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Interview a High Level/Executive Leader in Public Health

Linda Rocafort MPH, RDN, LDN, CDE
Interviewed:
Position: North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System Employee Wellness Promotion Coach and Coordinator

Responsibilities
- Effectively plans, develops, implements and evaluates employee wellness activities.
- Effectively implements principles, practices and procedures of event planning & marketing.
- Works independently, establishes appropriate priorities, and accomplishes program implementation without supervision.
- Plans, composes and conducts employee educational and training programs, using current media/technology.
- Effectively chairs the system Employee Wellness Council, and maintains appropriate responsibility over employee wellness activities. Ensures assembly of a diverse planning team or interdisciplinary members.
- Assists in activities in support of the overall employee satisfaction program and related activities, including the VHA all-employee survey.
- Develops and implements an operational plan, consistent with the VA, VHA and VISN goals and local needs and resources for enhanced employee satisfaction and wellness.

What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high-level position in public health?
- My previous work and volunteer experience spanned a number of different practice areas that depended on my ability to learn, use, and refine varied skills. For example, my previous work as the program co-manager of a pediatric weight management program and the owner of my private practice helped me learn and integrate many of the business-related skills that I utilize in my current role: creating and managing a budget, leadership, networking, marketing, public speaking and persuasive speech and writing. My volunteer work with the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics on both a national (previous member and Chair of the Diversity Committee) and local level also facilitated the honing and sharpening of those skills.
- I also think that my work as an outpatient dietitian, particularly my counseling skills, have been an asset for me in my current position. Learning and using health behavior theory to understand what’s important to others and how to facilitate change is a skill that’s applicable to various work situations and environments. Part of leadership and working with others also involves active listening – again an ability that I was able to hone and refine over the years as a clinician.
- I also find that overall grit and resourcefulness are determinants of success. When I was confronted in new situations or environments is when I grew the most. I think it’s important for someone to have a firm grasp of what they know and don’t know, what resources they have and don’t have; and that when a gap in knowledge and/or resources exists, how to bridge that gap regardless of what you have heard or been told. If I gave up on an initiative, idea, or opportunity simply because I was told that no one had done it before or that there’s a possibility it wouldn’t be supported, my current program wouldn’t be what it is today. I have also failed and made mistakes – and the ability to understand what factors contributed to those failures and how to adapt and grow is what has attributed to my success.

What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?
Build a supportive network of co-workers and professionals from diverse backgrounds and ideas; listen and learn from others successes; be resourceful; learn and grow from your mistakes; remember the individuals whom you serve and always push forward.

Tanja Cutting
Interviewed: Lacey Arneson McCormack, PhD, MPH, RD, LN, EP-C
Assistant Professor
Department of Health & Nutritional Sciences
South Dakota State University

Describe your current position and responsibilities.
I’m an Assistant Professor in the Department of Health and Nutritional Sciences at South Dakota State University. I teach in our undergraduate and graduate Nutrition and Dietetics programs and advise students at the graduate level. Currently I am teaching Public Health Nutrition, Nutrition Across the Lifecycle and Interprofessional Obesity Prevention II. My role is split among teaching (45%), research (45%) and service (10%). My research focuses on how
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the environment shapes diet and physical activity behaviors among rural populations. I work on several large, collaborative grant-funded projects and have authored nearly 20 peer-reviewed publications.

**What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high level position in public health?**
As a first generation college graduate, mentorship has played a large role in my academic and professional career. I ended up in an undergraduate research position when I was a sophomore in college where I collected and analyzed 24-hour dietary recalls. Prior to that I’d never been exposed to research, but I fell in love with the process. My mentor, Dr. Bonny Specker, allowed undergraduate students the same opportunities as everyone else (graduate students, full-time employees, etc.) so I got involved every part of the research process, including analyzing data and writing papers. I ended up because I knew I didn’t want to be a clinical dietitian, and I knew I wanted a master’s degree to stay competitive. In searching for combined master’s plus internship programs I discovered public health. I had always told people I was interested in health promotion and disease prevention, but I didn’t realize that had a name. I developed a passion for public health and knew I wanted (and needed) to bring this new information and these new skills back to South Dakota. In order to have a real impact, I’d need to educate the future of our profession. Pairing my love of research with my desire to educate students, I knew a PhD was the next step. Ultimately, I would say that mentoring and being open to any and all new experiences, plus formal education in public health, is what set me up for the position I’m currently in.

**What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?**
Everyone should get a degree in public health! It honestly changed how I think about everything, and it’s the direction healthcare should be moving. Additionally, get involved in research. It might be participating in a study, volunteering to help on a study, but get involved in the process. You’ll acquire a variety of skills that are useful in many different settings and situations. Finally, networking. It can be hard, especially as an introvert, but our connections with other people are really what open doors for us.

**Janice A. Fisher, PhD, RDN, LD, CDE, FAADE**
Affiliate Delegate, Iowa
I interviewed Angie Tagtow, MS, RD, LD, the former Executive Director at the Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, United States Department of Agriculture

**Current Position:** Recently resigned from position as Executive Director at the Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, USDA and is currently on sabbatical.

**What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high level position in public health?**
I have always had an interest in disease prevention and health promotion. I attended the University of Northern Iowa and tried to gear my coursework towards prevention versus disease treatment. After I graduated, I did not do an internship. I worked as a Program Director for the state of Iowa for the American Heart Association. I realized that completing an internship would be advantageous to my work, so completed a master’s degree at Iowa State University and became a registered dietitian. Some of the positions I have held were being a Regional Nutrition Consultant for Iowa Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for WIC, serving as a Food and Society Policy Fellow at the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy; Co-Founder of Iowa Food Systems Council; Founder and Principal of Environmental Nutrition Solutions, LLC; Food System Consultant, Community Transformation Grant Team for the Iowa Department of Public Health; Senior Fellow and Endowed Chair at Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture, University of Minnesota; Project Director of Cultivate Iowa; Founder and managing Editor of the Journal of Hunger and Environmental Nutrition; and Executive Director, Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, USDA.

Throughout my various positions, I realized that certain skills are necessary. These included having a passion for my work and being driven to expand my abilities to help people. It is important to have good communication skills and be able to present lectures in front of large audiences. I cultivated relationships with other organizations and people both within and outside of nutrition/dietetics. Networking was a key component to being successful, especially for enabling me to operate a successful consulting business. When I worked at the Iowa Department of Public Health, I was able to meet and work with the governors of Iowa and was appointed to committees and task forces that dealt with forming policy and expanding public health and farming programs. That connection later helped me be appointed to work on the federal government level. I particularly worked closely with Governor Tom Vilsack and his staff and later was appointed by Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack to my position as Executive Director at Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, USDA. As part of that position I worked on the Let’s Move Initiative, My Plate messages, and Physical Activity Messages for children.

**Advice for those who want to grow and pursue a career in Public Health.**

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Public health jobs are available to dietitians who can look outside the box of traditional dietetics. I recommend looking at community based organizations and community action organizations within the state. School districts have public health positions. The state health departments have many positions that have varied responsibilities. Often state level positions can open the door to attaining positions on the Federal level. Unfortunately, salaries of many public health positions are lower paying, particularly when you evaluate the skill sets needed to do these job well. Salaries on the state and federal levels are usually higher. If you seek positions with higher levels of authority, you may need to relocate to the east coast where most Federal agencies are located.

As you climb the ladder to higher level positions, you need to constantly work on improving your skills. Grant writing is an important skill that is usually improved through practice. Communication skills, networking skills, and writing skills are very important. It is important to understand and evaluate research and to be able to assess progress towards goals in a quantitative manner.

It is important to learn to work within teams and to be a team leader on projects. I would expand my knowledge outside of pure dietetics to understanding agriculture in the broader sense, and food policy issues.

**Shari R. Goldsmith MS, RDN**
**Virginia Affiliate Delegate**
Interviewed: Alanna J. Moshfegh MS, RD, Research Leader
Food Surveys Research Group
Agricultural Research Service
United States Department of Agriculture

**Job Description & Primary Responsibilities:**
What We Eat in America (WWEIA), NHANES is a national food survey conducted as a partnership between the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). WWEIA represents the integration of two nationwide surveys - USDA's Continuing Survey of Food Intakes by Individuals (CSFII) and HHS' NHANES. Under the integrated framework, DHHS is responsible for the sample design and data collection. USDA is responsible for the survey's dietary data collection methodology, development and maintenance of the food and nutrient databases used to code and process the data, and data review and processing. The two surveys were integrated in 2002.

Within the research arm of the USDA, Alanna supervises the approximately thirty nutrition, food science and statistical professionals responsible for the survey’s dietary data collection. Among numerous tasks, just to give one example, this group is responsible for designing/updating the 24-hour dietary recall instrument utilized to gather data for WWEIA.

**Additional Roles:**
Sits on a number of advisory committees and research groups and numerous working groups within the federal government:
Part of a data committee for the Dietary Guidelines for Americans Advisory Committee
Served on National Nutrition Research Roadmap Committee at USDA

**What skills, experiences, network/groups helped you achieve this high level position in public health:**
Strong background in understanding food production/food industry in America
Strong background in science of nutrition and foods
Strong understanding of regulatory aspects and food labeling
Statistics
IT – how data is used
Interpersonal skills
Good management skills – understanding how people work
Understand how American public views food – markedly different than nutritionists approach food

Best networking is from volunteering and maintaining longstanding connections with others in professional nutrition organizations.
Also cultivating contacts with others in non-nutrition professions

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What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?
Never burn a bridge!
We are at a crossroads with social media; use it wisely and professionally
Very important that we understand and respect the science of nutrition.
Really successful people never give up – do not let losses dissuade you from continuing to pursue your dreams.

Nadine Pazder
Affiliate Delegate, Florida
I interviewed Leslene Gordon, PhD, RD, LD/N, Community Health Director of the FL-DOH, Hillsborough County, Florida.

Job title:
Community Health Director

What are your primary responsibilities?
Leadership of managers for the following programs: Epidemiology, Health Promotion and Education, School Health, Lead Poisoning Prevention, Sterilization, Breast and Cervical Cancer Prevention, Office of Health Equity, Family Planning, Community Dental, school-based Sealant Program, Healthy Start Screening support. Lead for agency’s Community Health Assessment and Health Improvement Plan Process, as well as Public Health Accreditation.

How long have you been in this position?
12 years.

What, if any, additional roles do you have in this position?
Two committees for University of South Florida (DrPH Advisory, Colon Cancer Research)
Gubernatorial Appointment- Florida Diabetes Advisory Council
Metropolitan Planning Organization- Transportation Disadvantaged Board
US Public Health Accreditation Board Site Reviewer
Affiliate Professor and Mentor of USF Maternal Child Health PhD students
DOH State MAPP (Community health assessment) committee

What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high level position in public health?
Investment in the necessary academic work provides not just a degree but the required knowledge and skill set. I also feel my academic preparation in different majors (dietetics, environmental health science and public health) and work in these different disciplines broadened my experiences and made me more prepared to take advantage of unusual opportunities. Participation in a number of Academy volunteer opportunities (accreditation site visitor, CADE, Diversity committee, Nomination committee, Education Task Force, Committee for Public Health and Community Nutrition) provided experiences that enhanced leadership and facilitation skills.

What Advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?
Participate in a leadership development program (formal or informal)
Be willing to take risks
You will make mistakes, learn from them
Be creative, and flexible; there is always more than one way to achieve ones’ objectives
Set goals and take steps in the directions that will move you towards those objectives
Be open to changes and be comfortable with some degree of ambiguity in some situations
I value trust, honesty and ethics
A support network was crucial for me: family, a mentor etc. Would also add one dimension of support that may not be so popular, a belief in a higher power. I don't believe that I could have done any of this by myself.

Shannon Robson
PHCNPG Delegate
Interview with Claire Heiser, MS, RD Public Health Advisor, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
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Describe your current position and responsibilities.
I am a team lead for a group of professionals that work with state health departments and other grantees at the state, local, tribal, and territorial level (who have received funds from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) to implement strategies around nutrition and physical activity around obesity.
My responsibilities are primarily focused on management of the team and leadership. Within leadership my responsibilities are to work with partners (e.g. scientists, subject matter experts) to develop the next funding opportunity announcements. Included in this role is blending together the science and already existing programs. In my position I must also bring together a compilation of programs related to what is going on at the table in a particular area.

What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high level position in public health?
To achieve a federal position in public health I think it is important to start at the practitioner level working in a local or state level health department and/or community organization. Engaging at the practitioner level has allowed me to be successful in my current leadership positions because it provides context to the work. First you need to learn how to do the work (as a practitioner) then you can lead the work.

The skills learned as a practitioner can’t be learned in a textbook and it is those experiences that help you achieve a management or leadership position. For example, when I was in Texas I had to put together the Texas Obesity Council to write the first state obesity plan. This experience taught me the first components of partnership in bringing together individuals (e.g. scientist, community members, etc.) and developing partnerships a skill that I continue to use in my leadership position today.

As I progressed to my current position at the federal level, continuing to relate back to the folks in state health departments and community organizations to hear their stories has been incredibly helpful. I also take time to visit sites and see the work that is being conducted. Attending the Association of State Public Health Nutritionists annual meeting to hear about what folks are working on and their experience has been incredibly helpful as well.

What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?
You don’t need to have an academic public health background. If you have the passion go out and try it. You will learn so much from those who you work with in your first job in public health.

Additional Comments:
It is important to recognize in the field of public health often the positions we hold are not nutrition positions. Unfortunately, about six years ago all nutritionists in my division at CDC were reclassified into public health advisors eliminating the requirements for individuals to hold the Registered Dietitian (RD) credential. Since this reclassification, when candidates rise to the top for a new hire if one has an RD that is favorable, but it is not required for any position on the team. Individuals such as myself who have a nutrition background and are in a leadership position try to hire those with RDs, but as those in leadership positions move to retirement what to come in the future in regards to these positions is unknown.

In addition, my division has not required specific professionals (including RDNs) to fill position supported by our funding. This has resulted in less RDNs in our funded programs in public health agencies. While this is something I try to get to change it is not good to not have those safe guards in policy.
Lastly, many years ago in the late 90’s there was a funded assessment of all public health nutritionists across state health departments. As this has not been done in a while we need to get a better picture of where we are in regards to nutrition positions in public health. What does the landscape for RDs in public health look like across the US? This information is needed to provide the case (there has been a decline in positions) to take some action.

Denise Andersen, MS, RDN, LD, CLC
Womens Health DPG Delegate

Current job position: Program Director Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), Comprehensive Cancer Control.
Day to day responsibilities include administrative, management of staff and interns from the MPH Nutrition Program at the U of MN, budgets, policy development in addition to training, presentations, and development of work plan references and resources.

What skills, experiences, networks, groups helped you achieve this high level position in public health?
“I started out as the State of MN Nutrition Coordinator which included the Food Charter and Food Summit.”
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Donna was promoted to her position because of her abilities and work ethic with the Food Charter. She has been able to weave people to work together even those who were not able to agree on anything. Donna went on to say "I want to work closely with other chronic disease units within MDH, as well as be an internal liaison with our community health workers". She also stated "there are three arms in cancer: screening/research, policy systems and environmental change.

This involves the outward facing of all things cancer related at MDH." Donna's position has enabled MN to have the MN Cancer Alliance, passed by CDC. The MN Cancer Alliance includes training, health plans, training of MD's, nurses, and cancer plans to hospitals. The Alliance is led by advisory groups and include palliative care and advanced cancer care. The Alliance received a $500,000.00 grant from the State of MN which she spearheaded. A report on her work is provided to the MN Commissioner of Health. Donna has revitalized the Cancer Alliance.

Advice for those who want to grow and pursue a career in public health
"A Master’s Degree is important as well as hands on experience, a great mentor, and be passionate about your work!" "Your first position can lead you to other opportunities as well as leadership opportunities."

David Holben
RDPG Delegate
Interviewed: Nancy J. Emenaker, PhD, MEd, RDN
Program Officer, National Cancer Institute/NIH
Bethesda, MD 20892

Describe current position and responsibilities.
Health Scientist Administrators at the NIH are responsible for the initial administrative, scientific and technical review of NIH research grant applications pertaining to the scientific and technical fields. The duties and responsibilities of the Health Scientist Administrator include, but are not limited to; organizing and managing peer-review groups to evaluate research proposals on the basis of their scientific merit; managing extramural research and research training programs, and identifying research areas warranting either increased or decreased funding emphasis; developing requests for applications (RFAs) and Requests for Proposals (RFPs) designed to elicit research grant and contract proposals from the scientific community; providing technical assistance to applicants and grantees; serving as project officer on research contracts and program administrator/director on research grants; conducting site visits to applicant and grantee institutions to determine the adequacy of research and training facilities; and serving as spokesperson for agency programs in dealing with the scientific community, the Congress, and other Federal agencies.

Additional Roles
NIH liaison to National Food and Nutrient Analysis Program.
NCI researcher focusing on dietary components as modulators of colorectal tumor angiogenesis.
Reviewer for other agencies, including DOD and Cancer Charities.
Numerous NCI Working Groups, including Cancer Models WG (e.g., companion animal cancer research).

What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high level position in public health?
Doctoral and post-doctoral training with talented, caring mentors.
Research project and laboratory coordination.
ASN professional contacts.

What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?
Pursue goals and dreams.
Seek training that you need to pursue your dreams (e.g., genetics).
Find people that you can work with. Be prepared before you approach them and have ideas of how they can help you grow as a professional.
This is a career, not an occupation.
Be prepared to work hours outside of the traditional workday.
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Pauline Williams
Affiliate Delegate – Utah
I interviewed Phyllis Crowley, MS, RD, CD in the State of Utah Health Department

Describe your current position and responsibilities:
Job Title: Utah WIC State Nutrition and Breastfeeding Coordinator

Responsibilities: Administrative, supervision and management of the federal regulations for WIC. Supervises a staff of RDNs. Acts as the liaison to the USDA regional office in Denver. Receives all regulations and assures they are implemented. Provides technical support to 50 WIC clinics throughout state (entails – education, professional development, resources). Visits all local agencies throughout the state (13 of those). Responsible for typical administrative/management items such as budgetary decision, staffing issues (hiring, upgrading positions), policy/procedures, education/training, etc.

What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high level position in public health?
The main way of getting this position is experience. She worked 10 years in local WIC clinics in two different states, which gave her a great perspective. Those 10 years of local service gave insight into how WIC could be administered better and how she could get a position to improve the working situation of RDNS/nutrition professionals doing these frontline service. She was motivated to help implement government programs that can be very cumbersome and burdensome, in a more easy way. The person who had the job before was not a RDN. The people that interviewed her were not dietitians, they held an MPH and MCH (maternal child health). The skills that got her the job were 1) 10 years of supervision experience in WIC and 2) having varied experience and background in many different areas of dietetics. She had worked clinical, school nutrition, and WIC. The interviewer told her – “this broad experience says you can be open and flexible.” They didn’t want someone with one narrow focus. The more areas you work in, the more experience you have with different ways of doing things and working with many different types of people. Seeing things from a different perspective is a needed skill.

