role at in person meetings offering critical perspectives and opportunities for collaboration for HEN's public policy work. Additionally, she served as an editor for the HEN White Paper on Antibiotic Use in Agriculture, an education piece that has served to bring awareness to this critical issue for dietitians. Finally, she spearheaded the first Film Festival held at the Academy's Public Policy Workshop, bringing a HEN tradition to the wider purview of our profession. In her position at the Academy, Jenn continues to be an important resource to the HEN community.



Creating the Roadmap for Leadership in Sustainable, Resilient, and Healthy Food and Water Systems

by Bettina Tahsin, RD, LDN, CDE

As HEN dietitians, we all can make the connection between individual health and the availability of sustainable, resilient, and healthy food and water systems. Many of us are advocates to preserve and build these vital food and water systems. Many dietetic students want to ensure that these issues become part of their dietetic practice.

As a member of the work group that developed the Standards of Professional Performance (SOPP) for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists for Sustainable, Resilient and Healthy (SRH) Food and Water Systems, I am proud to announce that coming this spring, dietitians will have a tool to help us all integrate SRH Food and Water Systems principles into our own practice, regardless of our area of dietetic practice.

An SOPP is essentially a roadmap letting practitioners know what competencies need to be developed to become competent, proficient, and expert in a focus area of practice. The SRH Food and Water Systems SOPP will be a guide to all practitioners as to how to integrate SRH Food and Water Systems into their area of practice or how to develop a career path focused on SRH Food and Water Systems.

In July 2013, we had a chance to road test the SOPP in a series of focus groups in St. Paul, MN. We sought the input of food system leaders, both those within the profession of nutrition and dietetics as well as professionals outside of the profession. From those leaders who were not dietitians, we wanted to know how they currently worked with dietitians, what unique qualities they felt dietitians brought to the table, and how the SOPP indicators reflected the skill sets needed to be effective in food and water systems work. From those leaders who were dietitians, we checked the utility and content of the SRH Food and Water Systems SOPP and how applicable they

were to their areas of practices.

The good news was that the SRH Food and Water Systems SOPP was very positively received and both groups gave us thoughtful feedback on improving the work even more. It was clear that there is definitely a place for dietitians in SRH Food and Water Systems work and that dietitians are excited about contributing in this area.

So what's next? The SRH Food and Water Systems SOPP manuscript is now complete,

has been reviewed, and will be published in the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics* in March 2014. HEN is looking forward to developing educational materials around how to best implement this new roadmap and expanding understanding and implementation of SRH Food and Water Systems principles. For more information about Scope of Practice, Standards of Professional Performance, Scope of Practice Decision Tools and other related information, visit www.eatright.org/scope.



The SRHFWS SOPP team (from left to right): Angie Tagtow, MS, RD, LD, Teri Underwood, MS, RD, CD, Barbara Hartman, MS, RD, LD, Bettina Tahsin, RD, LDN, CDE, Lisa Dierks, RD, LD, Erin Bergquist, MPH, RD, LD, CNS, Ramona Robinson-O'Brien, PhD, RD, Kim Robien, PhD, RD, CSO, Meg Bruening, PhD, MPH, RD, Tamara Steinitz, MS, RD, Jennifer Wilkins, PhD, RD

CALL FOR PAPERS

JOURNAL OF HUNGER & ENVIRONMENTAL NUTRITION™

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Information about submission requirements is available at:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/action/authorSubmission?journalCode=wh-en20&page=instructions>

Questions may be directed to Marie Boyle, PhD, RD, Editor, at mboyle01@cse.edu.

HEN Member Spotlight

HEN Member Spotlight is a new column that showcases the important work and interesting career paths of HEN members.



Name:

Helen E. Costello, MS, RD, LD

Occupation and Location:

Program Manager,
New Hampshire Food Bank,
Manchester, NH

HEN member since:

Since it was merged and
formed in 2000

Hobbies:

gardening, skiing, snowshoe-
ing, kayaking, hiking

Favorite season:

I can't choose – I love them all
in New Hampshire (except for
mud season)

Would you like to nominate a
dietitian for the HEN Member
Spotlight? Email Bettina Tahsin at
healthy-eating@sbcglobal.net
or Rebecca Finkel at
rebecca.finkel@gmail.com

Describe your professional role.

