



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.

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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.



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This material was funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. SNAP. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (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: <http://foodhelp.wa.gov> or the Basic Food Program at: 1 877 501 2233.

This Month's Focus- Part 2 of a Series on Policy, Systems, and Environment (PSE) - *The Role of the Environmental Supports: Make the Healthy Choice the Easy Choice*

This is our second issue of the *Energize Newsletter for Nutrition Educators* on "Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change." PSE is an emerging way thinking about improving access and appeal for healthy food and physical activity in schools, workplaces, and other places where people live, learn, work shop, and play. To prevent long-term health risks and prevent obesity, improvements both in activity and nutrition are crucial. Our October issue provided an introduction to PSE. This issue focuses on Environmental change, the "E" of PSE.

As we wrote in the previous issue, Environmental change involves modifying the physical space where health-related choices are made. This can include schools, supermarkets, cafeterias in the workplace, restaurants, schools, and other locations



where adults and kids decide what to eat and how to be physically active. Structuring the Environment to "make the healthy choice an easy choice" is important because that is the place where people can take action to change their behavior. Andrew Riesenber, Western Region FNS SNAP-Ed Officer explains the importance of Environmental change

with this analogy: "Teaching people how to swim is effective only when they also have access to a safe, clean swimming pool that is convenient and free or low-cost to use. We cannot expect people to swim if they do not have access. Environmental changes make it possible *and easier* to act upon the healthy behaviors SNAP-Ed aims to promote without blaming individuals." Environmental supports also have the potential to reach a broader segment of the low-income population than individuals and families served in the classroom setting.

Environmental change can be the result of *behavioral economics*, a field of study that explores the social, emotional, and cognitive factors that play into why individuals make certain choices. For more background on the evidence that supports this concept and associated strategies, a 2007 paper described how behavioral economics can be used to improve diets of low-income Americans, <http://ben.cornell.edu/pdfs/USDA-BeEcon.pdf> and a recent article provides a brief overview, www.foodandnutrition.org/September-October-2014/The-Art-of-Influence.

Environmental change is easier to achieve when a diverse group of people or stakeholders is involved rather than one person, as passionate an advocate he or she may be. As nutrition educators working with those responsible for these environments, we know that change can take time as stakeholders are on-boarded not just with the value of making changes but also the mechanics and costs of doing so. An important place to start is with a needs assessment with the partner, partners or local residents. Depending on the situation, this could simply be a conversation with the key person responsible for the Environment, such as a school principal. Or it could involve a more formal survey, sometimes referred to as an Environmental Scan or E-Scan. An assessment could include an evaluation of the *built environment*, a phrase that refers to the buildings, interior design, layout, sidewalks, playground, and other things that have been constructed which affect the food people select and ways that they are active. For more information on evidence-based assessment tools, see the CX³ Website -- the *Communities of Excellence in Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Prevention*: http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Pages/CX3_Main_Navigation.aspx; and the *Nutrition Environment Measures Survey (NEMS)* site: <http://www.med.upenn.edu/nems/>.

After interpreting the results of the needs assessment, decisions can be made about where to begin with adopting Environmental change. What change is the partner most ready to make or enthusiastic about? What's affordable? What small step might make a vital difference in obesity prevention? What are short-term and longer-term priorities? Which change has as strong likelihood of success that might motivate the partner to make greater changes later? Which changes might attract future collaborators or can be sustained?

Three broad areas of the Environment can be considered for change. One is *informational* change. Examples of this may be a bulletin board with suggestions for making more healthful choices, point of purchase messages or menu labels on a salad bar, or prompts in a stairwell to make using the stairs rather than an elevator more inviting. The second broad area is *structural change*, which involves making physical changes in equipment or location, such as relocating healthier food choices to the beginning of a cafeteria line or installing bicycle racks at a workplace or school. The third type of change is in the "economic environment" that includes programs like Fresh Bucks which make fresh fruits and vegetables more affordable to low income shoppers at farmers markets. For information go to: <http://www.seattle.gov/environment/food/fresh-bucks>

Environmental changes may fall along a continuum, starting with a doable first step, with the anticipation of evolving to more complex and extensive changes later on. An example of an initial change in the physical activity Environment might be posting stairwell prompts to take the stairs instead of the elevator at the workplace or making daily announcements each morning on the PA system encouraging physical activity. An example of a change further along the continuum in the physical activity Environment could be opening the school gym or play fields one evening a week so that children and other people in the community have a free, safe place to exercise and play. A simple strategy to initiate in the school cafeteria is tasting new food, which leads to increased selection by students when it's put on the menu. Advanced examples of changes in the nutrition Environment might involve redesigning the school cafeteria to make it easy for students to make healthy choices, such as purchasing and placing a salad bar that all students access easily or building a community food garden where the harvest is used as part of planned menus for a halfway house or distributed to food bank clientele.



Tasting and rating "pluots" in cafeteria
Photo Courtesy of
WSU Food Sense, Spokane County

Through Washington State SNAP-Ed, some exciting programs are using the principles of PSE to make healthful Environmental Changes. Read on!