Other skills needed. Training and mentoring at the under and graduate level. Getting hands-on and direct experience with current public leaders. Longer intern rotations in public health 2-3 months, instead of 2-3 weeks. It is important for seasoned RDNs in public health to take the time and efforts to share and train interns and share their experience and really mentor students/interns. RDNs need to share the rewarding aspects of working in public health. If people are saying I don’t have time to take an intern, they should ask themselves, “do you have time to make sure the work you’ve done continues?” If you don’t train interns to do your job, someone outside of nutrition and dietetics will take it, which means RDNs won’t be in these leadership position. Find ways to motivate current RDNs to share their passion, share their joys of working in public health, share what is great about public health.

Advice for those you might like to pursue a similar role
Advice: A graduate degree is critical, not necessarily an MPH. Need experience combined with the master’s degree. Get a mentor to guide you in public health. Get the certificate of training in public health.

Other
Fear that is we don’t train new dietitians for public health leadership, these jobs will be taken by non-RDNs.

Joan Salge Blake
Affiliate Delegate Massachusetts
Here are my findings after my interview:

Describe your current position and responsibilities.
Stacey Zawacki, DrPH, MS, RDN, LDN, Clinical Assistant Professor, Director of Sargent Choice Nutrition Center at Boston University. She oversees the Center, which services 30,000 students and 8,000 faculty/staff. Because of this massive amount of individuals, she is responsible with creating and implementing large scale nutrition approaches for chronic disease prevention. She is also a researcher collaborating with other Universities who are also working with large population health approaches.

What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high level position in public health?
While she was clinically trained in medical nutrition therapy (MNT), Stacey pursued a doctoral degree in public health so she could learn how to implement population health approaches. She has applied this learning when creating the University’s healthy dining program, group classes, and interactive tools on the website to prevent lifestyle driven, chronic health conditions. The college age is a key time to do this intervention as these students are emerging adults making lifestyle decisions.
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What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?
While RDNs should be trained in one-on-one clinical approaches regarding MNT, they also need training in population approaches. She recommends getting an advanced degree in public health or a certificate in this area plus working in the field of public health under a good mentor.

Mayra Roman
Affiliate Delegate – Puerto Rico
Interviewee: Daniel Reyes MBA, RDN, LND, FAND, VHA-CM
Primary Care Service & Disease Prevention Program Manager
VA Caribbean Healthcare System

Describe your current position and responsibilities.
Health Promotion Disease Prevention Program Manager
Support our facilities mission in that our Veterans be provided all Health Promotion & Disease Prevention related clinical interventions and that they are seamlessly integrated across the continuum of their health care.
Duties include developing facility level strategic plans, staff learning & development & Outreach across the Caribbean to all sites the Veterans Health Administration Serves.

What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high level position in public health?
Healthcare is a field that changes rapidly and being abreast of evidence based-data driven information is crucial. Develop good communication skills by having strong written and oral communication. Have the ability to analyze data and prepare meaningful/actionable reports.

Most importantly demonstrate maturity upon making decisions & have honest and ethical conduct. The Academy has afforded me to not only be on our local board but have been in the HOD, Diversity Committee & Member Value Committee to name a few and the professionalism, networking and mentorship received have made me the professional I am today.

What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?
You need to cultivate a strong background seizing all the opportunities that help you grow personally and professionally. Especially out of Dietetics, this is what will make you unique. I see Healthcare as the largest industry in our nation and is a field that encompasses many different roles. Simply don’t be afraid to be the first at something and never say no (when possible) to any role you are given. You may discover you are great at more than one thing.

Mallory Mount
Affiliate Delegate – West Virginia
Interviewee: Dr. Richard Crespo, Jean C. Edwards School of Medicine at Marshall University, Professor, Department of Family and Community Health

Describe your current position and responsibilities.
Dr. Crespo has a research and service appointment in the School of Medicine at Marshall University. All of his work is grant funded. He is the primary grant writer; however, he has team that helps in the work. He has a variety of grants in a variety of public health areas and his focus is on rural communities in Appalachia. His passion is in diabetes management and control and has worked on many diabetes coalitions in rural communities. In addition, Dr. Crespo travels overseas 3-4 times each year to provide his professional services. Since 2010, Dr. Crespo has been involved in over 26 grant funded projects at Marshall University.

What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high level position in public health?
Dr. Crespo stated that he learned early in his career to be a facilitator rather than an instructor. He finds that engaging people in making decisions about what they want to do is essential in public health. Dr. Crespo received his PhD in Curriculum Development and Research. He stated that he brought this valuable information into the health care field, where he is most passionate.

What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?
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Dr. Crespo’s advice is to gain experience in the community. He reports that the most helpful part of his education was when he worked in between receiving his degrees. This helped to shape him into the public health professional he is today.

RoseAnna Holliday
Affiliate Delegate – Idaho
Interview: Marni McDowell, MS, RD Director, Global Health & Wellness

What are your primary responsibilities?
I lead a team that has responsibility for US and Global Healthcare benefits, Wellness programs, retirement/pensions plans, leave programs and employee engagement programs. As part of my role as director, I develop strategy, manage contracts and vendors, follow market trends and competitive best practices. I also serve as part of the HR leadership team.

How long have you been in this position?
I have been Director for 8 months, but with the institution for the past 9 years. I have been an RDN since 1997, going on 20 years!

What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high-level position?
I have spent years thinking outside of the traditional RD role. In all roles, there is opportunity to be innovative and start something new, refine a process and learn a new skill. I sought out mentors in the areas that I need help with (business related skills). I took advantage of my employer’s leadership program(s) as well as honing my skills in coaching, leading, and delegating. I was reflective and honest and had to do some self-learning in the areas that are not my comfort zone through reading, attending conferences/webinars. One tip is to subscribe to daily news updates in my subject areas. My advice is to look beyond the local network and community for learning and partnerships. Personally, I created a network in the Bay Area of Silicon Valley Employers to be connected with that industry. I intentionally focused on business acumen skills, such as budgeting, strategy, planning, and development.

What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?
My advice would be to think outside of the box and how your skill set can contribute in non-traditional ways! Always be watching and observing others in their discussions, decisions, and conduct. Develop business acumen skills such as financial, strategy, HR knowledge, learn the industry of the business you work. Take on stretch-goals and seek out mentors in disciplines that you need to learn more about. Look at job descriptions and identify skills that you would need development in to be able to move to the next level.

Irene Soucy
Affiliate Delegate - Delaware
I interviewed Joanne White, MA, RD, LDN, the Director of the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for the State of Delaware.

Describe your current position and responsibilities.
As the Director of the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Special Supplemental Nutrition Program, I provide leadership and direction for this federally-funded program for infants and children age 1-5 years (including foster children), pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers (up to 1 year) and postpartum women (up to 6 months). WIC administration includes: Program Operations, Nutrition Services, Vendor Management, Program Administration and Program Integrity. The Administrative unit is responsible for the financial operations, communications, compliance and outreach aspects of the WIC program. The Program Operations and Nutrition Services unit administers the nutrition program and related operations including breastfeeding and the dietetic internship. The Vendor Management unit manages vendor relations, vendor compliance and costs containment strategy. My role as the WIC Director is to facilitate a collaborative effort to integrate activities as needed to achieve the mission of WIC and the Division of Public Health (DPH).

What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high level position in public health?
Public Health provided me with many opportunities to develop my skills as a public health nutritionist. I was exposed to the entire lifecycle of nutrition from infants to the elderly and was able to impact their quality of life. Early on in my career at Public Health I was able to be active in the Delaware Dietetic Association and served as President and as a Delegate. These were valuable experiences as I came in contact with individuals who took interest in my growth and development as a dietitian working in Public Health. Delaware is a small enough that you cross paths with individuals
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who may not work directly in your profession, but your work ethic and skills can leave a lasting impression that may serve you well down the road.

**What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?**
My advice is to take every opportunity offered and develop yourself in all areas of public health as our mission is to promote health in all places where people live, work and play.

**Shayne Robinson**
Oncology DPG Delegate
First Interview: Alice G Bender, MS, RDN
Director of Nutrition Programs
American Institute for Cancer Research
Email: a.bender@aicr.org

**Describe your current position and responsibilities**
Currently Bender serves as the Director of Nutrition Programs at American Institute of Cancer Research (AICR). Her responsibilities include: Serves as media spokesperson and matters related to diet, weight and cancer risk. Directs nutrition programs including all programing related to the New American Plate, The New American Plate Challenge (both on paper and online versions) Educates RD’s such as her upcoming presentation at the Oncology Dietetic Practice Group Oncology Nutrition Symposium. She will be presenting on the new AICR report and new AICR recommendations Bender writes for ACIR blog for the public, monthly e newsletter for professionals and cancer research updates for health professionals. She also reviews AICR online and print publications.

**What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high level position in public health?**
Bender has an undergraduate degree from Goshen College in Indiana in home economics (since this college didn’t have nutrition major) but took all her nutrition prerequisites such as biochemistry and organic chemistry. She went on to obtain a Master in Nutrition and Public Health from Columbia University. After graduating she worked in hospital for 18 months as a self-directed internship, then 3 years in this hospital and its community well baby clinic and WIC clinics.

She went on to gain experience working with broad range health professionals for 4 years at Stanford University Health Center and then at the University of Georgia’s health center for 15 years. There she started a peer nutrition educator program to train nutrition students between to do outreach and nutrition education on campus. This program is still in existence and has evolved to include a teaching kitchen. Bender credits working with broad range of health professions with helping her develop communication skills and preparing her for her current roll.

**What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?**
Bender says she never imagined doing this type of job. She suggested RD’s look for experiences that stretch you and test you to be beyond what you are able to do or think you are able to do. Bender credits her involvement with first, her local dietetic association, and then, her state dietetic association in Georgia, rising as far as President of Georgia’s Dietetic Association, in helping her develop connections. These connections and the skills she learned helped her obtain her current position and she reports she still uses these contacts today. She advises all RD’s and students get involved in Dietetic Associations at either a local and state level.

**Shayne Robinson**
Second Interview: Colleen Doyle
Job title: Managing Director of Nutrition and Physical Activity for the American Cancer Society

**What are your primary responsibilities?**
Responsibe for setting the direction organization take in marketing and programming from prevention to survivorship; media representative

**How long have you been in this position?**
Doyle has been with ACS for 20 years, in this position since 1999

**What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high level position in public health?**
Doyle is an RD, she obtained a Bachelor of Science in Dietetics from Miami of Ohio and went on to get a masters in nutrition with a minor in exercise physiology from the University of Ohio. She followed with the masters with a 6 month work experience which at the time counted for a dietetic internship.
Doyle knew she didn’t want to practice clinical dietetics but at the advice of her guidance counselor worked in a group home for people with Developmental Disabilities, the same place she did her work experience. She found this a better setting than a hospital since she knew she wouldn’t go into clinical practice.

She then relocated to California (for her spouses work) and worked at the Department of Health in Fresno; there she worked on NCI funded 5 a day project. Doyle reports at this point she had no prior public health experience. At the same time she was volunteering at ACS and then took a staff position with ACS (community services director working on patient support and public education programs). She then relocated to Atlanta (again for spouses work) and worked at Emory in School of Public Health doing research and lecturing in a variety of classes. A position opened at National Office of ACS, and Doyle has been there since working through changes with the organization. When Doyle first moved to Atlanta she was active with the Atlanta Dietetic Association as fundraising chair but found as her job responsibilities grew she was unable to stay involved at the local level. Doyle’s favorite part of her job is talk to nutrition and public health college students in Atlanta.

What Advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?
Keep an open mind, try new and different things. If you think there is an area with in a field that you are interested in, try to volunteer and or reach out and talk to someone in the field. Doyle loves than AND is focusing on public health nutrition.

Joanne Graham
Affiliate Delegate - California
Interviewee: Caroline Kurtz, PhD

Describe your current position and responsibilities:
Branch Chief, Nutrition Education & Obesity Prevention (California Department of Public Health)
Administrative and programmatic oversight of media, development, training, and partnerships for local and statewide nutrition education and obesity prevention. Has been in this position for 5 months. Previously assistant branch chief (3 years), and section chief (5 years) prior to that.

What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high level position in public health?

a. Staying connected with academia, which allowed keeping up to date with current research, understanding the upcoming workforce (personality of students), ability for instructional experience or precepting (interactive experiences are valuable in government settings). She fosters precepting in her branch for MPH students and dietetic interns. Although much planning is required (which she considers a side administrative benefit), she finds the process extremely beneficial for her staff who gain communication and mentorship abilities.

b. Collaboratives - Being able to develop partnerships and foster shared interests (whether formal/informal)

c. Participation in associations - In her area APHA membership is very predominant. This allows for national, regional, and local sharing which expands her network. She strives to formulate committees or initiatives that are inclusive of outside members so there is cross-functional collaborations within the network.

What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?

a. There has been a shift away from classifications requiring RD. RD is preferred, but not required in current duty statements for jobs in public health. In her experience, there was a lack of understanding by RDs with regard to public policy, as well as program/structural development knowledge. There are two aspects that are needed in the public health role, and only having the RD didn’t fill the gap. She has found that those with RD and graduate degrees are better equipped to work in public health on the policy and program planning efforts.

b. In policy and program development/monitoring/evaluation (government), there needs to be skill sets that broaden RD abilities which are applied and beyond theory. Also, levels of RD research ability was variable.

c. RDs have the community, clinical and administrative background. But further experience in policy and program development/implementation through either a graduate program or on the job training in a local/state government setting should enable broad success of the profession in public health.
Pre-Meeting Comments from Constituents
Interview a High Level/Executive Leader in Public Health

Interviewee: Joanne Slavin, PhD, RD

My role in public health has been concentrated in my research areas of expertise, dietary fiber, whole grains, and carbohydrates. Work on panels and committees is based on referrals and recommendations so serving on the 2001 Dietary Fiber IOM committee established me as an expert in dietary fiber. To be selected for the DGAC, you need to be nominated so I thank my friends that have nominated me for the DGAC. Also, i campaigned to include protein in the dietary guidelines in 2010. Protein is the most important macronutrient and I have research projects in protein and satiety and protein supplements for athletes that have established me as an expert in that field.

My first 6 years at the University of Minnesota were as an Extension Nutritionist where I developed expertise in nutrition education and delivery of nutrition services. I have taught Life Cycle Nutrition and Advanced Human Nutrition for the past 30 years and developed expertise in these broad areas with my teaching. I have given presentations to a wide range of audiences around the world and each of these experiences has improved my ability to connect with an audience. My dietetics background and food service experiences continue to influence my work. And growing up on a dairy farm that I still own with my sisters has given me a connection and appreciation of agriculture that few others in my field possess.

The foods and nutrition field is full of opportunity and excitement. There is no sure path to success. All good in the world is through relationships you build and the trust people have in you. So think big, but always deliver the goods on time. Each success will bring you to another success. But bringing other along on your journey is the most fun.

Reyna Franco
Affiliate Delegate – New York
Interviewee: Maggie Meehan, Director, Nutrition Education at City Harvest, Inc. in NYC

Describe your current position and responsibilities
I am the Director, Nutrition Education at City Harvest, Inc. in NYC. City Harvest exists to end hunger in communities throughout New York City. We do this through food rescue and distribution, education, and other practical, innovative solutions.

The Nutrition Education department is part of the Healthy Neighborhoods Initiative, which takes a long-term approach to hunger relief. We work with community partners in low-income neighborhoods across New York City to improve access to healthy, affordable food and teach residents the basics of nutrition and how to shop for and cook healthy meals on a budget.

I oversee the Nutrition Education team. We teach 75 6-week courses each year and lead over 100 other nutrition education activities including one-time sessions, such as a 3-hour Nutrition Basics workshop, for community members and staff at partner sites. We also lead cooking demonstrations to introduce unfamiliar foods and new ways to cook familiar foods. Our supermarket tours explore making healthy food choices on a budget. The team also runs a program delivering fruit for healthy snacks, along with some nutrition education, to early childhood and after school programs. We train and support interns and volunteers to help us deliver these programs. We reach people across the life cycle at schools, senior centers, community centers, churches and other community-based organizations. Responsibilities also include envisioning how our programs contribute to the other departments within Healthy Neighborhoods, within City Harvest as a while, and to increasing food security in the community where we work.

What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high level position in public health?
I began a second career by returning to school and earning an MPH and my RDN certification (over a 5-year period). I then worked part time at several different types of organizations including Mount Sinai Hospital (as a clinical dietitian), for the NYC Department of Mental Health and Hygiene (as a consultant developing a curriculum), and at a residence for People Living with HIV/AIDS.

I began my career at City Harvest as the Manager of Seniors Nutrition Education (developing a senior-specific curriculum) and gradually expanded my responsibilities to provide programs to all ages in a wide range of settings. As a second degree and graduate student, I attended as many workshops and conferences as possible, both locally and nationally. These events helped to expand my horizons about the role of dietetics in the world of public health and beyond the clinical setting. One school requirement was to attend a meeting of a local group and I chose to attend a meeting of the Hunger and Environmental Nutrition Dietetic Practice Group. That was a big moment in changing my ideas about what issues needed to be addressed and what I could do. I also attend many of the NYC Nutrition Education Network Events, which is a great way of keeping on top of what is happening in the field. Keeping in contact with other professionals can lead to unexpected collaborations.
Pre-Meeting Comments from Constituents
Interview a High Level/Executive Leader in Public Health

What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?
Be prepared to work your butt off. Be open minded and thoughtful – welcome new ideas and be ready to shift how you do things. Actively seek out these new ideas (don’t just wait for them to show up). Try new things and ways of doing them and embrace the possibility that they won’t all work. Take time periodically to look back of what you’ve done, see what you’ve learned. Also, take vacations and don’t think about work or school at all.

Teresa Johnson
NEHP DPG
Interviewed Molly Killman MS, RD
Title: Director, Nutrition and Physical Activity Division, Alabama Department of Public Health

Describe your current position and responsibilities:
Serves as the lead representative for the state department of public health and provides expertise on issues related to obesity, nutrition, physical activity, and wellness. Is an active participant on local, state and national councils, committees, and work groups that address health issues related to nutrition and physical activity. Determines which statewide initiatives the division will develop and/or participate in and assigns the appropriate staff accordingly.

Responsible for administrative oversight for the division which includes supervising staff, making hiring decisions, evaluating staff, and giving recommendations on the organizational structure. Administrative duties also include program management, monitoring budget expenditures, coordinating projects, and completing annual reports (departmental and grant specific).

Works to identify funding sources for the division and participates in preparing grant applications. Monitors grant activities and programs for compliance with federal regulations and state policies.

What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high level position in public health?
The primary requirement for this position is to be a registered dietitian and have a Master’s degree from an accredited college or university in nutrition, dietetics, food and nutrition, public health, or a closely related field. Additionally, six years of experience in the field of nutrition, including one year of supervisory experience, is also a requirement.