I direct and manage the Recipe for Success programs at the New Hampshire Food Bank: culinary job training for unemployed adults, the Share Our Strength NH Cooking Matters program, an organic production garden and a SNAP Outreach program. I was hired to develop, implement, manage, and evaluate three of the programs and oversee the expansion and management of the Cooking Matters program to a statewide service area. My background in food systems guides my decisions in the development and expansion of the programs.

What was your career path and, if you knew then what you know now, what would you have done differently?

I have always loved both the science and art of food and nutrition and when I was an undergraduate I was focused on entering the clinical and research areas of the field. During that time I also read Frances Moore Lappe's *Diet for a Small Planet* which gave me a broader view of the food system, nutrition and world hunger. At the time, there were few avenues to engage in food systems work. I was lucky enough to have a couple of faculty advisors who were colleagues with Joan Dye Gussow and Kate Clancy and brought them in to talk with students about food system and food policy issues.

After college I followed a fairly traditional entry into the profession: obtained a MS in Animal and Nutritional Sciences and worked as a hospital dietitian. From there I started a private practice and consulting where I had some clients with sophisticated questions about the food system and the environment. Their questions brought me back to those questions I had in college. Looking for a way to take my career in a sustainable food systems direction I went back to school and got a MS in Food Policy in the Agriculture, Food and the Environment program at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University. Completion of that program opened the door to food security consulting and six years ago an offer to lead the programs at the food bank. If you had told me in college that I would be working as a dietitian in a food bank I would not have believed you. That is an example of what is so great about our training, a nutrition career can evolve in so many different directions.

How does your work align with the mission of HEN?

My work is in alignment with the mission of HEN because it involves tackling hunger using a systems approach and creating innovations to address solutions beyond direct food distribution. We teach skills and tools to allow clients to find a way to manage their personal food and economic security. Our production garden uses organic methods, our Cooking Matters program conducts activities at farmers markets, our SNAP Outreach incorporates nutrition messaging into its outreach and I purchase produce from local farmers in our culinary job training program. These are a few examples of how my work fits into HEN's mission.

What are some challenges you have faced in your career?

Sometimes you are your own worst enemy – enough said there.

What are key lessons you've learned in your career?

For a variety of reasons it took me a long time to understand that I could take my nutrition career in the direction of my interests. Our training includes a lot of transferable skills. Also, if it isn't an innate trait for you, develop and use your counseling skills of active listening. I also love the phrase, "Keep Calm and Carry On."

How do you stay current on the emerging research in your field?

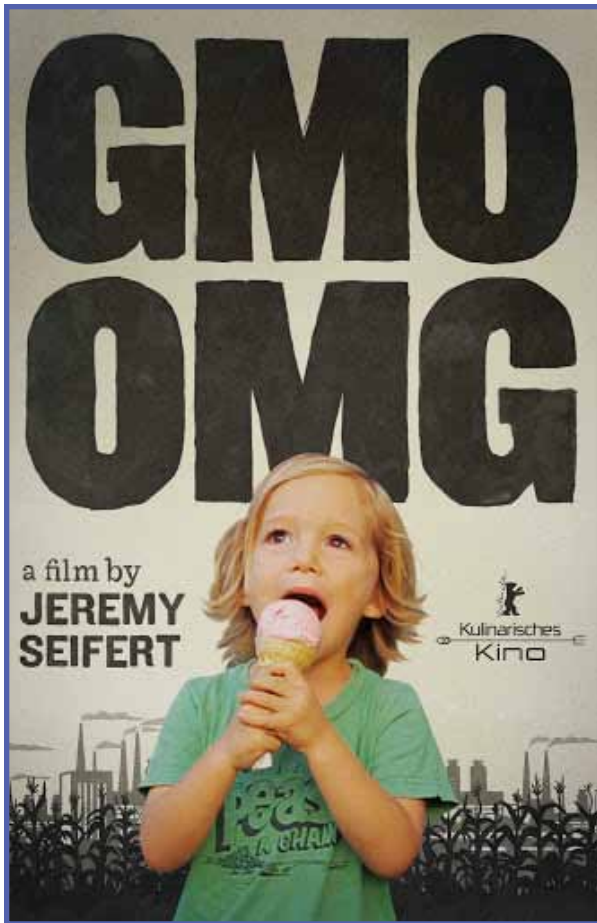
I have two strategies. 1. I try to keep up with both the popular press to have a handle on what the general public is reading and the primary literature in the field, the *Journal of Hunger and Environmental Nutrition* is an important asset to our work. 2. Most importantly I make myself break out of my comfort zone by going to conferences outside of my field, but related. It helps me bring innovation into my work.

