



PA NEN Member Highlights - *finding the story that hasn't been told so many times*

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Where do you or have you worked?

I started my career working for Equitable Gas Company in Pittsburgh as a home economist. We promoted gas appliance sales, visited customer's homes to demonstrate how to use and clean their ranges, gas lights and grills, assisted appliance dealers and did cooking demonstrations in schools. I left when my first child was born - maternity leave was short in those days. After about 9 months, I was ready to go back to work and found a job promoting Linton microwave ovens. It was the early days of microwaves and I supported dealers and suppliers, providing cooking demonstrations in stores after customers bought their microwaves. Did you know that you can cook turkeys (upside down) and angel food cake in a microwave? Leading a team of demonstrators, we partnered with dealers in WV, Ohio and PA. I also worked at specialty cooking stores and JCPenneys.

My family moved across the state to Paoli, PA, now with three children, and I decided to pursue a Master's Degree in Nutrition at Immaculata University. Between running around with the kids, I also worked for WIC in Chester County.

Six years later with an MA in Nutrition Education and RD from Bryn Mawr Hospital, I began working for Penn State Extension as a Nutrition Educator based in Delaware and Chester Counties. I managed two federal nutrition education grants (EFNEP and SNAP-ED). Our Delaware County SNAP-Ed grant was one of the first in PA in 2000, providing nutrition education classes to schools and senior centers in low income communities.

Over the 20 years that I was at Penn State Extension, we also provided Keystone Stars training for child care providers, mandatory ServSafe classes for food handlers, Dining with Diabetes education, and a myriad of other nutrition education classes for ages 0 - 99. I also wrote curriculum for Penn State on Food Allergies, Mediterranean Cuisine Comes to You, Totally Veggies, FRIDGE (Food Related Intergenerational Discussion Group Experience), and a national Dining with Diabetes curriculum.

There are two special programs of which I am especially proud. For eight years, I led a team of community organizations to host a Hunger Conference in Delaware County. The goal was to raise awareness of the hunger problem and connect with the hungry. As a board member of the Delco Interfaith Food Assistance Network, DIFAN, I could see the growing number of food cupboard users and how their ranks were populated by working folk, as well as the elderly and disabled. This cause receives more attention today. NEN has also been right there with me in supporting hunger issues throughout the years.

My other "outside the job expectations" project was to lead a trip to Kenya with my Extension coworkers. Penn State Extension has a number of agricultural projects in Africa, and we partnered to bring health, nutrition and hugs to the Children and Youth Empowerment Center in Nyeri. Teaching a

version of MyPlate with Kenyan food to children who eat beans, rice, corn, and porridge for most of their meals with occasional meat, mangos and bananas was enlightening.

I am presently back to consulting, with my primary job at Maternity Care Coalition, an Early Head Start grantee in Philadelphia and Montgomery Counties. Still learning and exploring new ventures, I love the opportunities available to those of us in this field.

What are your strengths?

<i>Curiosity:</i>	<i>Openness</i>	<i>Analytical Approach:</i>
It is important to me to explore diverse opportunities. Some friends call me Dora, the Explorer.	I love new projects and enjoy new audiences.	I have developed the ability to lead a project from needs assessment through evaluation. Collecting a community to address problems is essential to making change happen.

What about the health and wellness profession excites you?

The breadth of this profession is amazing - from kitchen, to farm, to grocery store, to hospital, to community center, to international outreach, to home visits, to research. While the salaries could be better, dietitians and nutritionists are making a difference in people’s lives and communities.

Any big projects ahead of you?

At my present job with Early Head Start, we have been hosting cooking classes with the immigrant populations whose children are enrolled. Our last class project was a Burmese soup, Kyar San Chat - yum! Plans are underway to include more “mom” led cooking classes to reach other ethnicities in the centers.

I am also working with a fellow RD from Trinidad to organize a food and cultural tour to Trinidad and Tobago.

Favorite food?

As an adventurous eater, I like most foods. However, rhubarb has been a favorite because it is a perennial plant that has history in our family. We have passed plants to friends and our children whose plants now produce better than ours. Because rhubarb stalks are not familiar to most, it is fun to show others how easy it is to prepare and enjoy. And rhubarb comes back early every spring to greet the new season.