These requirements lay a solid foundation of knowledge around the field of nutrition, physical activity, obesity, and wellness which is necessary for the position.

The skills needed for this position are the ability to build and maintain effective relationships/partnerships, personal skills to work well with colleagues and co-workers, strong decision making skills, and the ability to stay organized while multi-tasking. Most importantly, robust communication skills are necessary. As a representative of the agency, public speaking is an essential function of the job whether it’s in person or through a media outlet such as video or television. Also, communicating well with partners is essential when completing joint projects or initiatives with multiple partners.

Experiences for this position primarily come from working with and managing/coordinating public health programs and as an added bonus, having clinical dietetic experience, prior to public health, working with patients who are managing chronic disease and obesity. I worked as a consultant dietitian for 7 years before starting at the public health department (15 years ago) and I was with public health for 11 years before being promoted to director.

Advice for those you might like to pursue a similar role.
Working in public health nutrition is an exciting occupation that takes you to places you never expected to go. The scope of public health nutrition is changing and it’s more than just teaching people to eat the MyPlate. In public health I have been able to work with partners in and out of the state to establish programs, policies, systems, and environmental changes that support healthier lifestyles for of our citizens.

I would recommend that more dietitians enter the field of public health. And don’t be afraid to step outside the box. There are more dietitians in public health that are starting to manage programs other than those related to nutrition and physical activity! (chronic disease, communicable disease, etc.)

Linda Arpino
Vegetarian Nutrition DPG
My Interview was with Mario Garcia MD, MPH
Pre-Meeting Comments from Constituents  
Interview a High Level/Executive Leader in Public Health

Director DPH-SIM Population Health State Healthcare Innovation  
CT Department of Public Health

Describe your current position and responsibilities.  
Currently I work as a public health consultant for the CT Department of Public Health. My position title is Population Health Director for the State Innovation Model (SIM), a health system policy development and planning project. The SIM program is a Center for Medicare & Medicaid Innovation (CMMI) initiative to support the development and implementation of state-led, multi-payer healthcare payment and service delivery model reforms.

How long have you been in this position?  
I have worked in the field of public health for over 25 years. In the early part of my career, I worked in communicable disease control, health education and sanitation programs. I combined that experience with my interest in humanitarian relief work which allowed me to work as a public health practitioner for extended periods of time in many parts of the world.

I began my work in Connecticut as a manager of chronic disease programs in the Department of Public Health. After several years in that capacity, I took a position as a Local Health Director in the City of New Haven. After ending my four year tenure, I joined the SIM program over one year and a half ago.

What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high-level position?  
I have extensive experience across the spectrum of public health practice and a keen interest in policy and systems change. I consider particularly valuable having gained a thorough understanding of statewide systems and authority to effect change, while I also have experienced in how local institutions define their own course of action regarding public policies. Throughout my public health career on the State of Connecticut, I have got to know many individuals in government agencies, private health care sector, and community-based organizations. I also keep contacts throughout my graduate schools networks and associations of public health professionals. I am a trained physician and I have obtained master’s degrees in Community Health from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and Public Health from the Yale School of Public Health.

What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?  
At the onset of my career I did not plan to be in this role. I focused on following my instincts and be honest to myself. I just knew that would take me to a good place, so here I am. In developing professional skills and experience, it is important to be consistent but not to be monolithic. Venturing into other fields helps to gain better perspective of the goals we set for ourselves. Working on public health and public policy requires that sort of cross cutting experience. It is also helpful to establish early on what sector is more suitable for every person’s individual traits, skills and aspirations. There are many similar roles that can be exercised in the private sector. That includes academic positions, community activism, industry or administration.

Annette Maggi  
FCP DPG  
Interview with Jessica Donze Black RD, MPH  
Vice President Community Health, American Heart Association

Describe current position and responsibilities.  
Jessica leads strategy development and training for all American Heart Association community health initiatives across the country. In this area, she focuses on how to impact policy and consumer environments, targeting system level changes that allow the consumer to live more healthfully. Her work always includes an equity lens with priority on those who have the greatest need as it relates to healthy lifestyle behaviors.

What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high-level position in public health?  
Jessica started her career in traditional roles, and originally had very little exposure to public health. The nature of her work in pediatrics (seeing children with obesity and type 2 diabetes at young ages) inspired her to go into public health, desiring to move upstream of clinical to impact these public health issues. Jessica’s career path shows that opportunistic networking is a key skill to gaining leadership roles in public health. She strongly believes experience in policy is essential to leadership roles in public health, as these jobs require interaction in the policy arena. She sees the combination of content and policy expertise as essential for leadership roles in public health.

What are the top three factors that have led to your success?  
1. RD expertise. Dietetics is a better generalist degree than we give it credit for. Dietitians are better trained for adaptability than many other health professions.
Pre-Meeting Comments from Constituents
Interview a High Level/Executive Leader in Public Health

2. Public speaking, communications, political savvy.
3. Critical decision making.

What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?
Plans can change and you need to be responsive to the environment and take advantage of opportunities as they arise. Do really well at whatever you’re doing, no matter what the role is, and it will lead to a next opportunity.

Catherine Austin
Affiliate Delegate – Tennessee
Marian C. Levy, RDN, LDN, PhD
Interim Associate Dean, School of Public Health, University of Memphis
Immediate Past President, TN Public Health Association
Current Member, Governing Council, National Public Health Association

1. In her role as TN President of the PHA she implemented and guided the TN PHA and members. As a member of the Governing Council her role continues as she works on policy development and setting the direction for the national level of APHA. She is on the national nominating committee for the National Public Health Association.

She started in the public health professional association at the local level. She said she was visible, volunteered for tasks and projects--doing them to the best of her abilities and let others in the association know she was interested in continuing in leadership roles with the association. A colleague at the state level was on the nominating committee and asked if she’d be interested in running for a state office. She was and she did. She acknowledged that she was known for the quality of her work in each role she took on, whether big or small.

2. She started her education with a bachelor’s in psychology, obtained a master’s in nutrition and a doctorate in public health. Her passion is to improve the health of the community (through changing behavior). She established the MPH program at the University of Memphis and hopes to collaborate with any dietetic internships to establish this as a route to registration, as ACEND’s new requirements come to fruition. She came to public health to work on helping people to change behavior to change or improve their health and lives.

3. Networking: The most impactful expansion of her network net happened while serving on both the local and state levels of the Public Health Association. She was an ACTIVE member, not a passive member. She held offices and did the job well--not just resume-building. Once on the state level her national networking exploded. She encourages RDs to ‘go for it’--the field, in any organization is wide open, volunteers are always needed. If you want to make a difference to the health of Americans, join the professional organization closest to your heart, work in/with/on it and do things. You will impact a great number of people. Make sure your networking crosses boundaries, lines, organizations, professions--both personal and professional. You never know where your next contact will come from. Continue to educate yourself--another great way to network and learn at the same time. Be an active networker--don’t just phone it in--get out there and meet people face to face.

4. What was a turning point in your career? I was working with the Bogalusa Heart Study in New Orleans, as an MS research assistant. I was working with lots of PhD researchers who seemed to think less of my skills, abilities and knowledge because I only was Master's prepared. I knew I was as smart as every one of them. I knew in order to determine my own destiny I had to avail myself of a PhD. I make sure I appreciate each of my colleagues, no matter what their education level, because we all have something important to contribute. I advise everyone to take advantage of opportunities, be your own best advocate. If you don't get asked, ask for yourself. Do not let the possibility of rejection or ‘no’ stop you from trying or asking. Seek always to make a difference or at least start the conversation.

5. What attributes do you think have made you successful in public health? I am well-known for the high quality of my work, I am innovative, network with others--within and without my professional passion, help others to succeed, persistent, ambitious (to get things done, not necessarily to make it big), hardworking, collaborative and I genuinely care.

6. What advice do you have? We are MORE than ‘dietitians’. Sometimes are our own worst enemy in holding ourselves back. We do have to work with different professionals and be able to see issues from their perspective and work from their perspective. We need to be persistent, pleasantly and sometimes with a little more ‘oomph’. We need more dietitians in public health, at the table and at the head of the table. People aren’t trained like we are, we have some pretty unique skills that work well across all professions and programs. We need to keep collaborating, implement more interdisciplinary training in our programs and continue to branch out into the known and unknown.
Pre-Meeting Comments from Constituents
Interview a High Level/Executive Leader in Public Health

7. Last recommendation for getting dietitians to the public health table: AND/ACEND need to contact Georges Benjamin, MD, the current Executive Director for the National Public Health Association. I would be glad to facilitate.

NOTE: I have paraphrased many of Dr. Levy's statements. I apologize in advance for any confusion or miss-speaking. I also apologize for any typo

Amanda Gallaher
HEN DPG
I interviewed two dietitians at the regional and national levels at USDA.

Andrea L. Farmer, Community Meals Branch Chief in the Policy and Program Development Division of Child Nutrition Programs at the United States Department of Agriculture
Describe current position and responsibilities.
- Interprets federal laws and translate them into regulations for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP).
- Disseminates policy guidance based on changes to federal policies through policy memorandum and other resources such as handbooks.
- Manages and assigns work to staff in the Policy and Program Development Division.
- Meets and collaborates with other Child Nutrition Program divisions at USDA and the USDA regional offices.
- Provides information to stakeholders through training opportunities such as national conferences and webinars.
- Communicates and works with stakeholders such as national policy and advocacy groups and CACFP and SFSP sponsors.

What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high level position in public health?
- Worked in a position with the Child Care Food Program at the Florida state agency in program compliance and monitoring CACFP sponsors. This helped her learn the ins and outs of the program.
- Found a strong nutrition background with a variety of experiences very helpful (clinical dietetics, private practice, teaching at a community college, Child Care Food Program at the state level, leadership experience with state dietetic group, USDA nutritionist with CACFP).
- Encourages experiences outside of clinical dietetics if interested in policy because it's necessary to have a broader perspective and be able to think about how a policy might impact people in different environments and scenarios.
- Public speaking experience (through teaching at a university in her case) is helpful because she often speaks to large groups.
- Supervisory experience (through management experiences as a clinical dietitian)

What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?
- Gain policy experience at multiple levels.
- If interested in working in government, work up from the local level to a state agency or possibly regional office before working at the national level. This experience brings useful perspective when working in policy.
- Decide on whether to pursue public health nutrition through a government or non-profit path.

Samia Hamdan, MPH, RD, Senior Nutritionist at the United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service at the Midwest Regional Office
Describe current position and responsibilities.
- Provides nutrition leadership, training, and technical assistance to state agencies in the Midwest region implementing a wide variety of nutrition programs including the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, and Child and Adult Care Food Program. This includes coordinating regular conference calls to keep states up-to-date and responding to policy questions. The USDA regional offices provide funding and oversight for states implementing these programs.
- Works with tribal governments including coordinating nutrition advisory committees and technical assistance with the Food Distribution Program.
- Works on other initiatives such as outreach or managing community partnerships. Special initiatives tend to change as the administration changes.
Pre-Meeting Comments from Constituents
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What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high level position in public health?
- Samia first became interested in public health through a public health capstone during her undergraduate education. She later pursued a Master’s in Public Health at the University of Minnesota where she became involved in a public health nutrition program for teens. Before joining USDA in her current position, she worked in D.C. at the School Nutrition Association as a Research Associate.
- She mentioned a number of particular skills that have been key to success in her current role including:
  - Public speaking and giving presentations to large groups.
  - Facilitating workgroups with a wide variety of audiences and professionals.
  - Gaining experience with project management.
  - Synthesizing policy and translating the information both for the national office and for state agencies and the audiences they serve.
  - Maintaining networks of different partners and collaborators.
  - Being exposed to many different types of projects.
- She put a lot of emphasis on this: You shape the position you’re in.
  - Her role has changed significantly overtime because she has play an important role in shaping her position. There have also been many changes related to the introduction and implementation of the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010. This has increased the amount of opportunities to provide nutrition-related technical assistance, grow a wider network, and have increased responsibility.

What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?
- Any position can be turned into a leadership position.
- Gain more managerial skills – Many high-level positions may be nutrition-related but often move away from directly providing nutrition services. To move into these positions, dietitians may have to be okay with stepping out of traditional roles and gaining more managerial experience.

Catherine McIsaac
Affiliate Delegate: Vermont
I interviewed Heather Danis, MPH, RD, Public Health Director, Vermont Department of Health. Heather oversees a broad portfolio of programs for Chittenden County, VT, including WIC, immunization clinics, chronic disease prevention programs, maternal/child health programs, and school health clinics.

How long have you been in this role? 9 years

What other jobs/positions have you held? UVM Extension (10 years), WIC Nutritionist in North Carolina, solo RD at a hospital in rural Maine

What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high level position in public health?
From her first job as the only RD in a small hospital, Heather learned to be independent, and work and make decisions autonomously. In that job, she also worked closely with the food service department, and gained management skills that she has put into place in a variety of settings. Her MPH program included a lot of practicum work, from which she gained hands-on experience to help her integrate the academic work into the real world, and made it easier to implement programs in a new setting.

What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?
Don’t be afraid to take a job in a smaller hospital or clinic, experiences you gain in various settings will help inform your future work. In the public health world, the “RDN” credential provides a level of credibility with other health professionals (i.e., nurses, physicians).

Karen Beathard
Affiliate Delegate - Texas
Interviewed: Dr. Joseph (Joe) Sharkey, Ph.D., M.P.H., R.D.
- Founding Director of Program for Research and Outreach-Engagement on Nutrition and Health Disparities Solutions
- Professor in the department of Health Promotion & Community Health Sciences at Texas A&M University
- Affiliate Professor in the Health Services Department at the University of Washington School of Public Health

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Responsibilities include:
- Teaching undergraduates and graduate students
- Research and mentoring
  - Research focus is on minimizing food insecurity risks in rural and underserved areas
  - Principle investigator on a USDA NIFA award to improve nutritional and physical health among families of Mexican heritage who reside in underserved areas along the Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas borders with Mexico. He is currently in year three of this five-year study
  - Advisor and chair for graduate students, including those in Texas A&M University Dietetic Internship Program

Skills, experiences, networks/groups that helped Dr. Sharkey achieve this high level position in public health include the following:
- Diversifying and getting a graduate degree in public health
- Viewing his faculty position through an entrepreneurial lens to gain grant money for research
- Engaging with the community and observing what was going on with others
- Listening to the needs of others and responding
- Keeping in touch with people at the grassroots levels including rural locations, unfamiliar and/or uncomfortable areas
- Serving on local, regional, state, and boards (Example: National Advisory Board for Strong Hearts, Healthy Communities (SHHC) for Cardiovascular Disease Prevention in Rural Montana; National Advisory Board for RIDGE Center for Targeted Studies)
- Participating in various working groups including the Expert Working Group to Reduce Childhood Obesity

Dr. Sharkey’s advice for those who might like to pursue a similar role:
- Seek graduate degree in public health
- Get grounded in behavior theory and apply it
- Be open-minded and diversify
- Get involved in local, state, and regional coalitions
- Volunteer, network and engage with diversified groups
- Develop relationships with people at grassroots and gain trust

Margaret (Meg) Rowe
Affiliate Delegate – Pennsylvania
Interviewed: Rachel L. Levine, MD

I had the distinct honor and privilege of interviewing Rachel L. Levine, MD on August 28, 2017. She is the Acting Secretary of Health and Physician General for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. I asked her to address the following four statements/questions:

Tell me about your formal education
Undergraduate: Harvard College
Medical School: Tulane University School of Medicine
Residency – Pediatrics: Mt Sinai, NYC
Fellowship - Adolescent Medicine: Mt. Sinai Hospital, NYC

Please describe your current position and responsibilities
Currently she has three formal positions:
1. Acting Secretary of Health for the Commonwealth of PA
   a. Overall responsibility for the Department of Health
   b. Management of 1300 employees
   c. Responsibility for $800-900 million dollar budget
2. Physician General of the Commonwealth of PA
   a. Provide health policy advice to the Governor
   b. Advocate for issues of importance to the Governor
   c. Serve in Governor’s cabinet
3. Professor of Pediatrics and Psychiatry at Penn State’s Hershey Medical Center
Pre-Meeting Comments from Constituents

Interview a High Level/Executive Leader in Public Health

What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high level position in public health?

1. Skills: Education, clinical expertise, prior leadership on various levels
2. Experiences: ADVOCACY and NETWORKING with groups and organizations leading to appointment to the incoming Governor’s transition team and ultimately selection as Physician General
3. Groups: LGBT Community, Penn State College of Medicine colleagues

What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?

1. Be flexible, adaptable, observant and mindful in all situations
2. Gain broad level of knowledge, experience, and skillsets
3. Take advantage of all training offered in your profession and leadership
4. Take advantage of all opportunities that are available to you
5. Develop leadership style that works best for you.
   a. Dr. Levine detailed her leadership style as one based on communication, consensus, and collegiality mixed with kindness and humor
   b. She credits her leadership abilities to paying attention to other leaders and borrowing skills and decision-making tools that work for
Pre-Meeting Comments from Constituents
Interview a High Level/Executive Leader in Public Health

Health background/training, private counseling, worksite wellness groups, organizations, conferences; employee benefits knowledge

What are the top three factors that have led to your success?
- Excellent mentors in population health and worksite health promotion
- My own passion and enthusiasm for my work
- Ability to analyze and interpret population health data
- Strong public speaking, collaboration and leadership skills

What was a turning point in your career?
When I left the healthcare environment to work for a Fortune 500 company managing their worksite wellness program

What attributes do you think have made you successful in public health?
Strong background in prevention, disease management, behavior change, data analytics and evidence-based guidelines

Advice you may have for those who might like to pursue a similar role.
- In the employer segment of the population, it's critical to have a solid understanding of health benefits, benefit plan design and the health & lost productivity costs to an organization
- Understanding the components of a comprehensive wellbeing program and the supplier/partner options to construct a program
- Behavioral economics and choice architecture principles and how they apply to behavior change.

Laurie’s education includes:
Hanley Health Leadership Development Certificate, Organizational Leadership 2010 - 2011
HLD is a partnership between the Daniel Hanley Center for Health Leadership and the Institute for Civic Leadership. These two organizations share a common goal of building a culture of greater collaboration among leaders across Maine.

Current Job Description: Assistant Vice President Global Wellbeing & Health Management
Unum
General Summary
This role will be responsible for the program design/management including evaluation of initiatives and programs that support employee health and well-being globally. This includes individually focused activities for example, health assessments, nutrition counseling, EAP as well as group focused activities such as stress reduction classes. This role will be responsible for all fitness centers, health resource centers, and stay @ work/return to work programs. Has financial management of the budget and overall effectiveness of the programs.