What message would you like to share with HEN dietitians, especially those who are thinking of following a similar career path?

I think HEN dietitians have so many more options to work in food systems today than in the past. I can't wait to see the future HEN profiles in the HEN newsletter because we have so many leaders in the DPG doing important work in sustainable food systems. I would suggest HEN dietitians create their vision and write a plan to achieve it. Sometimes it means a lot of long hours fitting it into traditional settings. It can seem like a long journey but it is worth it when you arrive.

At the Movies: GMO OMG

Directed by Jeremy Seifert, Reviewed by Rebecca Finkel, MA, MS, RD, CD



Jeremy Seifert's timely documentary, *GMO OMG*, was released as Washington state prepared to vote on Initiative 522, the campaign to label genetically engineered foods. The film follows the director as he travels across the country and around the world to interview farmers, researchers and politicians regarding the safety of genetically modified organisms (GMOs). He grows increasingly skeptical of GMO use and finally asks, "where's the outrage?" As I watched the film during its one week run at a small independent Seattle theater with less than two dozen people in attendance, I wondered "where's the audience?"

Disney World.

The reverence for seeds is a recurring theme also conveyed through visits with rural farmers in Haiti, who famously burned the seeds sent by Monsanto following the devastating earthquake in 2010. The poorest country in the Western Hemisphere drew worldwide attention for refusing the seeds, which would have meant a loss of food sovereignty and crop diversity. Later Seifert travels to Norway's remote Svalbard Global Seed Vault, which preserves global crop diversity by collecting seeds

from around the world. If the film had stuck with these key scenes and placed greater emphasis on seeds it might have driven the film in a different direction, exploring biodiversity through history, politics, science, nutrition or beliefs about the sacred value of life. Instead it tries to reframe them with a focus on GMOs but without the rigorous science that would make the case necessary to convert most skeptics.

In 2013, as more and more state ballots enable voters to express their desire for labeling genetically engineered foods, it's fitting that a film enters the cultural sphere trying to educate the public. In 2004 the documentary *The Future of Food* took a sober look at GMOs and their impact on the American farmer and food system. *GMO OMG* manages to be lighter, but also less convincing, and less likely to sway voters who are indifferent or opposed to labeling GMOs. In Washington state, the limited theatrical release of the film could hardly counter the more than \$20 million spent by the "No on 522" campaign (nearly entirely from the Grocery Manufacturers Association and out-of-state biochemical companies) which aired targeted television advertisements. Still, through the strong efforts of the Yes on I-522 campaign, the initiative had strong support in the state and lost by a very narrow margin, with final election results tallied at 48.92% Yes and 51.08% No.

For many who are already aware of GMOs, the arguments made in the film will not be new. Framed for a discussion group or educational event, however, a screening of the film would provide a foundation to further explore the issue

and get to the heart of the arguments on both sides. On its own *GMO OMG* raises more questions than it is able to answer, but the film can be a useful tool for introducing the arguments for labeling genetically engineered foods to a wider audience.

For more information about GMOs, read Melinda Hemmelgarn, MS, RD's article, "Thinking Critically About GMOs" in the Summer 2013 issue of *The HEN Post*.

The film opens with a voiceover of Wendell Berry's poem, *The Peace of Wild Things*. It begins: "When despair for the world grows in me/ and I wake in the night at the least sound/ in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be..." It is the responsibility of being a parent that drives Seifert's movie, a concern for the health and wellbeing of his children, the very same motivation expressed by writer Jonathan Safran Foer in his eye-opening 2009 book *Eating Animals*. Seifert's children are featured throughout the film, adorably and often gratuitously. His oldest son Finn's love of seeds provides some of the film's most poignant moments. It's a delight to hear Finn explain with fascination and intuitive understanding of how one seed grows to produce infinitely more seeds. And when the family arrives at Seed Savers Exchange Heritage Farm he displays the level of excitement other kids might express upon arrival at



A scene from Jeremy Seifert's film *GMO OMG*

The University of Vermont Breakthrough Leaders Program in Sustainable Agriculture

by Garnet Bruell, RD

In June 2013, I traveled to Burlington, Vermont to participate in the University of Vermont's Breakthrough Leaders Program in Sustainable Food Systems. Over six jam-packed days, I was exposed to leaders from every walk of life: economists, researchers, extension officers, farmers, restaurant owners, entrepreneurs, teachers, authors, chefs, politicians, and doctors. My cohort was full of people from equally diverse backgrounds: students of food policy, directors of non-profits, grocery store representatives, school-food managers, business owners, urban planners, and teachers. Together we explored the progress and development of Vermont's 10-Year Strategic Food System Plan, visiting sites around the state that showcased the kinds of action that are leading to wide scale food systems change.