Photo Courtesy of WSU Food Sense, King County

Environmental Change Example: School Meals – Smarter Lunch Rooms

What's in a name? Apparently a lot, particularly when it comes to motivating students to eat nutritious foods. Young Seattle Seahawks football fans were excited to get their hands on Beast Mode Bananas (just regular bananas with a new name). Julie Evenson, Food Sense Coordinator in Kitsap County, commented that Bethel School District School Food Service Director, Leeda Beha, said the bananas flew off the shelves with the changed name, while interest beforehand was lukewarm. Julie offers some other clever names: Russell Sprouts, Legion of Boom Legumes, Coach Carroll Carrots and Touchdown Tacos. This is just one strategy which uses behavioral economics to "nudge" kids to easily choose more healthy foods at school, <http://smarterlunchrooms.org>. (Contact: Julie Evenson, Extension Food Sense Program Coordinator, Kitsap – NW WA Counties, Washington State University, 360-337-4651, jlevenson@wsu.edu.)

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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Environmental Change Example: Physical Activity Washington State University's SNAP-Ed staff worked with staff at Barnes Elementary school in Kelso to build a track around the perimeter of the school. This has been used by both kids and parents to provide a safe and convenient place for physical activity. In the 2015 school year a running club for the youth will be started. Partners involved include Barnes Elementary School staff, parents, and local businesses.

In addition to the track, Tina Thompson, Food \$ense nutrition educator with SNAP-Ed, worked with a group of 3-5th graders in a student nutrition advisory program. The students suggested to the school principal their recommendation to install a 'buddy bench'. This is a bench where youth who want others to play with can go and find new friends or youth to play with. Currently the school is planning on installing 3 of them this school year.

(Contact: Sandy Brown, Extension Food \$ense Faculty, Clark – SW WA Counties, 360-397-6060 x 5700, browns@wsu.edu.)



New Walking Track at Barnes Elementary in Kelso
Photo courtesy of WSU Food \$ense, Cowlitz County

Environmental Change Example: Retail and High Schools

Students at a high school in Kent and another in Seattle have embarked on a two-year project to make targeted changes in the food environment, both at school and in their communities. This fall, they received education from the Rethink Your Drink Curriculum and Smart Snacks in School from SNAP-Ed staff. The next step is for selected students to promote what they've learned among their peers through posters, videos, and other means that they will choose. They will also assess the eating environments within 500 to 1,000 feet of their schools to see about the availability of healthy food and beverage choices, as well as how those are marketed. Meetings with the food retailers and focus groups with students will be used to design strategies for change that mirror changes in the school food environment. (Contacts: Elizabeth Kimball, Program Supervisor, SNAP-Ed, Public Health – Seattle and King County, elizabeth.kimball@kingcounty.gov or 206-263-8395.)



Graphic Courtesy of WSU Food \$ense

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Local Tips and Tools Using Behavioral Economics – A fun way to engage students in school meals is by using a laminated posters of a meal tray that can be changed each day with an erasable marker to personalize the menu items. To download the printable posters files (available in two sizes for both breakfast and lunch), and suggestions for their use, go to <http://nutrition.wsu.edu/MyTray/>. Also on Washington State University's Food \$ense website are bag-stuffers that can be distributed at food banks to provide helpful tips for uses for foods commonly found there such as bread and canned chili. Available for free download at <http://nutrition.wsu.edu/fbresources/>. (Contact: Kathleen Manenica, State Coordinator, Food \$ense, Washington State University Extension, 253-445-4598, manenica@wsu.edu.)

ToolKit for Healthy Retail - Stock Healthy, Shop Healthy, developed by University of Missouri Extension, is chock-full of useful information for retail and community partners: tips for displaying and merchandising healthy food items, strategies to turn a profit from nutritious food sales, and ideas for promotion and marketing. A special section targets small retailers, such as corner stores, to not just increase the sales of nutritious foods to their local customers, but also to attract and keep customers by building partnerships with supportive community organizations and residents. Downloadable toolkit and free webinars that can be watched at any time are available at <http://extension.missouri.edu/stockhealthy>.

New SuperTracker for High School Students – A fun, interactive online tool for teens is one of the latest resources on the ChooseMyPlate website. The new SuperTracker Nutrition Lesson Plans for High School Students is designed to help students in grades 9 to 12 learn how to build a healthy diet. This free resource was launched in October by the USDA's Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion and can be accessed at <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/downloads/SuperTrackerHSLessonPlans1.pdf>.

DID YOU KNOW?

Potatoes OK'd (Eventually) for WIC – Clients on the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Nutrition Program currently receive a modest benefit to buy fruits and vegetables – except white potatoes (they can currently buy sweet potatoes and yams). But that will change. In the federal budget that passed Congress last week, a provision was added to allow white potatoes on WIC, although it won't happen right away. USDA must first issue guidance about the change and then the state WIC office will determine how they will implement it.

Washington State allows only fresh produce, so at some point WIC clients will be able to add spuds to their shopping lists. (Contact: Cathy Franklin, Nutrition Coordinator, Washington State WIC Nutrition Program, 360-236-3648, cathy.franklin@doh.wa.gov.)

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