Principal Duties and Responsibilities
- Accountable for the design, development and management of initiatives and programs that support employee’s health and wellness globally (e.g., Fitness Centers, Health Resource Centers/risk assessments, Nutrition Counseling, EAP Programs, Assistive/Adaptive Technology, ergonomics, Group Activities such as stress reduction classes, etc.)
- Evaluate and report on the strategic direction and design effectiveness of global wellness and productivity initiatives in meeting strategic objectives, by:
  - Research, propose, implement new programs or modifications to existing plans/policies
  - Conduct and maintain current, comprehensive marketplace analysis
  - Monitor changing external environment for trends in wellness approaches to program design and regulatory environment
- Develop and manage partner relationships working towards optimal productivity and performance
- Partner with Health & Insurance Team to assess the impact of wellness initiatives on health care costs and disability costs and employee productivity
- Develop in partnership with Benefits Education & Communication area a comprehensive, global education campaign to promote wellness programs
- Accountable for the financial management of wellness budget and cost effectiveness programs

Job Specifications
- Bachelor's degree required, Masters preferred.
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- Minimum 10 years progressive experience in the health field providing leadership to and managing company wellness programs
- Demonstrated experience as a thought-leader in employee prevention strategies and business results
- Demonstrated success in managing health plans through both strategy phases as well as implementation and evaluation
- Excellent oral and written communication skills - ability to interpret technical/contractual language into easily understood text
- Demonstrated skill as a leader and a manager with a broader business orientation than only the technical aspects of wellness program design and management
- Strong negotiating, influencing, facilitation and interpersonal skills
- Strong financial skills
- Demonstrated experience leading organizational change with respect to benefits and an understanding of behavioral change strategies and demonstrated experience translating these strategies into health program design and communication.
- Track record for attracting, retaining and developing exceptional talent
- Meets the standards for this position, as defined in the Talent Management framework

Athena Evans  
Affiliate Delegate – Colorado  
Interviewed: Susan Franceschi, Chief Membership Officer, American Water Works Association

That are your primary responsibilities?
I design and monitor strategies to attract, retain, motivate, engage and develop water industry and other associated professionals (educational, scientific, etc.) as members of AWWA, the oldest and largest non-profit organization committed to advancing public health through safe drinking water.

How long have you been in this position?
7 years

What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high-level position?
I achieved this position after working my way up through other positions in the organization. My educational background, along with my willingness to absorb knowledge about the resources and connections available to properly equip water professionals for successful roles in their careers distinguished me as a person who could bring academic, practical and relationship skills to an executive level.

What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?
1. Be willing to start at the bottom and work your way up.
2. Pay attention to people and information. You never know who or what you will need to know to help you in your work.
3. Appreciate and respect the member/customer/community you are serving.
4. Be willing to stretch beyond what you are most comfortable doing.

Naomi Trostler  
American Overseas Delegate  
First Interview: Camella Rising, RD, PhD candidate is US trained and has spent several years abroad.

Describe your current position and responsibilities.
The following refers to educational training, work and research experiences, as each level contributes to current and future involvement in public health. My career in PH nutrition started with WIC Overseas, at the Naval Air Station Sigonella, Italy. There I provided to a diverse population nutrition counseling to pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women and their children under five years old. Consequently, the position required diversity and culturally adapted development and delivery of nutrition classes, database management, and collaboration with Naval Hospital Sigonella. With the international experience with diverse populations and cultures, I was ready for the next step in my professional career, as nutrition consultant at the Nutrition Services Branch, North Carolina Division of Public Health, and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. I provided expert technical assistance, professional guidance, and continuing education for nutrition professionals. Developed nutrition education for the public, particularly for parents/caregivers and children.
Presently I concentrate on perusing my PhD studies and work within academia as I become convinced that research and outcomes data analysis are the backbones of advanced level practice and provides tools for innovations, seeing the big picture and testing and implementing solutions. I also need to stress the importance of participating actively in professional organizations as it is in these groups that much of the experience of others is shared, it leads to practice and research collaborations and provides support and soundboard for ideas.

**Education - Ph.D., Communication (expected May 2018)**
Concentrations on Health and risk communication, mixed-method research design
Research interests: Prostate cancer, breast cancer, cancer communication, nutrition behavior, psychosocial health.

*Graduate Lecturer (2016-present)* - Instruct undergraduate students in courses related to Family Health Communication and Communication Theory.

*Research Assistant (2017-present)* - Provide research support to the principal investigators on research which evaluates the effectiveness of using targeted social media to disseminate breast cancer environmental risk information (includes nutrition recommendations). Responsibilities include participant recruitment; data management, collection, and analysis; and manuscript preparation.

**What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high level position in public health?**
Membership in professional associations is of paramount importance for professional development, interpersonal connections, develop collaborations, sharing knowledge and being exposed to important professional information.

Membership in The American Overseas Dietetic Association (AODA, an affiliate of the Academy for international members), and the PHCNPG played, and continue to play, an important role in my advancement in public health nutrition. Through the AODA network, I met the head of the Nutrition Services Branch of the North Carolina Division of Public Health at the time, and she helped me find a position as a nutrition consultant. Through colleagues at the Division, I learned about the hopeful development of the Academy's NCP Toolkit for RDNs working in public health/community nutrition (PH/CN). My engagement on that project—thanks to the endorsement of the PHCNPG—eventually led to my position as Chair of the NCPT Committee (2014-2015). In my capacity as Chair, I had the opportunity to promote the importance of reaching PH/CN RDNs with regard to NCPT use. As member of Nutrition Care Process Research Outcomes Advisory Workgroup (2015-present) at the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics I provide expertise related to the maintenance of the Electronic Nutrition Care Process Terminology and related Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics products.

I also had the chance to promote use of the NCPT to PH/CN RDNs at FNCE, at an affiliate meeting, and at international conferences (Israel, Spain) from 2012 to 2014. I believe that my AODA and Academy leadership/service roles afforded me these opportunities because holding such positions educated me, expanded my network, and increased my trustworthiness.

My PH/CN-related work and leadership/service experiences have, without question, lead to my interest in advancing my career in nutrition by becoming a behavioral scientist focused on health/risk communication (including nutrition behavior). As an engaged member of AODA and the Academy, I witnessed leaders presenting their research at educational events and felt compelled to educate myself further as a mid-career RDN.

Involvement with the International Communication Association – as graduate student representative, Health Communication Division (2017-present) I had a chance to assist the Health Communication Division Chair with the development of a mentoring program for students and early career members of the Division. Represent the Division as a member of the ICA Student and Early Career Advisory Committee. I also serve as Member, Student and Early Career Advisory Committee (2017-present). In that capacity I participate in committee-related online communication and quarterly and annual association conference committee meetings. Take part in planning and carrying out Student and Early Career events during the annual association conference, such as social receptions and educational workshops.

My activity with the American Overseas Dietetic Association as a Country Representative for the U.S.A. (2012-present), enabled me to serve as a member resource for country-specific nutrition and dietetics information; provide professional support; organize networking opportunities; and act as liaison between U.S. members of AODA and the AODA leadership team. Additional duties with AODA include membership on the Strategic Planning Task Force and program planning for Kids Eat Right International.

**What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?**
- Volunteer for your affiliate and the Academy! Understanding public health is essential to all RDN roles, so the specific affiliate should not matter.
- Look at everything through the lens of PH/CN and consider what might be missing or improved in our field.
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- Use your affiliate, DPGs, MIGs, and the Academy as a way to make connections and communicate within those network areas that you see need improvement with respect to PH/CN.
- Consider cross-training in fields that will help our field advance. We need RDNs with educations not only in graduate-level public health but in the social sciences, the humanities, psychology, etc. to help understand how to best help publics improve their nutrition and overall health.
- Life-long learning, targeted and general, is an essential.

Naomi Trostler
American Overseas Delegate
Second Interview: Marianella Herrera, MD, PhD, RDN

Is a native of Venezuela, educated both in Venezuela and the U.S. From the start of her professional career she has been involved, in both practice and research, with public health implications of the economic crisis in Venezuela. She is an active member of the American Overseas Dietetic Association, the overseas affiliate of the Academy, where she shares knowledge and collaborates with RDNs globally. She is currently AODA’s president. Her research

Describe your current position and how long have you been in this role?
- I have been a researcher in the field of Public Health for past 10 years.
- As of 6 yrs. ago - a professor and researcher at Central University of Venezuela,
- For 1 1/2 yrs. - chair of the department Development and Health
- As of 4 yrs. - member of the Board Director of Bengoa Foundation for Food and nutrition, (NGO dedicated to surveillance in nutrition in Venezuela)
- As of 3 yrs. – on the BOD of the Venezuelan Health Observatory President of the Venezuelan Scientific Society for Obesity (2010-2012)
- Serve as a spoke person for these two organizations during the crisis being experienced in Venezuela.
- Am actively involved with the Academy’s Kids Eat Right International (KARI). Direct the collaborative KERI project in several countries around the globe (part of AODA’s research initiatives)
- Direct research projects in public health nutrition, concentrating on pediatric malnutrition, in Venezuela

What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high level position in public health?
- Education, basic and continuous - I have a background as a medical doctor, a master degree in human nutrition and a doctorate in human nutrition with emphasis in public policies.
- Continuing education - I attended a program at Harvard John F Kennedy School of Government: "Applying behavioral insight to the design of public policies", which enriched my quest for achieving the best health and nutrition status for all; encouraged collaboration with effective implementations and public actions; supported patience for understanding the processes associated with public policies, and their transformation into actions.
- Joining a professional association - A key component of my career has been joining the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, back in 2007. When I joined, I was also starting my career as a researcher, integrating it with clinical practice as a physician and nutrition. The tools and experience gained through the Academy’s teams I’ve been part of has been supportive as they provided me with the possibility to work on the international sphere, collaborating with diverse people.
- Learn from a situation - My involvement in the current food and nutrition Venezuelan crisis, benefited from the research I have been involved with in Latin America. It provided opportunities for research, for implementing the methodologies, making a diagnosis, design strategies and implement interventions.
- Need for documentation - Documenting the Latin America crisis enabled learning about human rights, integration of making adequate nutrition and health diagnoses, and establishing a baseline for future work. Learning to work in times of uncertainty has been a powerful motivation for continuing in this path.

What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?
- Identify your passion
- Dream
- Ask your-self the following question: how do I see my-self in 5-10-20 years from now?
- Work hard
- Be consistent, don’t be shy, talk with people
- Explore and be inquisitive, ask yourself questions, try to answer them,
- Document outcomes for the future
- Publish to show a path
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- Be flexible. The ability to transform and change allows to learn, to adapt and to integrate, fulfilling you as a professional and as a person.

Lisa Eaton Wright
Affiliate Delegate – Illinois

Describe your current position and responsibilities.
The Bureau of Family Nutrition included a variety of food assistance programs, including WIC, the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, Farmer’s Market, Senior Farmer’s Market, breast feeding promotion and support through the WIC program; the SNAP Education program and SNAP Outreach to name the major programs under this Bureau.

We were a part of the Department of Public Health until the Department of Human Services (DHS) was created in the late ’90s, early 2000. We have 13 RDNs/public health nutritionists; the majority are located across the state and they reported to me, and there were 3 RDNs located in Springfield.

My responsibility was to manage the programs and to oversee all of the requirements of the programs. All of them were USDA funded, so federally funded programs. We didn’t have state money, but we did require an appropriation from the state in order to spend our federal money. So we would get caught up in the kinds of things that have been going on in the state currently when there’s no budget.

Responsibilities were then based on the regulations and requirements for the federal programs as provided by USDA and then also what the state required. So it was a position that required working on a number of levels as far as whether it was the staff in the communities; and the responsibilities of the public health nutritionists throughout the state were to provide oversight to primarily public health departments with our programs that were provided to the community members; for instance, the WIC program, that serves women, infants, children, income qualifications, the kind of guidance and training that staff would need that deliver those programs is what our regional staff would do. In addition to managing programs, my position was to interact with other food assistance related programs in other areas. So we had an interagency nutrition council and brought together both state government and public/private groups that had a connection to food assistance programs, so for instance, State Board of Ed with the school breakfast/lunch programs or University of Illinois Extension who is our partner for SNAP Education, just to name a few. And then I was also responsible for working with other states that had these programs and we did this through the National WIC association or other national associations related to various programs.

A lot of my day was spent communicating with staff located in Springfield or out in our regional offices; usually conference calls with the staff in Springfield, do planning for trainings or if we were applying for grants; always monitoring our budgets to be sure that our providers were providing the appropriate information we needed in order to submit our budgets and get them paid also; various meetings, depends on what day of the week; weekly meetings with other bureaus within the division; communicating at whatever levels with the various members or entities/providers that we worked with.

What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high-level position in public health?
I started out as a provider of WIC services in Charlottesville, Virginia when I first started in public health nutrition. So I did direct services. And that sort of foundation was very helpful as I went on in public health because I did have some experience in the kinds of programs that I was working with.

Probably what was the best or what helped me in getting me to the different positions and levels that I was at was the connections that I made, whether it was through state programs or groups or national, through the National WIC Association; and also luck and timing. You are prepared for a position, but when the time is right, it opens and you are there and your background is such that yes, it makes sense to move into that position.

Prior to my leading the Bureau, it had not been led by anybody with a nutrition background, even though all the programs had that common theme – so that’s a good thing! It doesn’t always happen that way. Working in state government, there’s a lot of politics that goes on. So just because you do have experience and training in certain things doesn’t mean you’ll get a certain position.

As far as skills, organization. I see that as a common feature of a lot of dietitians, people that go into dietetics. A fair number have that sort of bent of being organized; being able to communicate with other people but also listen. While you may be in a role of leadership, half the time or more you should be listening to what other people are telling you
Pre-Meeting Comments from Constituents
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about the programs, but then providing that leadership to those who are within your organization; and being a mentor. We had a number of students who came through the program for their public health nutrition experience and from that experience, we hired staff, also, a that was a very good training ground and time, even though it took our time, it was a good way to build our staff.

The person that took my position is a dietitian, Stephanie Bess. She’s doing a phenomenal job. It’s good to see the way I left the programs, it continues to be well run. Since retiring, I have continued to work in an area of food security related to the food bank located in central Illinois; I do volunteer there, I also do monitoring for the food bank and various food pantries throughout the area; so I keep in touch with my area of interest that way.

What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?
I do think a lot of people that go into dietetics when they go and do a public health experience, it either connects with them or it doesn’t, like they have sort of a clinical mind or they really connect to the kinds of programs delivered through public health. So you can tell with some dietitians, it’s just not their interest at all. So I really think some sort of experience, whether it’s direct service that the person provides or the experience they have through their training in public health is really important so that you can really determine if this it’s for you.

I know my experience in my Internship was one week of public health nutrition – I had a 9-month internship – not that that week turned me around and I said, yeah, that’s what I’m going to do, but it certainly opened my eyes to something other than clinical. So it’s always interesting when you give experience in public health or community nutrition how some dietitians really respond to that and it peaks their interest. So I guess what I’m saying is some sort of experience. My whole thing is that all of us, because of the fact we are in communities in our private lives that we have a role to play that is a community or public health focus, whether we have kids or we’re with our friends, that there is some piece of community nutrition that you can impact. So that's one of the messages I try to get across for students that would go through our program, that they should always be involved in some way in their community.

So what I said is experience. And then timing, being in the right place at the right time, even though you can’t train for that. But being aware of that sort of thing. You should really take a chance. Somebody says yeah, we want you to be in charge of these programs, give it a try; in most cases, you’ll do great.

Recognize that you have the opportunity to have input in regulations. I'll go back to school lunch: people love to put down school lunch programs. Get to know what the lunch program is like in the schools in your community; is there some way it can be improved or should somebody be speaking out.

Teresa Bush-Zurn
Affiliate Delegate – California
Interviewed: Lauri Phillips, RD, LD, VHA-CM

Describe your current position and responsibilities.
Associate Director for Whole Health Innovation,
VHA Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation (OPCC&CT)

- Leads and oversees OPCC&CT's innovation strategies, working in conjunction with the Deputy Director and the Clinical Director of the Integrative Health Coordinating Center
- Recommends the design and oversees the subsequent implementation of the whole health partnership – a national initiative to provide whole health care early in the relationship between VA and the Veteran, emphasizing self-care in the larger context of well-being, and incorporating a full range of conventional and complementary and integrative health approaches.
- Represents the Executive Director in matters pertaining to the implementation of the whole health partnership throughout VHA
- Participates in formulating and recommending the strategic planning, operational planning and budget development needed to support this large-scale transformation.
- Develops and implements Veteran engagement strategies, tools, and resources to assure that Veterans are aware of the Whole Health transformation and prepared to participate as partners in their healthcare if they so choose.
- Oversees the design and development of Veteran whole health educational content and delivery models.
- Oversees the grant process for the whole health partnership and other innovations. As best practices evolve, helps to share those best practices with other sites.
Pre-Meeting Comments from Constituents
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What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high-level position?
I started out as a clinical RD in the private sector and moved to VA as a clinical RD and got progressive levels of responsibility. I was always seeking out opportunities outside of my scope and volunteered for stretch assignments. For example, I volunteered to be a project manager when we were designing the Domiciliary at Big Springs. Wherever I’ve worked I always looked for and volunteered for stretch assignments – both inside and outside the field of nutrition.

I applied for formal leadership program opportunities within the VA. Ultimately what led me to my current job was the VA Executive Career Field Leadership Development Program. With my mentor in that program new opportunities opened for me to apply. As dietitians within the VHA we are fortunate to have several leadership opportunities outside of our local community.

What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?
- Seek out developmental opportunities and don’t be afraid to stretch yourself.
- Seek out a mentor – informally and formally. I was very young when I attained my first supervisory position and I sought out my own informal mentors (experienced department directors).
- Be a lifelong learner. I’m always studying and trying to learn new skills.

Our education serves us well to hold leadership positions in health care.

Kinsey Jeffers
(2017 Fall Meeting proxy for Meghan Windham/Delegate-at-Large: Under 30)
Interviewee: Rachel Kwan RDN, MPH, Director of Strategic Partnerships - Feeding Texas

Describe your current position and responsibilities.
As the Director of Strategic Partnerships at Feeding Texas, I oversee and integrate our Feeding With Impact Initiatives, which is our statewide strategy that pairs healthy food with interventions to improve diet quality and financial stability of clients. Primary responsibilities include:

1. Developing a statewide nutrition education strategy focused on evidence-based interventions to improve eating behaviors and reduce obesity
2. Expand and strengthen the capacity of member food banks to offer nutrition education and obesity prevention services
3. Supervising the AmeriCorps Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) Client Empowerment Program and enhancing collaboration between VISTA and SNAP-Ed projects
4. Administering program-related contracts and grants, including the HHSC SNAP-Ed contract
5. Working with finance and accounting staff to ensure monthly invoices are prepared accurately and timely for submission to HHSC and funds are disbursed timely to participating food banks, and
6. Collaborating with the Director of Social Services to integrate Feeding Texas’ nutrition and health, client empowerment, and outreach programs and strategies.