In the two weeks prior to the campus-based session, my cohort and I participated in an intensive online component with two primary focuses: leadership and food systems.

Week one had us exploring the idea of leadership by reading *Social Intelligence & The Biology of Leadership* by Daniel Goleman; watching TedTalks by Brené Brown - *The Power Of Vulnerability* - and Simon Sinek - *How Great Leaders Inspire Action*; and listening to the podcast *On Being* where Andrew Zoll explained the idea of resilient vs. sustainable systems. We also began systems-based thinking by reading and responding to the

article *Leverage Points: Places to Intervene in a System* by Donella Meadows.

Week two ushered in our discussion of the global food system, which introduced us to the SEED system - Social, Environmental, Economic, and Diet/Health. The supposition is that our food system is a combination of these four factors. They affect each other, and some aspects of the system are prioritized over others. For example, grocery stores may choose to try to maximize their profits, which may have social and environmental effects; environmentally-conscious food producers and distributors may prioritize minimal environmental impact, which may necessitate an increase in the price of their products. We read *Food: The Growing Problem*, an article from the journal *Nature* that projected hunger issues into the future, and John Wilkinson's *Globalization of Agribusiness and Developing World Food Systems*, which investigated the growing third-world agricultural oligarchies that are developing as mirrors to the United States. Lastly, we were introduced to The Center For An Agricultural Economy, the regional food system initiative based in Hardwick, Vermont, which we would later get to visit in person.

The campus-based session was designed to let us engage with leaders from all segments of the food system as well as form networks and friendships with each other. Being in classrooms with intelligent, action-oriented, accomplished, and like-minded people is a recipe for strong

relationships.

Burlington is a hotbed for many initiatives that play into the larger Strategic Plan, including The Intervale Center, a 350 acre area of restored floodplain along the Winooski River. Some of the programs that take place at The Intervale are the Farm Incubator program, where new farmers test their technique and business practices for a minimum of five years, the Intervale Food Hub, an online local foods market that sells local produce to individuals, and Intervale Gleaning & Food Rescue, which works to improve food access in Vermont.

We were visited at The Intervale by presenters that included Intervale founder Will Raap, HEN Member Diane Imrie, RD, of Fletcher Allen Health Care, Severine von Tscharner-Fleming of The Greenhorns, Katherine Sims of Green Mountain Farm To School, Enid Wonnacott of NOFA Vermont, and Marie Audet of Cabot Dairy. These conversations were invaluable and continue to influence my life months later.

The next day was spent touring highlights of the changing Vermont food system, including the Vermont Food Venture Center, where local farms can process their food into new products, High Mowing Organic Seeds, one of the larger distributors of organic seeds in the country, and Pete's Greens, a 4-season organic vegetable farm.

The final day was the UVM Food Systems Conference, which was a TED-style event that featured wonderful speakers such as

Tanya Fields, Sandor Katz, Karen Washington, Gary Nabhan, Tamar Adler, Mary Hendrickson, and Yoni Freedhoff. This event was recorded and is available to the public at <http://learn.uvm.edu/sustainability/food-summit/>. We were able to share a meal with the presenters and talk with them one-on-one.

The UVM Breakthrough Leaders Program felt like a necessary extension of my education to become a Registered Dietitian. Committing the time and effort necessary to understanding the complexities and players within our food system is one of the first steps needed towards necessary change, and Vermont has many examples of partnerships and initiatives that we can take back into our own practices and communities.



Participant field trip to Pete's Greens in Craftsbury, VT. Author Garnet Bruell, RD is pictured third from the right.

Making Sure Everyone Gets a Bite of the Big Apple

By Eduardo Martinez, graduate student in Clinical Nutrition, New York University

The environment determines food choice. People select what they eat only from accessible options. Within farmers' markets the majority of available food, namely fruits and vegetables, promotes good health. Availability, however, does not mean access; healthy food can exist in an area, but if it is too expensive for some, it is not universally accessible. Greenmarket, a program of the non-profit GrowNYC since 1976, accepts SNAP,* Health Bucks, WIC* WIC FMNP,* SFMNP* and has developed an original program, WIC+* to ensure that everyone can enjoy the market's bounty. Having worked for the organization, I want to share my experience in expanding access to Greenmarkets.