What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high level position in public health?
1. **Skills**: High competence in organization, project management, partnership formation, communication, and capacity building. Competence in data analytics, research, leadership, personnel management, and financial management.
2. **Experiences**: Building capacity of non-profit and public organizations, working directly with target audience and community members, Asset-based community development.
3. **Strong dietetic internship program** administered by a local health department with an emphasis on public health. The internship provided the following unique opportunities:
   a. Produced a literature review on SNAP Redemption Strategies in Farmers Markets to support CDC-funded Community Transformation Grant administered by the State Health Department
   b. Authored and submitted School Garden grant that was awarded $1,500
   c. Coordinated BMI study involving 1,000 students across 18 schools during school food service rotation
4. **Masters of Public Health** degree.
5. **Liberal Arts Degree** with intensive writing classes. As an undergraduate, pairing a liberal arts degree with my nutrition degree significantly refined critical thinking, writing, and communication skills. Because public health is so broad, effective leaders are best when they can build partnerships with and bring ideas from other sectors and sciences.

What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?
Pre-Meeting Comments from Constituents
Interview a High Level/Executive Leader in Public Health

1. Make sure your passion and skills match the work. Public health successes take years! You must be ok and excited that this work takes many years.
2. Get experience to learn relevant skills. Find opportunities to coordinate and/or manage projects. Get to know populations who are most affected by health inequalities. Get in on activities that allow you to learn from executive leadership (strategic planning, building partnerships, communications, meetings).
3. Learn Spanish.
4. If you want a high level position, get a graduate degree that allows you to work with priority populations and/or coordinate projects in the community.
5. Connect with a public health leader. See how you can learn from them either as a volunteer, intern, or mentee.
6. Invest in your leadership skills. Read broadly. Attend trainings.

Donna Castricone
Affiliate Delegate – Rhode Island
Interviewed: Sue AnderBois, Director of Food Strategy for Rhode Island

This is a new position created by the Governor in 2015. Sue AnderBois is the first person in this position.

What are your primary responsibilities?
My role is bifurcated (though not a 50/50 split). One side of my job entails “de-silo”ing food across State government. We recognize that food is one of those issues that cross the boundaries of our agencies, and so many state agencies play a role in our food system (e.g. RI Dept. of Ed, Environmental Management, Health, Commerce, Human Services, Elderly Affairs, etc.). Part of my role is to work across those agencies to ensure that we are speaking/working in a coordinated way and with one voice. Issues are complicated, and we need to ensure that we are untangling those knots internally before they reach outside stakeholders.

The second piece is that I was tasked with developing (and then implementing) a Food Strategy for the Governor. Developing the food strategy involved extensive stakeholder outreach, data analysis, and consensus building with stakeholders within and outside of state government over the course of about 11 months. Implementation requires us to recognize the role of government and prioritize areas that we can play a unique role in implementing.

What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this position?
My background is split in terms of topic focus between clean energy and food – but I’ve had a consistent theme of strategy development, policy development and advocacy, and stakeholder engagement. In terms of education, I have a bachelor’s degree in environmental studies from Dartmouth and an MBA from Yale University.

There have been a lot of networks and groups who have been essential. One thing that has been so essential has been the consistent interest and collaborative spirit across the board from Rhode Islanders. One group/network that is invaluable is the Rhode Island Food Policy Council – which is made up of volunteer council members who represent the food system at large. There are fisher people, farmers, food business owners, food safety experts, emergency food relief-focused folks, folks working on new business models for farmers/food businesses, lawyers, students, etc. It’s a great way to engage with a larger network – and for the development of the Food Strategy, they were essential for outreach across the state for input. We also have a state-level equivalent, which is the Inter-Agency Food and Nutrition Policy Advisory Council – which is the heads of state agencies who have a relationship to food.

Additional things that have helped the position succeed: Systems thinking: in de-silo’ing food across sectors/agencies, you need to be able to think in terms of systems and make connections across different parts of the system. Food is a complicated system, and we won’t really make progress without a more integrated mindset.

What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?
My biggest piece of advice is to just keep showing up. This is an entirely new role for the State, but this is the exact type of work that I wanted to do when I moved to Rhode Island. If the exact role that you are looking for doesn’t yet exist, keep being involved with organizations/people/etc. who are doing work close to what you want to do, even in a voluntary capacity. I attended my first meeting of the Rhode Island Food Policy council 2 hours after moving to Rhode Island. I left my husband at home with our unopened boxes because I knew I wasn’t going to have a chance to interact with these folks again for a few weeks given their meeting schedule – so I had to show up then. Get yourself on projects, volunteer, hone in on the skills you really have that are transferrable to the role you want. You’re
Pre-Meeting Comments from Constituents
Interview a High Level/Executive Leader in Public Health

more likely to be in the right place at the right time if you put yourself out there in the places you want to be.
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Cynthia Stegeman
Affiliate Delegate – Ohio
Interviewed: Kim Oberlander, DMD, MPH

I took an alternate path to interview a dentist in public health: Kim Oberlander, DMD, MPH from the Cincinnati Health Department.

Describe your position and responsibilities.
Dr. Oberlander currently works at a school based dental center as the primary dentist, 40 hour/week. She is responsible for comprehensive dental care for her patients; including preventive, restorative, endodontic, removable prosthetics and crown & bridge. I also manage the staff which typically includes dental hygienists, Expanded Function Dental Auxiliaries, and dental assistants.

What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this public health position?
Dr. Oberlander shared that she achieved this position through volunteer work. It helped her to form connections with other staff and managers. In addition, the dental school she attended had a strong focus on public health issues. Therefore, her educational background in combination with a spirit of volunteerism and passion to work with people were the primary reasons she has her current position.

What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?
Dr. Oberlander reported that getting involved is the first step! Volunteering is always a great way to find out if you would like working in public health. Check job postings on specific city, state or other local websites - often the Cincinnati Health Department is not allowed to post jobs in other places than the official website. Dr. Oberlander revealed that Public Health is a great place to work, if you enjoy making a difference in the lives of your patients each day! She is an amazing role model for dental hygiene students.

Nina Roofe
Affiliate Delegate – Arkansas
Interviewee #1: Stephanie Alsbrook, MS, RD, LD
Assistant Director of Healthy Schools
Arkansas Department of Education, Child Nutrition Unit

Describe your current position and responsibilities.
- Provide training, technical assistance, and monitoring to Arkansas public schools and charters, emphasizing in Wellness Policies, Wellness Committees, Smart Snacks and Arkansas Nutrition Standards, Special Dietary Needs, and Marketing. Serve as preceptor for dietetics students.
- Coordinate Team Up for School Nutrition Success peer-to-peer mentoring workshop annually
- Review and make revision proposals to Arkansas Nutrition Standards
- Interpret Healthy Hunger-free Kids Act regulations, develop teaching materials, and conduct training for school personnel
- Serve as Child Nutrition Unit liaison for 16 other agencies and non-profits
- Oversee grant award applications, awards, and budgeting for $2.6 million

Professional Profile:
Registered Dietitian serving as the Assistant Director of Healthy Schools, providing tailored monitoring and technical assistance to schools with the USDA school meals programs, presenting annual training to over 900 participants in a variety of settings including online and digital formats, and building partnerships with other federal and state agencies and non-profits. Currently involved in agency wide strategic planning with a focus on new federal education legislation and personalized learning approaches.

What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high level position in public health.
Arkansas 4-H
- Being exposed to project management
- Meeting and interacting with government officials and government processes
- Working in a group that represents a larger body as a state officer
Pre-Meeting Comments from Constituents
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FACS Education and Business Education in High School
International Science Fair, Research classes in undergrad and graduate school
Dietetic Internship – the variety of experiences, the connections made

WRITING!
PUBLIC SPEAKING!
RELATIONSHIP BUILDING
Having a mentor
- Connie Phelps (4-H, UAEX)
- Wanda Shockey (CNU Director)
- Suzanne Davidson (CNU Director)
  Serving as a Diabetes Educator at Children’s Hospital and Baptist Health (the patient interaction, but also community outreach, problem solving)
  FACS methods class and interaction with family and friends in the education world
  IDEAL Leadership Team at UCA
  AAFCS State Officer and other FACS opportunities
  Specific training for: understanding personalities, communication, marketing, developing relationships
  Involvement with ArAND and School Nutrition Association
  Strategic Planning at the Department of Education – a feeling of support beyond Child Nutrition but also in the education world by the ADE Leadership Team, especially the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner

What advice do you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?
My advice to students is always find what you are passionate about. Dr. Ivy Pfeffer at ADE says it like this, “Not a career for me – but a career I am proud of.”

Child Nutrition is hard. Everyone has an opinion about food – teachers, parents, community, USDA, ADE, and CNU. We have to find ways to collaborate, so new hires have to understand that just because “the book” says we should do things one way, we have to consider all of the implications that affect all of these groups and make the best decisions based on all of the data we have at the time. That means things change A LOT. So, we have to be ready for that.

So, if someone loves politics, something new every day, loves children, believes nutrition is a key part of education, then Child Nutrition is the perfect fit.

The background they should focus on is getting into a school cafeteria and kitchen. Observe the cooks, the manager, and the director. Consider menu planning within Child Nutrition Guidelines. Observe the teachers, the students, and talk to administrators about how hunger affects their test scores, behavior, and attendance. Attend School Nutrition Association conferences to hear the latest ideas. Know the history of Child Nutrition, including its origins in Arkansas. Don’t believe everything the media says – do you own research into what school meals really look and taste like.


Interviewee #2: Mary Jane Cagle, Nutritionist Consultant, Arkansas Department of Health WIC Program

Describe your current position and responsibilities.
The Nutritionist Consultant is responsible for developing and presenting nutritional training programs and consultation for agency or institution service providers. This position is governed by state and federal laws and agency/institution policy.

What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high level position in public health.
- Ability to develop and modify nutrition program policies and procedures.
- Ability to plan, develop, and conduct training sessions and technical assistance programs to communicate information.
- Knowledge of nutrition program requirements and procedures.
- Ability to evaluate programs for compliance with policies and procedures.
- Knowledge of nutrition as part of patient therapeutic management.
Experiences:
- Didactic experiences in school
- One-to-one contact with program participants enabling identification of needs on a Program-wide basis
Pre-Meeting Comments from Constituents
Interview a High Level/Executive Leader in Public Health

- Broad responsibilities to gain experience with program administration
  Networks/groups:
  - Involvement in various community based organizations that involve same population as program:  Head Start; EFNEP; March of Dimes
  - Involvement in national/state/local dietetics groups: accepting leadership roles to broaden experience

What advice do you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?
- Volunteer for community activities
- Accept responsibilities that will broaden your experiences
- Let it be known what you’re interested in and goals you have

Bonnie Willis
Affiliate Delegate – Ohio
I’ve attached our response from The Health Commissioner of the General Health District in Summit County, Ohio and chief executive officer of the Summit County District Board of Health. This dietitian is a well-recognized professional who shares much insight into her preparation for this position as an appointed public official as well as her responsibilities.

Describe your current position and responsibilities

ROLE OVERVIEW:
An appointed public official who serves as the Health Commissioner of the General Health District in Summit County, Ohio, and chief executive officer of the Summit County District Board of Health. The Health Commissioner reports to the District Board of Health. The Board of Health prescribes the terms and conditions of appointment in accordance with Ohio law. The term may not exceed five years and may be renewed.

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS:
- Practices and supports visionary leadership – works with the Board of Health, staff and other stakeholders to develop and articulate a vision for public health and the organization and encourages others to share the vision; assures the integration of the Board of Health into the transforming health system
- Creates sense of mission – articulates and models professional values and ethics; facilitates organizational mission development and reassessment; develops policies and processes that translate mission and vision into action
- Serves as effective change agent – facilitates application of systems thinking; develops and implements performance measurement and evaluation strategies; facilitates strategic and tactical assessment and planning; facilitates empowerment of staff and community partners to take action; generates fresh ideas and approaches to solving public health problems
- Political competencies – identifies and analyzes public health policy issues and alternatives; utilizes principles of media advocacy to communicate the public health mission to stakeholders; works with community coalitions and advocacy groups; guides the community and organization in seeking policy change and action on public health issues; translates policy decisions into organizational and community programs and services
- Negotiation – guides and mediates the investigation and resolution of conflict within the organization and with other governmental agencies and community stakeholders
- Marketing and education – utilizes principles of social marketing and health education to communicate with target audiences
- Manages organizational dynamics – assesses organizational environment, needs, assets, resources and opportunities; develops new organizational structures utilizing knowledge of organizational learning, behavior and culture
- Employs inter-organizational collaborating mechanisms – includes key stakeholders in collaborative ventures; develops collaborative and partnering strategies, including task forces and coalitions; facilitates networking of all stakeholders; develops collaborative strategic action plans
- Social forecasting and marketing – identifies and interprets emerging trends in public health and provides information, analysis, and interpretation to stakeholders and community partners
Pre-Meeting Comments from Constituents
Interview a High Level/Executive Leader in Public Health

- **Team-building** – develops organizational team structures and systems focused on customer service, continuous quality improvement, and accreditation standards; facilitates development of teams; serves as team facilitator, mediator, and effective team member

**TASKS ASSOCIATED WITH FUNCTIONS, COMPETENCIES AND SKILLS**

- Assures that the Board of Health conducts organizational strategic planning and monitors progress toward strategic goals
- Assures that the Board of Health participates in or leads ongoing community health assessment and planning in partnership with other community stakeholders, e.g., hospitals and other health departments
- Identifies and pursues funding from public and private foundation sources to address public health priorities identified through organizational strategic planning and community health assessments
- Seeks volunteer leadership positions with local funding agencies, e.g., United Way, Family First Council, community foundations, to encourage them to support public health priorities identified through community health assessment processes
- Serves on boards and committees of other community organizations to assure that the District Board of Health is fully integrated into the local public health system.
- Champions QI processes throughout the organization
- Advocates for funding for landfill inspection and well testing programs through active involvement as a member of the Summit County Solid Waste Management District Policy Committee
- Educates state and federal legislators and policymakers about funding and policy changes needed to address current and emerging public health problems, e.g., funding for blight removal and stabilization of closed landfills
- Participates in research activities with academic and practice partners to increase the evidence-base for public health practice, e.g., through the Public Health Practice-Based Research Network, presentations at scientific conferences, publications in peer-reviewed journals
- Serves as primary media spokesperson for the organization on public health topics or identifies other subject matter experts for that role if appropriate for a particular topic
- Leads organizational efforts to achieve and maintain local health department accreditation from the Public Health Accreditation Board
- Coaches and supports managers and staff to help them achieve organizational and personal improvement goals and identify measures of success; creates and promotes leadership development and succession planning opportunities for managers and staff
- Communicates regularly and frequently with Board of Health members, managers, staff, external stakeholders, and the public through in-person meetings, community forums, email, newsletters and written reports about trends and events of importance to the organization and the public
- Actively involves herself/himself in peer professional organizations, e.g., National Association of County and City Health Officials, Association of Ohio Health Commissioners, Ohio Public Health Association, American Public Health Association
- Actively involves herself/himself in stakeholder organizations, e.g., Summit County Township Association; regularly attends business and social meetings
- Continuously monitors organizational climate through surveys, focus groups and other media to assure a high level of staff morale and performance
- Assesses job performance of direct reports on an annual basis or more frequently if necessary and identifies opportunities for individual performance improvement
- Drafts and reviews local public health regulations that address emerging public health problems for adoption by the Board of Health
- Convenes administrative hearings with individuals and business entities subject to enforcement action in order to resolve complaints and avoid escalated enforcement action, i.e., Board of Health orders or court action
- Identifies and recruits community members for service on organizational advisory boards and committees
- Prepares agendas and meeting materials for Board of Health meetings and meetings of its committees
- Assures that regulatory staff meet regularly with the regulated community to obtain feedback about how to improve regulatory policies and decision-making
Pre-Meeting Comments from Constituents
Interview a High Level/Executive Leader in Public Health

- Mobilizes support among the public and policymakers for public policy changes that improve health, e.g., Issue 5 – the Ohio Smokefree Workplace Act
- Reviews hiring/firing recommendations from managers and makes hiring recommendations to the Board of Health
- Seeks opportunities to increase workforce diversity through strategies contained in the organization’s affirmative action plan
- Promotes the Organizational Code of Ethics by encouraging board members, managers and staff to bring ethical questions to the Ethics Advisory Committee for timely discussion and recommendation
- Convenes and staffs the Health District Advisory Council and Licensing Council in close consultation with the Council Chairs
- Consults frequently with municipal leaders from contract cities
- Organizes new community collaborations, coalitions and initiatives to address emerging public health issues

What skill, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this position in public health?
As you can see from the description listed above, the job is very diverse and doesn’t have any one skill that stands out as the most important. So I am going to tell you what I think helped me the most.

- I spent most of my career in positions that served the community and with individuals at greatest risk for poor health outcomes. It always made me grateful for the work I had and focused on doing as much as I could for families.
- I pursued my Master’s Degree which taught me to love the scientific literature and always look for best practices.
- I left my personal agenda at the door when I worked with groups in the community and tried to be as neutral as possible never caring who took credit just wanted to see the benefit to the community.
- Professional organizations were very instrumental in keeping my interest and I learned the most from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics in regards to public policy and advocacy.
- I pursued funding new projects through grants, contracts and any other arrangement I could to bring resources locally. I learned to love the opportunity that brought programs to the most disadvantaged as well as the general public.
- I learned the federal grant system for pursuing, obtaining and implementing different projects. Soft money is a way of life in the public sector and you need to understand it.
- I learned how to manage grants and budgeting even though I had fiscal staff at my fingertips. It was very helpful as I moved up in organizations.
- I learned administrative functions as much as I could by asking questions and reviewing internal policies.
- Public Health is fundamental to improving the quality of life for residents. Whether it is a vaccine, clean water, healthy foods, safe environments, etc. it improves our communities. You need to be willing to work in many areas.
- I worked in a variety of programs that were not just strictly nutritionally focused which gave me a diverse knowledge base.
- You have to like all kinds of people not just those that look like you or think like you.

What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?
The advice I would give would be meet the minimum educational requirements most districts require at least 5 years’ experience in public health as well as time in supervisory positions. You also need to have a Master’s Degree. I would work in public health and try to get as varied of an experience as possible not being afraid to step out of the comfort zone. Dietitians are perfectly suited for this type of work based on the scientific knowledge, logical thinking, business sense, interpersonal skills, creative thinking and possessing a deep belief in prevention. You have to be willing to learn every day something new as two days are never

Kara Freeman
Affiliate Delegate: Nevada
Interview with Aurora Buffington, PhD, RDN, LD

Describe your current position and responsibilities
Public Health Nutrition Specialist (Assistant Professor)
University of Nevada Cooperative Extension (UNCE), Land Grant University
My work and research is focused on increasing access to healthy foods in the community. As such I oversee SNAP-Ed and Team Nutrition programing, such as the Healthy Eating on a Budget Program which provides nutrition education to SNAP recipients enrolled in the SNEP-ET (Employment Training) program, and the Pick a Better Snack Program for 2nd & 3rd graders at select Title 1 schools. I facilitate the Southern Nevada Food Council and am an appointed member of the Governor’s Council on Food Security. One of my major projects is to help Southern Nevada come up with a food action plan to help create a more sustainable, resilient and healthy food system. Additionally, I am helping a local non-profit implement its Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) grant award as it will help SNAP recipients stretch their food dollars by providing a dollar for dollar match when they use their benefits to purchase fruits and vegetables. One way I’m helping with that is by providing technical assistance related to farmers market SNAP authorizations which includes creating a communication network among market managers to easily disseminate information.

What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high level position in public health?

My time at the Southern Nevada Health District was helpful as I worked there for 7 years. When I began my work there, we started focusing on policy, system, and environmental (PSE) changes rather than nutrition education, recognizing that PSE work had a much larger impact on population health as compared to direct education which is more individual-based. This gave me a lot of exposure in the community with change and decision makers. As a part of that, I belonged to a few coalitions and work groups that focused on improving health nationally and in Southern Nevada, allowing me to network widely at the local, state, and national level. I like to submit abstracts on my behalf or on behalf of a team for professional meetings enabling me to share my work as well as the good work of my colleagues. I frequently follow up with individuals I meet at meetings, collecting their business cards and making sure to ask questions as to how others run their programming. Also, working on grants with other individuals/agencies is helpful in learning about key roles both locally and nationally, and supporting grants received by others with complementary efforts to provide synergy helps build good rapport with community partners.

What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?

I suggest individuals focus on one or two aspects of nutrition that they really want to work on. Is it chronic disease prevention? Policy? School wellness? Find one or two areas of interest and learn as much as you can on those areas. Use practice and position papers because they provide a wealth of information plus they are a source of good sound bites when you do interviews. Refer to the Academy’s Standards of Professional Performance, both in Public Health and Community Nutrition, as well as Sustainable, Resilient and Healthy and Food and Water Systems – these standards will help you understand they types of activities and knowledge levels you need to become proficient and expert in those specific areas. Don’t be afraid to network with others outside the profession, i.e. city planners, legislators, restaurant chefs, non-profit agencies, grocers, horticulturists - even waste, recycling and composting. Look at other professions that have a relationship to what you are doing and look for areas that relate or marginally relate to nutrition. Nutrition is always a hot topic. Show how we can help them support optimal health through good nutrition rather than letting unqualified people provide them with that help. There are lots of people and groups willing to help create a healthier community, and we as nutrition professionals need to ensure we are included in that group – after all, we are THE food and nutrition experts.

Katheryn Bark
Affiliate Delegate – Montana
Interviewed: Alison Harmon, PhD, RDN, Dean of College of Education and Health and Human Development, Montana State University, Bozeman, Montana

1. How long have you been in your current role?
   a. 6 months as Dean, and 2 years as Interim Dean.
   b. 11 years as faculty full time full professor in Food and Nutrition at MSU.
   c. 14 years total at MSU.

2. What other leadership jobs/positions have you held?
   a. Program leader, HHD undergraduate coordinator, university committee (institutional service), Director of Dietetics Program; Director of Montana Dietetic Internship, Supervisor of Townes Harvest Farm. MSU Farm.
   b. Program Leader for 2 degree programs, including Sustainable Foods and Bioenergy Degree; Hospitality Management Program.
   c. Interim director of Hospitality Management Program for 2 years.
Pre-Meeting Comments from Constituents

Interview a High Level/Executive Leader in Public Health

d. Academy or Other Roles: Practice Group Chair of Environmental Nutrition for 3 years, Division Chair for Society of Nutrition Education and Behavior for Sustainable Food Systems, Leadership roles in Ag Food and Human Values, Program Chair for 2010 Conference.

3. What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high level position in education with a public health focus?
   b. Be willing to go out on a limb. I feel that because I have gone out on a limb was a reason I have been chosen for leadership positions (i.e. Interim Dean).
   c. Work hard to understand all sides. Leaders can see an issue from multiple perspectives and be objective.
   d. Move on. Don’t get stuck on whatever happened yesterday. If you spend too much time dwelling on a failure, it brings down on what you can bring the next day. Be resilient and make a quick recovery.

4. What was the turning point in your career?
   a. Graduate school when you watched to start lead things, mid 20s.

5. What attributes do you think have made you successful?
   a. An important one is to be able to give and take constructive feedback. Don’t take anything personally.
   b. Fly your ideas. Meaning test your imperfect ideas.
   c. Be humble. I still feel like a beginner and feel like I keep learning.

6. What advice do you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?
   a. Take advantage of any professional development, especially leadership skill building ones you can. Pick a concept you have an interest in and explore them.
   b. You can always get better.
   c. Set goals -you should create your own mission. Keep yourself accountable.
   d. Be open to the doors and requests that are made. Think hard…Be open to the signs and suggestions of what you are capable of.
   e. I recommend selecting people who you know and not be afraid to ask them to get involved in leadership roles.
   f. Remember that you may fail before you succeed; it is important to expect that along the way. Important to learn from your failures.

Jennifer Cash
Affiliate Delegate – Texas
Interview #1: Leslie Hibbs
Job title: Brazos Valley Community Action Programs WIC Program Administrator; Local Agency WIC director

- Describe your current position and responsibilities.
  Oversees 8 WIC clinics in 6 counties in rural/central Texas. Clinics expand to Leon Co, past Buffalo to Palestine; South to Grimes Co, west to Summerville. These areas are less populated and widely spread out, which brings some unique challenges.
  Day-to-day duties include:
  - Manage budget
  - Hire/train personal at all 8 sites
  - Liaison b/t governing (BVAP) and state agency (financial group – Federal Funding w/ state administration).
  - Monitoring daily operations of WIC Programs, including certifying of clients, counseling, and benefits.
    - Does not want to turn people away
  - Manage special funding grants; Ex: Peer Dad Program, Peer Breastfeeding counselor (including sending counselor to high school group);
  - Demographic surveys (children from birth to 5 yrs.) for the government. WIC is #1 source for this age and this demographic.
  - Facility management, including the buildings and grounds.
  - Health records sent to Austin. Legal issues (CPS) may be director to Austin, but also tracks potential legal problems w/ child care.

- What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high level position in public health?
  Skills and experiences:
  - Receiving BS in child development and family studies w/ minor in health promotion.
Pre-Meeting Comments from Constituents
Interview a High Level/Executive Leader in Public Health

- Ran education and enrichment programs in south Dallas in community that was lower SES and primarily Spanish speaking. Focus was improve academic success.
  - Almost did not interview for position because of location and appearance of building. Fell in love with the children and their heart to learn.
  - Sadly, this burned her out
- Later change to more affluent clientele – families of adoptive children and helped with their challenges of raising children on spectrum or with behavior issues.
  - Served as advocate and support for families with children on the spectrum.
  - Helped w/ providing advice and served as resource for parents dealing with these children w/ behavior issues.
- Then recruited by special needs lawyer for care planning of children for the future.
  - Helped families
  - Received certification to manage nursing facilities for geriatrics
    - Skills here crossed over to WIC
    - Started managing budgets and marketing – this helped w/ future roles as administrator.
- Motivate behavior change for employees which translates to client behavior change.
  - Being sensitive to client’s situation and circumstances/
  - Strip down biases.
- Should not be afraid of change and failure of change, as long as failures turn into positive changes in future that serve the clientele.
- Professional writing skills
  - Went back and took professional writing class to improve communication skills.
- Dream was to have a daycare.
  - Moved to College Station w/ husband
  - Early Head Start
  - Became certified in child care facility director (Licensed Child Care Facility)
  - Then asked to direct WIC
- Has taken some courses in nutrition to be classified as Nutritionist in Texas. However, this is not requirement of current position.

Networking/groups:
- National Association for the Education of Young Children
  - Since college and still a member
  - Previously active with this organization, but no longer actively involved.
- Very involved w/ WIC organizations:
  - Texas WIC Directors association for peers to help/mentoring
  - Elected to secretary to keep notes, which helps her stay informed for future changes.
  - Active in National WIC Association – can see big picture and bring it back down to smaller level
  - Also helps her learn what is coming and how to be prepare. She is able to initiation changes early in anticipation of these changes in procedure/process.
- Serves as internship rotation site; this brings new ideas to clinic and forces her to ensure her employees are well trained

- **What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?**
  - Be willing to make changes rather than doing the same thing. Be proactive.
  - Feel confident about problem solving skills and strategic planning skills
    - Strategic planning to work smarter, not harder
    - For WIC, nutrition education, breast feeding and obesity prevention are focus, so always keep this in mind when developing vision and plans.
    - Decisions and changes all go back to mission/goals and strategic plan
  - Be willing to have uncomfortable conversations to better manage staff.
    - Need to be able to correct people. This may mean you are the “bad guy” sometimes.
    - “Tough skin”
    - Provide constructive feedback
    - Performance appraisals
    - Making sure employees know they are held accountable for their actions.
  - Financial responsibility – a good steward of other peoples’ money.
  - Be a great motivator for staff to motivate others for behavior change.
Pre-Meeting Comments from Constituents
Interview a High Level/Executive Leader in Public Health

Interview #2: Leslie Hibbs of Brazos Valley Action Programs, WIC
I am currently serving Active Duty in the U.S. Army and my duty title is Chief of the Education and Research Branch in the Department of Nutritional Medicine at Brooke Army Medical Center (BAMC), Fort Sam Houston, TX. I am also an Adjunct Professor for the U.S. Army-Baylor Graduate Program in Nutrition.

In my current duty position, I wear many hats and am responsible for several key initiatives within my department. I serve as the departmental performance improvement (PI) and continuous quality improvement (CQI) coordinator, facilitating and assisting with departmental initiatives, and I report outcomes at hospital-wide PI committee meetings; I am a Certified Lean Six Sigma Green Belt. I lead the planning, implementation, and execution of mandatory military and organizational training, in addition to personal and professional development opportunities for all employees (e.g., educational courses, informational briefings, CPEU opportunities for RDs). I support the department through Joint Commission (TJC) readiness and compliance initiatives, and coordinate volunteer services and student/intern shadowing within the department. I am responsible for over-seeing departmental human resource operations including in- and out-processing and timecard compliance. I also oversee the departmental competency assessment folder (CAF) program for an integrated Army, Air Force, and Department of the Army Civilian staff.

Additionally, I serve as site Research Director to lead and mentor graduate student nutrition research. I develop protocols and serve as the Primary Investigator (PI) for the U.S. Army-Baylor Graduate Program in Nutrition (GPN) students/dietetic interns working on Master of Science theses. My primary responsibilities include coordination with the U.S. Army Medical Department Center and School, Health Readiness Center of Excellence, and other military or civilian facilities for multicenter trials and intra-organizational studies. I establish research objectives for my department to include the design, approval, execution, and publication of research while mentoring graduate students through the research process. I manage research activities for all GPN student interns assigned to BAMC and student interns in phases I & II on protocol development. I maintain a faculty appointment with Baylor University in Waco, Texas and assist the GPN with Phase I (didactic) course instruction. I maintain active research collaborations with local and national entities, support Army Medical Specialist Corps Research initiatives, and maintain an active role in the planning and execution of our annual research course, the Mary Lipscomb Hamrick Research Course, each year.

Being a military professional, I have taken a non-traditional career path compared with my fellow dietetics and public health colleagues. However, my military career has opened the doors to opportunities within Public Health that I never deemed possible. I have a skill-set that establishes me as a Soldier and a professional who is required to maintain and enhance clinical competencies, potential and proficiency as a leader, all while maintaining fitness, resilience, and readiness. Public health professionals in the military are offered a myriad of opportunities to engage in humanitarian assistance, public health research, disaster relief, program planning and evaluation, diplomatic relations, and operating in austere environments worldwide. My decision to join the military was the most important decision of my life. This career has shaped me into the type of person I had always admired as a young adult. For those who might like to pursue a similar role, know that this path will be the most challenging, yet rewarding, of your life. Dedicate yourself to lifelong learning, stay connected and involved, and remain knowledgeable and relevant.

Lisa Neuhaus
Affiliate Delegate – New York
Interview with: Cariny Nunez, MS, Senior Public Health Advisor and Language Access Lead, Office of Minority Health, FDA

Cariny has a BS in Biology with a minor in Chemistry. She also has her MS in Public Health with a concentration in health policy and management and health promotion and disease prevention. She is also certified in Health Care Risk Management. Cariny is currently working on Her Doctorate in Public Health. She has been with the FDA for seven years and in her current position since 2015. Cariny always had a drive for good health and wanted to be a doctor. Then “life happened” and she took a different path. She knew she couldn’t do much with just a Bachelor’s degree and she wanted to do more. She learned about public health and felt it would be very fulfilling. She consulted her family for advice and, concerned she wouldn’t find a job in public health, they recommended that she try Physical Therapy. She lasted 1 semester in the Physical Therapy program as she did not like it. On advice from her professor in the program, she quit. Her professor told her there are many ways to serve. After quitting the program, it took her 5-6 years to get a job in public health.
Her career in Public Health began in Miami, working for a non-profit organization, YWCA, where she was a program coordinator and health educator. She educated families on breast cancer and chronic diseases, providing free mammograms and pap tests to women with no insurance. Her teaching also extended into the prison system as well. Cariny was a Community Liaison for the Healthy Start Coalition focusing on Maternal/Child health. She started with the FDA 7 years ago as Public Affairs Specialist with the Office of Regulatory Affairs. Her work there brought her to her current position in the Office of Minority Health in Maryland.

The FDA Office of Minority Health has as its mission: To promote and protect the health of diverse populations through research and communication of regulatory science that addresses health disparities.

Describe your current position and responsibilities:
Involved in Research and Collaboration-Partner with academia, minority serving organizations and other Federal agencies to strengthen research in minority health and health disparities with regulatory significance. The office supports FDA’s research efforts to advance regulatory science and health disparities. Approve and provide funding for different outreach programs throughout the country, partner with different agencies to provide training.

Works to improve FDA’s communication and outreach with minority and underserved people and partners with stakeholders to identify and reduce health disparities. In a current program, she is working with the Latino and Asian populations to educate and raise awareness of the safety of supplements and holistic health remedies so they can make and educated decision since this population tends to use a more holistic approach to health and treatment.

Oversees implementation of language programs for whole FDA agency. Responsible for product translation in particular languages.

Key Priority Areas: Clinical Trials, Language Access, Cancer, Cardiovascular Disease, Hepatitis, HIV/AIDS, Diabetes and Sickle Cell Disease

What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you to achieve this high position in Public Health?
- Strong educational background; need more than just a Bachelor’s degree
- Volunteering
- Networking as much as possible
- Having a drive for good health
- Working in community setting/advocate

What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?
- Have a drive for good health
- NETWORK-form relationships
- Be resourceful
- Know your strengths and weaknesses
- Take advantage of your College or University Career Services office-they have knowledge of jobs available that aren’t necessarily publicized.
- Do your due diligence
- Perseverance
- Be honest about whether you can do the job, be realistic about your abilities
- Keep an open mind and be flexible-things can change in a moment’s notice
- Keep relationships with colleagues and mentors-this is key.
- We all have our areas that we like, but you never know what is out there-each job Cariny had, took her on a different path and led her to her job today.
- Dietitians are important in public health, especially with issues such as obesity. Obesity as a whole has become more inclusive; it is a strong factor leading to other diseases and conditions. The role of Dietitians in public health is critical to help understand the disease and educate communities.

“My time at the FDA has been quite a journey both professionally and personally. I am grateful to all of my coworkers who have helped to open doors for me and provided guidance and assistance. I will forever be grateful to them.

“......Cariny Nunez

Drissa Clifton
Delegate-at-Large: DTR
Interviewed: William Humble, MPH
Position: Executive Director of the Arizona Public Health Association

Which responsibilities of your position do you feel are most impactful in the public health field?
Pre-Meeting Comments from Constituents
Interview a High Level/Executive Leader in Public Health

Policy development
Legal advocacy - At the state level work to maintain good relationships with state law makers
At the Federal level, engaging more members of congress and senators, building political relationships
Mobilize members (public health professionals) to engage and weigh in on polices

When it comes to the wide range of public health issues you work on, what are you most passionate about?
He is most passionate about the areas where he knows he can make a difference. Currently, the AZPHA is working with the Community Health Workers association to help uplift and support their desire to obtain a voluntary certification that can help with reimbursement. He values the relationships built with other organizations and stakeholders.

What skills and experiences helped you achieve this leadership role in public health?
-Pacing himself was extremely important. He wouldn't take a role until he was truly ready and he believes that helped him get far.

Were there any networks/groups helpful in your journey?
He discussed the importance of managing up, down, and side-to-side.
Managing down: managing those under you
Managing up: Keeping the people you report to in the loop on what you’re doing and why. Whether it’s your boss, governor’s office, or the law makers, communication and transparency are key for getting the best support.
Managing side-to-side: again, maintaining those key relationships with other organizations and stakeholders.
Being proactive about collaboration.

Advice for someone pursuing a similar role in public health?
Make it a priority to develop strong relationships with the media (TV, Radio, Print, etc.) Early in his 30 year career he worked for an environmental agency and there was another group opposing them in the media. He said the other group had a better relationship with the media so they ended up controlling the narrative and his agency had to be more defensive. Also, if something bad happens, a journalist might be more likely to help with a positive spin if you're close to them. Media is extremely important in informing the public and encouraging these policy changes.

Norma Elaine Farley-Zoucha
DBC Delegate
Interviewed: Dawn Ballosigh

Dawn Ballosigh is the current WIC Manager for the Federally Qualified Health center (FQHC), OneWorld Community centers (OWCHC) WIC Clinics in Omaha, Nebraska. The focus of her career has always been on Public Health and Community Nutrition, but understood that to be impactful in this field that she must have a clear understanding of Public policy and administration so chose a Master’s degree in Public Administration.

Current position responsibilities:
- Focus is on population health and strategic management of resources that can make a significant health improvements to Women, infant and children of minority populations.
- She has taken the mandates of the Federal Women, Infants, and Children program and integrated into the mission of the FQHC to provide holistic approach to healthcare literacy, chronic disease prevention and wellness to low-income, underserved minority populations of myriad cultures and languages such as Spanish, Canjobal, French, Nuer, Arabic and Vietnamese & Chinese and Hearing impaired, to name a few.
- Established partnerships with groups such as Public health dental hygienists and Lead educators and breastfeeding specialists, and initiated other Food supplement services such as SNAP enrollment and CSFP drop off site at the health center, to fill gaps for care and education for the demographic she serves, to help overcome community barriers such as transportation and food costs, making the services at the FQHC a One-stop location to meet many of social determinants that affect their health.