When the chance to volunteer for Greenmarket came up, I applied right away and the project manager invited me for an interview. As an intern, I asked market goers to complete an anonymous survey for evaluating the impact of a program called WIC+, a partnership program offering additional resources. Shortly thereafter, I took the position of EBT Coordinator at Brooklyn's Grand Army Plaza Greenmarket. Months later, I started the same job at the Bronx Borough Hall market. My main responsibilities involve explaining how to use food stamps transaction. In this capacity, I have joined the ranks of a nationwide movement expanding access to fresh fruits and vegetables to all members of the community! It all starts with Greenmarket's two missions.

The first mission is "to ensure that all New Yorkers have access to the freshest, most nutritious locally grown food the region has to offer." Greenmarket carries this out by accepting state, federal and local food assistance and through initiatives such as WIC+. The second mission is "to promote regional agriculture by providing small family farms the opportunity to sell their locally grown products directly to consumers." By operating 64 farmers' markets and one wholesale hub within New York City, Greenmarket follows through on this goal.

Within the market itself, food access begins when SNAP participants come to my tent and request the amount that they plan to spend

at the market. Swiping their EBT card through a wireless terminal, I deduct the requested value from their food stamps account. I count out wooden tokens imprinted with specific denominations and hand them to the EBT cardholder. During certain months of the year, however, the transaction doesn't end there and the best part takes all new shoppers by surprise.

From July through November in 2013, the New York City Health Department District Public Health Offices developed and distributed Health Bucks; paper vouchers worth \$2 each, earmarked for fruits and vegetables. For every \$5 in SNAP used at the market, people get one Health Buck. For example, when someone charges \$50 to their food stamps account, they receive an extra \$20 (10 Health Bucks) for fruits and veggies. Consequently, this system raises the value of SNAP benefits by 40%, granting recipients access to an environment ordinarily off limits due to budget constraints.

For WIC participants, we accept WIC FMNP and SFMNP at all 64 markets. Additionally, at specific locations, we increase the value of monthly WIC vouchers with Greenmarket Bucks. Through a partnership with the organization Wholesome Wave, the program known as WIC+ provides an additional \$2, \$4, or \$6 when recipients of WIC use \$6, \$10, or \$15 vouchers, respectively. In the form of \$2 Greenmarket Bucks, these amounts are earmarked for fruits and vegetables, just like the Health Bucks. Essentially, Greenmarket Bucks are to WIC monthly fruit and vegetable vouchers what Health Bucks are to SNAP benefits.

WIC+ and Health Bucks expand the value of federal benefits, putting fruits and vegetables within reach of customers ordinarily repelled by real or perceived higher prices. The federal and state money that funds these food assistance programs go straight to local farmers, essentially back to the community. Call them incentives; call them the most brilliant marriage of local economics and social consciousness in recent history; call them whatever you'd like, they bring people to the farmers' markets. To say They bring people to an environment where the healthy choice is the easy choice.



Author Eduardo Martinez proudly displays the Farmers' Market Bucks

Sure enough, according to my numbers, EBT participants consistently make healthy choices at Greenmarkets. In the late afternoon, I collect tokens from the farmers and write a receipt in the amount that they accepted during the day. The numbers represent where most of the EBT customers used their wooden tokens. Every week since I have tracked this data, well over half of all SNAP benefits ended up with the fruit and vegetable vendors. This is not a scientific study and there's no way of knowing how the customers spend cash, but I find comfort and validation in this pattern.

All that being said, the market community is my favorite part of the job. Besides narrowing the food gap, food access allows every person to contribute to this important social network. Each day, the farmers, their employees, my coworkers, customers, interns and volunteers teach me new lessons. Some are immediately clear, some latent, but all of them will influence my career as a dietitian. The best memory I have from my experience with Greenmarket may not exist without these programs. After getting her tokens, one EBT customer returned to my tent with a sweet smile on her face, gently placed a plumcot on my table and in a coy voice said, "A gift for you." I smiled instinctively, humbled and inspired by her selfless generosity.



The Grand Army Plaza Greenmarket in Brooklyn, NY

***SNAP:** Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

***EBT:** Electronic Benefit Transfer

***WIC:** Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children

***WIC FMNP:** WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program

***SFMNP:** Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program

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