What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this position in public health? Education & Experience.
- Being a Caribbean-born person of a multi-ethnic; multi-cultural and multi-lingual society has been her biggest benefit and advantage to my professional perspective and her multi-language abilities to best serve the community
- Began career as a food service worker at Immanuel Medical center
- Completed Master’s Degree in Public Administration
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- Moved to OWCHC as WIC RDN and soon became Manager and made the OWCHC WIC Clinic the largest in the state since 2009
- Was selected and completed Leadership programs for both the Academy and WIC and our Toddler Learn & Play program was featured in the ADA times in 2012.
- Completed the Academy’s Public Policy and Reimbursement trainings that has facilitated service for the better part of last 10 years in different positions on the Women’s Health DPG and is now the Chair Elect; and for the last 5 years as part of the Nebraska affiliate’s Public Policy Team member in capacities such as Reimbursement Representative and currently as Consumer Protection Coordinator.
- Mentorship and encouragement by other RDNs such as Toni Kuehneman, Denise Anderson, Rita Batheja, Dr. Evelyn Clayton and Public Health Promotions, Division Chiefs Charlotte Burke and retired Mary Balluff have been priceless.

What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?
- Develop steady focus on the objectives; in public health, there are other worthy impactors that can help reach the big goal, but can pull resources away from achieving the smaller objectives and this can cause burn out and loss of incoming young talent.
- Stay connected to your community; Public Health leaders, officials, and both formal and informal community leaders to ensure that you still have the pulse of the community and its needs.
- Remember one size does not fit all, and though public health nutrition programs have overarching rules for a target population you must continually reassess and customize your approaches for the individual needs.
- Never stop learning! Learn the language of your population that instantly makes a connection; learn about their foods and preparations; progress your programming using technology and other theories in other fields for improvements and data collection so you have defined measures to know if you are making that improvement to population health or if you have to re-evaluate and re-tool and you must learn the mechanism that is public policy and legislation that drives your field and scope of practice.

Katherine Capen
Affiliate Delegate – Indiana
Interviewed: Samantha Schaefer, MS, RDN, CD
IU Hospital, Healthy IU Program Manager

Describe your current position and responsibilities.
Manager, Worksite Wellness program at a university for full-time employees and spouses on a medical plan. The primary role is to provide leadership and ongoing supervision in developing, implementing, promoting, supporting and evaluating the programs. Responsibilities include: managing personnel, program coordination; relationship building; oversight of health screening quality and data collection; communicating Healthy IU mission, vision, values and services; supporting environmental and policy infrastructure so the “healthy choice is the easy choice”.

What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high level position in public health?
Networking in the community over 10 years; taking advantage of professional trainings/CEUS; leadership training; commitment to life-long learning; holding officer positions in various organizations; quality improvement projects; being open to feedback and learning to grow; positive mentoring

What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?
Attend an internship program that offers you a wide variety of experiences (not majority of rotations at one main facility in a small town); become an AND and state/district member and be involved and serve in leadership positions; find a good mentor; sign up for all the free opportunities to learn; create a learning plan to set goals to grow

Julie Schwartz
WM DPG
Interviewed: David L. Katz, MD, MPH, FCPM, FACP, FACLM

In choosing a leader to interview, I wanted to pull in my passions which resonate with the work the HOD did in 2016-2017 around Appreciative Inquiry and Wellness & Health Promotion. In reading others interviews the synergy is wonderful. I had an amazing conversation with Dr David Katz. The key take aways and questions are listed past his bio which is from his website davidkatzmd.com/.

DAVID L. KATZ MD, MPH, FACP, FACPM, FACLM, is the founding director (1998) of Yale University's Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center, and current President of the American College of Lifestyle Medicine. In 2015, Dr.
Katz established the True Health Initiative to help convert what we know about lifestyle as medicine into what we do about it, in the service of adding years to lives and life to years around the globe.

Other roles listed on Dr Katz website include:

- Medical director- Weigh Forward
- Senior medical advisor verywell.com
- Founder Turn the Tide Foundation a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization created to help combat obesity by developing, evaluating, and disseminating creative, yet practical programs that can be used in the real world, by real people, for free. Check out more, including the ONQI nutrition scoring system, and other resources at http://www.turnthetidefoundation.org/programs.htm

You are involved in many initiatives! There are several descriptions of your work and bios on the internet, in your words, how do you describe your current position and responsibilities?

I serve many roles that’s for sure! All involve translating what we know about healthy lifestyle and nutrition into what we do, and help our patients do the same. For 25 years I’ve treated patients combining disease treatment and lifestyle prevention or disease improvement. These have gone hand in hand. I’ve worked in the lab mostly testing hypothesis of how to get the things we know to work into the real world. Better choices in nutrition, such as plant based eating and choosing whole foods. It’s more about the how than the what. How do we get the messaging out? How do people make healthy choices?

I’ve been a teacher, worked in clinical care, program testing and dissemination of information.
- My premiere role now is the True Health Initiative, primarily a philanthropic initiative, a place to plant funds and use them to take our work in the lab and empower real world application. An example is our food label literacy Nutrition Detectives® which is in over 50,000 sites globally (New Zealand, India, Canada, Mexico, South Africa, Spain, the US of course and more.)
- Secondary is disseminating information. I’ve been a contributor to the New Haven Register since 1996! I contribute to the Huffington Post, ABC’s Good Morning America, Very Well, Oprah Magazine, The Boston Globe, and more. He’s a LinkedIn high contributor with approximately 85,500 followers.

Ultimately what I do is every conceivable way to make a difference with the fundamental truths of health put into every person’s routine.

What sparked your passion to change our culture to health vs. disease?

Constitutionally, I run to the house on fire vs. run away! Probably that’s why I went into medicine. Perhaps the good examples around me growing up, my dad was a Cardiologist and surrounded by life and death every day. Early on I was influenced by Edmund Burke “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.” I felt obligated to do something good for nature and nurture. I began exercising as a young teen and my interest in nutrition peak to better fuel my sport to be strong and fit. Knowledge of good health, being fit and strong evolved into vitality makes life better and everyone deserves vitality! Half way through my internship in Internal Medicine, working 100 plus hours each week, surrounded by the desperately sick, striving to keep them alive and realizing that most were there as a consequence of bad lifestyle choices I realized things had to change. I started seeing patterns of association between behavior and chronic illness, especially in the desperately sick. I recognized that we needed to change the next cohort, to look forward. I did a second residency in preventive medicine and do everything in my power to help people prevent disease, prevent further disease, as well treat the sick

What strengths and/or strategies helped you achieve your position?

- I can see the forest through the trees. I see the big picture as a sum of the smaller pictures. I have the ability to see the big picture, and public health is the big picture.
- Knowledge, ability to see the big picture and influence the conversation toward solutions.
- Knowing the fundamental truths and defend them to the hilt!
- It was important to get in touch with confluence of knowledge. I always thought of myself as an academic> I have a thought and challenge the thought and come up with solutions. Sometimes I’ve felt alone, that others in science were not of the same thought.
- I looked to the private sector when I needed to.
- I have unique communication skills and I use art to illiterate science. The use of metaphors creates a picture in people’s minds and an image is worth a thousand words. People can see the image, they “get the message”. I often start talks with John Godfrey Saxe- The Blind Men and the Elephant—part vs whole. The parts don’t always resemble the whole.
- Messages need to be clear and simple- transforming complex science into actions that people can make. It’s about the how.
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What possibilities exist in your vision or dream for the future in regards to health and well-being that perhaps we haven’t explored?
I’m not sure we’re at the point to create a vision or dream. We need to be a combined voice. The days when public health leaders such as C. Everett Koop and Dr Spock had a following and trust and people listened and wanted more, went away with the internet. Now people have opinions and they look for information on their opinion, that supports their opinion and they elevate people who write and speak to that opinion to a level of expert. Even if the opinions are things we wish were true, yet are not what we know through science to be true.

The True Health Initiative® is a global initiative to combine single voices into one, to rally people to truth. The initiative combines experts from various scientific, health and nutrition backgrounds and focused on the common ground. The message is uniform, even with some differences of opinions, yet the truth messages are repeated and repeated in numbers by global leaders and experts in health and nutrition. We have to fight the false information and get people empowered with truth.

What guidance would you give to the RDN who might like to pursue a similar or complimentary role?
- Do what you like to do. Avoid being distracted by what’s important. If it’s important to write a blog, but you don’t enjoy writing and you aren’t good at it, choose another way. Fill your hours with fulfillment.
- What is your single overarching mission? Mine is: Years to life and life to years in ways that are also good to the planet. The last part has been added in recent years.
- Think how you disseminated information. We need to build bridges and band together with good people as unity is strength.
- Focus on the common ground. This was a recurring theme throughout our 45 minutes! Defend the fundamental truths to the hilt! We know that plant based and whole foods is healthy and what is evidence based for treatment and prevention of chronic diseases. It’s also good for the planet!
- Focus on epidemiology vs. ideology. Know the fundamental truths.
- Avoid conflict of interest. If you have alliances, sponsors or advertisers do they share the same message and mission?
- Stay with the science and knowledge. World experts agree. They may also have varying opinions such as vegans vs. Paleo, however they agree on the common ground of plant based, whole food nutrition.
- Separate passion, conviction and opinions. It confuses the public and the media. It leads to distrust, a “hell with you” attitude toward us, and we lose our audience.

Catherine McIsaac
Affiliate Delegate – Vermont
Interviewed: Amy Malinowski, RD

I interviewed Amy Malinowski, RD at the Vermont Department of Public Health. Current role is the Supervisor of WIC and School Health Programs. Primary responsibilities include quality improvement for divisions, staff training and supervision. Amy enjoys working on the systems and tools to support the staff in their work to support families.

How long have you been in this role?
3 weeks! Prior role was as supervisor in Maternal and Child Health program and Substance Abuse programs, held for about 5 years. Her first job was as a WIC nutritionist in the local office in Burlington, VT.

What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high level position in public health?
Colleagues at the health department (dietitians and others) have been great mentors. The health department supports continuing training and education in skills that were not part of her internship, including project management, program evaluation, development of training programs, and meeting facilitation. Amy has found that taking advantage of these various opportunities has increased her skills and opportunities for various roles in public health which may not have a nutrition focus.

What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?
Encourage RDs and DTR to have an open mind to try out new jobs and opportunities, there is always something to learn in every job and role, even those that are not strictly nutrition related.

Mary Angela Miller
MFNS DPG
Interviewed: Wanda Dillard, Director Community Development, Ohio State University
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Wanda began her career like so many of us do, as a practicing clinician, then pursued a master’s degree in a different profession in order to enhance her scope and leverage her skills on a community wide basis.

Current position and responsibilities.
Primarily Coordinates Community Health Care for a Medical Center Health System by
• NOT by focusing on mobile units, or public health screenings or other one-shot programs, because that is episodic care
• Instead she coordinates healthcare services for underserved populations in our communities
• Asian, Latino and Noor/Muslim Community clinics are 3 in place
• Partnerships with community based organizations, family medicine practices, etc.
• Each partnership is different based on what the community organization can provide and other partners can provide: Space, Laboratory services, Health Providers, Volunteers, etc.

What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high level position in public health?

Education & Experience
• Began career as a Respiratory Therapist,
• Became a Manager in RT Dept. for another Health System
• Earned a Masters in Health Administration degree
• Completed a 2 year MHA Fellowship
• Mentored by CEO who assigned projects in community based organizations
• Her work was so well done, she was recruited by another organization to build an effective community health program

What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?
• Be creative! In your approaches, in your outreach and utilizing the networks in your past
• Tap into community resources: go out and meet with, get to know City and State Public Health officials and leaders of community based population and settlement groups,
• As a retired Major, National Guard, in my early years I worked in rural counties. I learned that it is critical to tailor services to community needs. It may be flu shots for seniors or dental care for children or infant feeding education
• Find out what need is in area and be creative in developing services that meet those needs, certainly food insecurity is a key way Nutrition Professionals can get involved.
• Remember to respect a personal sense of pride and it is best to offer services on a sliding scale or for a contribution, financial or by volunteering rather than making people feel they are a charity case.

Young Hee Kim
CNM DPG
Interviewed: Nancy Robinson, MBA

Describe your current position and responsibilities.
I interviewed Nancy Robinson, MBA, whose title is Innovation Consultant/Coordinator for the Coalition to End Hunger (the Coalition). The Coalition has three teams: policy, communication/education and service integration. She sits on the policy and the service integration teams.

Nancy’s broad responsibilities include but are not limited to coordinating the Coalition, addressing/identifying innovative strategies that will end hunger and writing grant proposals. To achieve those goals she provides support to the regional, state and non-profit agencies; liaises between agencies; and provides support to the health care organizations. In addition, she is currently overseeing a grant funded pilot program to identify persons who are at risk of food insecurity and provide referral to the appropriate social services.

What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this level position in public health?
Nancy, unequivocally, stated that her background in healthcare was the most helpful. Her experience of working at a large teaching hospital helped her in navigating and maneuvering through hospitals and knowing who and how to approach a potential partner. In addition, she held many different leadership roles during her tenure at a hospital which helped her hone her skills in working with C suite to front line staff.
Nancy, also, worked with organizations such as Healthcare without Harm, CISA and Mass In Motion. This helped her understand public health issues from a community perspective. Nancy underscored the importance of relationship building, managing by influence and understanding operations management. However, she felt the most important factor for her was the passion to help.
Pre-Meeting Comments from Constituents
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What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?
Find your passion and volunteer to serve on committees and boards. Don’t be afraid to try something new. Develop transferrable skills. Maintain a positive outlook as lack of resources or bureaucracy can become overwhelming.

Sachiko St. Jeor
Delegate-at-Large: Retired
Interviewed: John P. Foreyt, PhD, Professor (~44 years, 1974 – Present)
Departments of Medicine and Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences
Director, Behavioral Medicine Research Center
Baylor College of Medicine
Houston, Texas

BACKGROUND:
I have had the distinct honor and privilege to truly know and interview Dr. John P. Foreyt, a colleague, mentor and special friend. We met in 1980, as charter members on the Behavioral Medicine Study Section for the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and he has truly encouraged and supported me (as well as numerous other dietitians and health professionals) to be creative and assume new roles/responsibilities and move beyond traditional images. Thus, I have admired his commitment, enthusiasm and tenacity to pursue his chosen profession (clinical psychology) by successfully expanding public health initiatives to combine behavioral, interdisciplinary and cross cultural challenges. Additionally, he has been able to provide support to his clients, colleagues, friends and family through his sophisticated and unique interpretive listening skills that demonstrate true empathy and understanding. Importantly, I have tried to learn to be selfless and focus on moving forward by using a positive problem solving approach through his example!

Many consider Dr. Foreyt to be the “Father of Behavior Modification” as a pioneer and innovator bringing together many disciplines and intertwining cognitive behavioral strategies to improve health outcomes. In 1977-1978, he introduced behavioral strategies as the editor of two classic books: 1) “Behavioral Treatments of Obesity” followed by 2) “Cognitive Behavior Therapy: Research and Applications” He has published his work in over 400 articles, books, etc. and has served on at least 15 national and international editorial boards. Importantly, he has also served on numerous important committees, task forces supported by the NIH, Institute of Medicine (IOM), Center for Disease Control (CDC) and other study sections, work groups and advisory boards and committees that have impacted policy and funding priorities. He has also demonstrated the ability to inspire and challenge professionals beyond traditional approaches and has helped pave the road to achieve new directions. His own track record speaks for itself and includes contributions as Principal Investigator for many significant, multi-site clinical trials (including CVD prevention in Mexican Americans and the recent Look AHEAD trial to improve longer term, successful outcomes for diabetes and obesity treatments). Importantly, he is also a very popular speaker and expertly spreads his ideas throughout the world. Thus, it is no surprise that he encourages public speaking and being purveyors of change. He enjoys a world-wide reputation as a leading behavioral psychologist and has many honors in recognition for his accomplishments and successful recommendations, particularly in initiating and maintaining desired behavioral changes.

QUESTIONS:

CURRENT POSITION AND RESPONSIBILITIES: As a faculty member in the Baylor College of Medicine and Director of the Behavioral Medicine Research Center, Dr. Foreyt’s major responsibilities included the traditional academic requirements to pursue innovative research, education and service/outreach opportunities. His charge was primarily to obtain extramural funds to support research to cultivate new directions in behavioral medicine, develop educational programs and demonstrate leadership in all areas. He was acknowledged for his unique contributions and development of the field of Behavior Modification and international reputation by his successful promotion to Associate Professor in 1980 and then to Professor in 1991 at the Baylor College of Medicine.

He has demonstrated this expertise and lists over 400 publications in the best journals and 60 research grants for which he has played a major role as Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator. These grants have included major, multi-center clinical trials, most recently including the Look AHEAD multicenter trial where he contributed to innovative intensive lifestyle interventions to improve weight management and quality of life in type 2 diabetes. I calculated from his CV that he has generated over $ 50 Million in funds (averaging over $1 million/year during his tenure of 44 years) as Principal or Co-Investigator leading teams of many colleagues from major disciplines. He maintains a rigorous speaking schedule and loves mentoring students, other professionals and colleagues.
SKILLS, EXPERIENCES, NETWORKS/GROUPS THAT HELPED ACHIEVE THIS HIGH LEVEL POSITION IN PUBLIC HEALTH:

SKILLS: Dr. Foreyt demonstrates and maintains a combination of both professional and personal skills enhanced by many kind attributes. He is able to relate to all types of audiences and is a very popular public speaker. He also demonstrates sincere enthusiasm and expertise in a wide range of topics and not surprisingly stated that he believes that the “development of listening skills is critical to success.”

EXPERIENCES: Dr. Foreyt is a self-starter and exhibits endless energy for all that he does. He lists over 400 publications and 60 grants as Principal or Co-Investigator ranging from $1000 to $12.7 million. He has created jobs and new opportunities for many professionals to work together using the team approach.

NETWORKS/GROUPS: Dr. Foreyt continues to enjoy many honors, awards and special recognition citations by prestigious organizations, including the American Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics as an Honorary Member in 1991 and Fellow in 6 Societies, (including the American Society for Nutrition, American Academy of Health Behavior, The Obesity Society, National Lipid Association and Overseas Royal Society of Medicine). Many prestigious groups and committees for which he has chaired or participated have been initiated through these professional societies.

ADVICE FOR THOSE WHO MIGHT WANT TO PURSUE A SIMILAR ROLE:

Dr. Foreyt believes that the secret to success is “TENACITY”. His advice focused around 10 recommendations that he has mastered himself:

1. Play to your strengths and be your own person.
2. Be introspective and positive; be your own best critic.
3. Take responsibility and don’t criticize others.
4. Learn from life experiences
5. Be sensitive and empathetic.
6. Learn to listen wisely and sincerely.
7. Respect others and look for their strengths.
8. Take opportunities by being pro-active.
10. Know yourself…Identify what makes you unique.

Adrienne White
Affiliate Delegate – Maine
Interviewed two state leaders in public health, one in nutrition community/public health positions and one who has directed public health agencies across the spectrum. Both have over 25 years of experience

Current positions and responsibilities.
- Assure successful program implementation statewide
- Coordinate and supervise workforce across the counties
- Provide ongoing training, mentoring and monitoring
- Communicate through newsletters
- Assure fidelity of implementation of evidence-based curricula
- Manage state and federal grants—grant oversight, contract management, budget management, grant writing, strategic planning, staff supervision

What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high level position in public health?

Education: a Master in Public Health; A Registered Dietitian with a Master’s Degree and work experience in a variety of community settings

Skills:
- Strong communications skills are essential
- Must be able to manage people
- Be a risk taker; get involved in challenging programs, such as “no-soda in schools”
- Be systems-oriented with ability to assess the community environment and support systems for healthy behaviors
- Understand the socio-ecological model and the spheres of influence on health behaviors; that will help to identify barriers to healthy behavior changes and how to develop small steps toward solutions
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- Have a strong desire to provide information needed to make informed health decisions and lifestyle choices
- As Registered Dietitians, we have the capacity to translate scientific information into communications that can be used by individuals and partners in the community

Experiences that helped to achieve the high level position in public health:
- Working with excellent managers/leaders to learn from
- Participating in multiple initiatives that involve people with many skills from many organizations – by contributing to these efforts, new skills and knowledge were gained such as lobbying, legislative advocacy, communication, policy development
- Getting management training
- Getting involved in programs that may be new or challenging such as smoke free restaurants, tobacco tax, removing soda sales from schools. Involvement in these programs provide opportunities to be a leader

Experiences that helped to achieve the high level position in public health (continued):
- Showing up and participating in initiatives with other public health leaders both to learn from them and to display leadership skills. Hard to do that if you just sit in your office all the time, or attend meetings but don’t actively contribute.
- Being actively involved in professional associations

Networks/groups helped you achieve this high level position in public health
- Professional partners and associations such as American Heart Association, Academy for Nutrition and Dietetics, Nutrition Council and Public Health Association.
- Local task forces and city/school committees
- Public health initiatives

What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?
- Get involved, contribute and learn from others who have different skills
- Have a vision for the future and lead by example
- Be willing to manage people --- but learn how to do it effectively, appreciate the strengths of people and learn how to minimize weaknesses – attend management/leadership training
- Seek and maintain professional credentialing
- Network with professional partners & professional associations
- Get involved in your community
- Be a role model – practice what you preach

Tina Dugdale
Affiliate Delegate – Connecticut
Interviewed: Dawn Crayco, MPH

Describe current position and responsibilities:
- Developing a statewide strategy for future scale and systems change for FoodCorps programming that connects kids to healthy food in schools through hands on learning, healthy school meals, and encouraging a school-wide culture of health
  - Identify high need school districts ripe for partnership with FoodCorps
  - Identify, maintain and establish partnerships with high quality service sites for member placement
- Leading, managing and overseeing FoodCorps Connecticut program
  - Ensure superior program quality and fidelity across service sites in partnership with national staff and existing FoodCorps networks
  - Oversee program performance management and monitoring, including data collection, site observations and AmeriCorps compliance
  - Selection and management of service sites
  - AmeriCorps member recruitment, selection, training and management
- Serving as the key contact for FoodCorps’ partnership with AmeriCorps in CT
  - Support national staff with AmeriCorps compliance reporting, lead AmeriCorps site visits
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- Developing and sustaining professional relationships with key stakeholders across CT including CT Advisory Board, school district leaders, principals, elected officials, food service directors and companies and peer organizations
- Developing and Implementing In-State Trainings

What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high level position in public health?
- I've found building and nurturing relationships with others in the field, related fields, and those impacted by public health initiatives to be critical to my growth in the field and as a leader.
- Stepping outside of our typical circles can bring the most opportunity and learning. We're all impacted by public health which means anyone can be a partner and adds value to addressing our most pressing societal needs. I think fully engaging those being served or impacted is critical in developing successful, equitable public health programs.
- Show-up! Good things happen when you show up. Your presence matters and it's remembered in the future!
- Collaborations with other people and groups is the key to large scale impact. I'm only one person and the issues and problems we address in public health need scale to truly make a difference. Projects with great collaboration have also felt the most rewarding because they've been team efforts that can live on beyond my or any one person's involvement.

What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?
- Invest time in getting to know the people you work with and the communities you serve.
- Surround yourself with others who have strengths you may not possess so you can learn from them and take a balanced approach to your work.
- Take care of yourself! There will always be public health. Walk the walk by practicing self-care in your work and life.

Michele Tilton
Affiliate Delegate – California
Interviewed: Lynne Ashbeck, RD, City Council Member, Clovis, CA

Current Responsibilities and Duties:
Lynne states: In general, cities do not have public health plans…that is left to the county. I am in my 5th term as a council member and prior Mayor of Clovis, CA. As an elected legislative member of the City of Clovis, the City Council has overall responsibility for the scope, direction, and financing of City services. The City Council, as the legislative body, establishes policy that is administered and implemented through full time staff under the Council-Manager form of government. The Council is also responsible for establishing land use policies through the General Plan and zoning regulations. My current duties that relate to public health include; adding a health element to the general city plan, by suggesting more walking paths, bike paths and better walkability within the city. I am partnering with Clovis Unified School District to use school playgrounds on the weekends as parks for all citizens. I am on the Wellness Committee of Clovis Unified School District and help with creating events for children, such as: Walk to School Wednesday. I was also involved with the County Supervisor of Fresno to create an Rx Drop box for citizens to be able to drop off unused or expired meds at the police stations. I am currently working on a potential project at Children's Hospital for the creation of a Community Garden or learning garden for children.

What skill set and experiences with networking have you used to help you achieve your high level position?
My first job was at the Dairy Council of CA, I made many contacts at this job and learned of future opportunities for growth. I wanted to become more involved in my city and started with becoming a member of the Personnel Committee, then the Planning Committee and on to running for City Council member and Mayor. I did desire to be an elected official and made contacts on the committees.

Skill set: the ability to connect ideas and move them forward, by working with others who have a similar mission/goal. I look for opportunities of merging ideas into one successful project. I learned to take on projects and help others with similar goals to achieve success.

What advice would you give to someone in the field of public health who is pursuing a similar role?
Learn about your city and county plans. Learn who is on the local government and find a way to engage them; joining council meetings open to the public, join a planning committee or a commission if you are looking into changing or guiding public policy.
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Jennifer Jackson
Affiliate Delegate – Oregon
Interviewed: Marie Harvey, Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Programs, Distinguished Professor of Public Health, College of Public Health and Human Sciences, Oregon State University

Describe your current position and responsibilities.
I have been in my current position as Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Programs for 6 years. This position requires me to oversee 3 domains. It is important to note that although I am in a leadership position, all of my work is accomplished with a team.

Domain 1: College administration: I support the dean in everything she/he needs done, including development and implementation of strategic planning for the college, helping with fundraising efforts, serving as ex-officio on committees, helping with college budgets, developing annual report for the provost.

Domain 2: Research: this has everything to do with building faculty research capacity, ongoing professional development, administrative support, help with interdisciplinary research, help with getting applications submitted, NIH training and seminars, track funding that comes into the college and create reports on how the college is doing.

Domain 3: Graduate programs: I provide leadership in policy and procedures related to graduate programs, including recruitment and retention. I work closely with the school heads and program coordinators, and help with student grievances.

What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high-level position in public health?
It has been helpful to have academic degrees be in public health, including a MPH and PhD in public health. Having breadth and depth of experience and training in public health has helped me to have an influential role in building the College of Public Health and Human Sciences at OSU. I have had experience in public health and leadership roles throughout my career, and this experience has been important for learning leadership skills. My academic programs did not provide training in leadership; thus, assuming multiple leadership roles provided tremendous experience. My leadership experience is not limited to academia. For example, I co-founded and served as co-director for Pacific Institute for Women’s Health, a non-profit in Los Angeles. This experience helped me to develop skills in fundraising, business savvy, human resources, and management with limited resources. Other experiences helped to build my knowledge about public health and how to design and implement public health programs and interventions. As for networking, the Oregon Public Health Association has helped me to see the broader work of public health and provides practice-based networking. The American Public Health Association is a great organization for networking related to the research component of my position. And the Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health offers a group for academic deans that meets regularly to help understand where the academic world in public health is going in the future.

What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?
Leadership skills are essential for a high-level position in public health. A leader is different from a manager. Leaders are visionary, spearhead new directions. An important attribute of leader is to be a risk taker. A leader can’t move the needle or make difference if she/he is unwilling to take risks. Risk taking means being willing to be new and innovative, to do things outside the box, to be comfortable with failure, and be comfortable with fact that people don’t like change, so pushback is expected. It is important to be a calculated risk taker vs. a foolish risk taker. Other attributes include interpersonal skills, being selfless, having thick skin, and an internal sense of confidence because leaders are often criticized.

Susan Adams
Affiliate Delegate – Pennsylvania
Interviewed: Amanda Frankeny, RDN, LDN, Community Nutritionist for the Pennsylvania Nutrition Education Network

I had the privilege (and honor) of interviewing Amanda Frankeny, RDN, LDN, Community Nutritionist for the Pennsylvania Nutrition Education Network (Since 1996, the Pennsylvania Nutrition Education Network provides a forum for public and private agencies and other groups working with the food stamp population of Pennsylvania to share information about current nutrition education efforts and to plan and implement innovative strategies).

I asked Amanda to describe her current position and responsibilities at the PA NEN and she related she is the liaison for the Social Marketing Committee for PA NEN; works to expand the “Eat Together PA” social marketing campaign.
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and website; writes the PA NEN’s weekly E-newsletter, collaborates with statewide partners to create and distribute PA NEN recipe booklets and other nutrition materials; and updates members regarding food policy and nutrition research across the state. She has been in this role for 5 years. One of the two RDNs in this organization (Christine E. Mullin, MPH, CPH, RDN, Network Director is the other RDN), Amanda Frankeny is the “voice of sound nutrition and evidenced-based practice in the PA NEN.

Amanda came to this position with a strong interest in public policy having worked for Katie Cavuto, MS, RD, taught as an adjunct and also an on-line behavioral health organization based in Washington, D.C., where she was exposed to the impact of public policy on the profession of nutrition.

The skills Amanda Frankeny developed to succeed in her position are: An understanding of research and knowledge of resources available in the public health realm, life-long learning, and networking skills with everyone (nutrition professionals, the public, other professionals).

The advice that Amanda Frankeny would give someone interested in pursuing a career in Public Health Nutrition is to:

1. Find a mentor (and this could be someone not in the nutrition field) that would help one develop a support system.
2. Develop a passion for this area of nutrition (especially helping alleviate food insecurity) to allow for working longer hours to pursue success.
3. “Fake it till you Make it!”
4. Join and become involved in several DPGs to further broaden one’s contact, knowledge and passion by joining with other like-minded professionals.
5. I left the interview inspired to help others through supporting nutrition education programs and those professionals that work in these programs. Thank-you for your words of wisdom, Amanda Frankeny, RD, LDN.

Karen Geismar (proxy for Tina Maxwell)
Affiliate Delegate – Texas
Interviewed: Leslie Hibbs
Position: Brazos Valley Community Action Programs WIC Program Administrator; Local Agency WIC director

Describe your current position and responsibilities.
She oversees/supervises 8 WIC clinics in 6 counties in rural/central Texas. Day-to-day duties include:

- Manage budget
- Hire/train personal at all 8 sites
- Liaison b/t federal governing group and state agency
- Monitoring daily operations of WIC Programs, including certifying of clients, counseling, and benefits.
- Manage special funding grants; Ex: Peer Dad Program, Peer Breastfeeding counselor (including sending counselor to high school group);
- WIC is #1 source for children up to 5 years and this demographic. Therefore, responsibilities include demographic surveys for the government.
- Facility management, including the buildings and grounds.

What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high level position in public health?

Skills and experiences:

- Receiving BS in child development and family studies w/ minor in health promotion.
- Ran education and enrichment programs in south Dallas in community that was focus was improve academic success of lower socioeconomic status individuals.
- Later, was recruited by special needs lawyer for care planning of children for the future. Started managing budgets and marketing, which helped with future roles as administrator. Also, received certification to manage nursing facilities for geriatrics that tied to management of facilities.
- Skill on how to motivate behavior change for employees is important.
- In this role, cannot not be afraid of change and failure of change, as long as failures turn into positive changes in future that serve the clientele.
- Professional writing skills are also important. She took a professional writing class to improve communication skills.

Networking/groups:
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- National Association for the Education of Young Children
- She stays very involved w/ WIC organizations:
  - Texas WIC Directors association for peers to help/mentoring
  - Elected t secretary to keep notes, which helps her stay informed for future changes.
  - Active in National WIC Association – can see big picture and bring it back down to smaller level
  - Als helps her learn what is coming and how to be prepare. She is able to initiate changes early in anticipation of these changes in procedure/process.
- Serves as internship rotation site; this brings new ideas to clinic and forces her to ensure her employees are well trained

What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?
- Be willing to make changes rather than doing the same thing. Be proactive.
- Feel confident about problem solving skills and strategic planning skills
- Be willing to have uncomfortable conversations to better manage staff. Need to be able to correct people. This may mean you are the “bad guy” sometimes.
- Financial responsibility – Be a good steward of other peoples’ money.
- Be a great motivator for staff to motivate others for behavior change.

Amanda Jones
Affiliate Delegate – Oklahoma
Interviewed: Interview with Sara Raney, Program Manager for the Healthy Living Program: Serving Cleveland County

Background information about TSET and the Healthy Living Program:
Established by voters, the Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust (TSET) is a state grant making trust devoted to preventing cancer and cardiovascular disease, Oklahoma's leading causes of death. By awarding grants to schools, communities, state agencies and partner organizations, TSET works to improve the health of Oklahoma's citizens. It also funds research and emerging opportunities in the public and private sectors. TSET initiatives are addressing Oklahoma's most pressing public health issues — and creating healthier places for all Oklahomans to live, work, learn and play. Half of all cancers are caused by obesity and tobacco use. Oklahoma has some of the highest rates of tobacco use and obesity in the nation. TSET Healthy Living Program grants are designed to prevent cancer and cardiovascular disease by preventing and reducing tobacco use and obesity on a local level.

Describe your current position and responsibilities:
The healthy Living Program is a community base program that is dedicated to assisting schools, afterschool programs, congregations, workplaces and communities with their sustainable efforts to reduce tobacco use, and promote physical activity and nutrition. Being the Manager over the Healthy Living Program, my duties include creating, planning, implementing and evaluating strategic plans and objectives to meet the needs of the program as well as the organization. Developing and maintain healthy partnerships with schools, businesses and key stake holders and managing a complex budget and employees of unique skill sets. Grant writing at the local, state and federal level for funding.

What skills, experiences, networks helped you achieve this position? Having a degree in the public health field is a plus, but also having knowledge of health and most importantly the passion and drive for the health of Oklahomans! Being an advocate for health care and wanting to make a difference in your state will demonstrate strong leadership skills and will rank high along with education and experience. I believe in continuing education so joining as many local coalitions who share the same passion of health care as you is a great start for networking and gaining education. Also attending local and state level training and conferences. There are many that are free or low cost to attend.

What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role? I would say to start small, like at the local level and remember public health is a long term goal not short term. Although we want to see results over night, it is a process and it takes a team of people to achieve these goals.

Michele Nikolai
Affiliate Delegate – Michigan
Interviewed: Diane Golzynski, PhD, RDN

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Describe your current position and responsibilities:
My official title is “Interim State Child Nutrition Director.” I am currently one of two Assistant Directors in the Office of School Support Services (soon to be renamed as the Office of Health and Nutrition Services). My role is to oversee the day to day operations of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Nutrition Programs - all except for SNAP and WIC (those two are at MDHHS). This includes The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), USDA Foods for Schools, the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), the At Risk After School Program (ARAS), the School Breakfast Program (SBP), the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP), and the Michigan Team Nutrition Program (MTN). I oversee approximately 50 staff including 4 front-line managers and 3 second level managers. In addition, I assist in overseeing the 25 staff under our other Assistant Director. Currently I am also acting in the role as office director (so both the director and the assistant) while we work to replace our previous director that retired in February. As director, I am responsible for the strategic positioning of our nutrition and health programs within the greater vision of the Michigan Department of Education and as a partner with other state level partners such as Women Infants and Children (WIC) and other divisions of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), Michigan State University Extension (MSUE), Michigan Fitness Foundation/Michigan Nutrition Network (MFF), Center for Regional Food Systems (CRFS), etc. I also lead the state nutrition efforts for the Flint Water Crisis and am currently leading the efforts on the 10 cents/meal pilot (www.tencentsmichigan.org). In my role, I assure our State Agency work for the FNS programs follows all state and federal program, fiscal, and civil rights regulations. I am the direct liaison to USDA’s Midwest Regional Office in Chicago. I also work collaboratively with the other state agency child nutrition directors to assure we are in line with how other states are implementing the programs.

What skills, experiences, networks/groups helped you achieve this high level position in public health?
Having a mentor who believed in me was very important. My previous job at the state in public health was to connect people together who were doing similar work in different agencies/organizations to improve access to fruits and vegetables. My mentor and I were in different state agencies and had worked closely together on a few projects. She saw leadership qualities in me and brought me into her agency and up to my current role as interim (assistant) State Child Nutrition Director. Prior to this, in my area of work, I was in such a unique position, I had to go the national level to find other dietitians doing similar work. We started the state fruit and vegetable nutrition coordinators council through the Association for State Public Health Nutrition Directors. Their mission is to develop leadership skills for public health nutrition leaders. I have spent many years working closely with others around the country to hone my leadership skills and to demonstrate my hunger for always wanting to learn more.

I. Skills are ubiquitous. These are skills everyone can hone regardless of position. An example of this is the recent Flint water crisis. I was asked to lead the state’s nutrition response to the Flint water crisis. My position is 100% federally funded position. This was a state level crisis and state level work and I provided all of the state level coordination of the response to the crisis for nutrition intervention not because it was a part of my position but because I had the leadership skills necessary to get the job done. Developing the leadership skills is a critical component to reaching high level positions and work activities.

What advice would you have for those who might like to pursue a similar role?
Without a doubt, polish your leadership skills. Leadership is not about the position you are in. You do not need to manage people (in management) to be a good leader. Dietitians at every level need good leadership skills to be successful. These are the skills that make you the go to person – the key member to the team that others suddenly believe they cannot work without. Another one of the keys is to never burn a bridge because you never know when you may need that connection. Nutrition is truly a small world and one day you may find yourself having to work with someone that you may never have expected to see again. Don’t be afraid to make mistakes but when you do, own up to it, grow from it, and move on. Others will see that in you and appreciate your hunger to learn and do better. Then you can take those bridges you’ve built and use your leadership skills to navigate your own future.