



# WIC watch

## Unite, Inspire, Uplift- It Is Happening!

March 30, 2020 will be remembered in California WIC history as the day when our huge state successfully transitioned not only to the California WIC card, but also to the WIC app and WIC WISE information system. A decade in the works, the project's success was built on the collaboration, communication and commitment of USDA, state and local staff, grocers and technology partners. Never did we expect that we would also be dealing with a pandemic during the final rollout. Before they were even fully implemented statewide, the new technologies had to be adapted to deal with the pandemic!



ways, and ensured that staff and participants are safe. All these changes have worked! Since February 1, 2020, 271,887 new participants are receiving CA WIC benefits.

We are deeply inspired by the national activism to address racial justice, especially for Black, Indigenous and other people of color. Within WIC, families, colleagues, friends, and participants are in pain and experiencing deep sadness and fatigue from being subjected to generations of racism and even loss of life. There are opportunities for all of us as individuals, and for governments, programs, and organizations to be part of the change.

We are deeply troubled by the annual wildfires in California and the West coast. WIC staff, participants and communities are facing devastating losses. Many WIC staff are detailed to not only COVID but also wildfire emergency response, while also providing WIC services. Some having lost their homes in recent years. This is unprecedented.

Inside this WIC Watch you will read inspiring stories of recently retired colleagues and their contributions to WIC families and, ultimately, WIC outcomes. Other stories here focus on ways that staff are developing the leader within and securing scholarships and advancing their degrees so they can take us toward a bright future. See how WIC staff have adapted to COVID-19. Did you know about CA WIC authors?

Just a few weeks remain until the election. It is important that we vote and encourage our friends, neighbors, families, co-workers and participants to register and vote as well. This is time for change and renewed leadership. To call upon the theme of CWA's first virtual conference, voting will Empower Young Families to Unite, Inspire and Uplift!

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## USDA Waivers Vital for WIC Services

WIC clinics are finding ways to continue serving participants—both current and new—by adapting to COVID restrictions for which USDA waivers are critically important. With layoffs and unemployment from COVID-19, more families than ever need WIC services, while fears of contracting the disease and additional responsibilities at home keep people from coming to the WIC clinic to receive their benefits. WIC staff throughout the state are grateful for the USDA waivers that have made it possible to serve clients remotely. Remote access has also indirectly benefitted client participation by removing the frequent transportation barriers to getting to WIC offices. Moreover, enrollment in online classes at WICHealth.org has increased. Says Joy Ahrens, Director of Northeast Valley Health Corporation WIC in San Fernando, “More families than ever need WIC right now. They don’t want to risk COVID-19 exposures and they have expressed much gratitude that we can enroll them over the phone. Likewise, WIC staff are happy that they are at lower risk by staying behind closed doors.” WIC staff resoundingly agree that the waivers need to continue, at least until September 2021, or until WIC clinics can serve participants safely and keep the WIC workforce, essential workers themselves, safe. Ahrens said, “WIC sees a high volume of people and we need more time to reconfigure our WIC sites before we can open. WIC serves a high-risk population and we need to protect them.”

WIC agency directors and staff throughout the state shared similar thoughts. Here are some of them:

Although the public doors are locked, Glenn County WIC remains open and ready to help families in need. In the middle of March, we quickly purchased headsets to make phone appointments more ergonomic. Since all six of the Glenn County WIC employees have their own offices, we can comply with social distancing measures and poke our heads out when we need interaction with each other. Clients and staff are increasingly using WICHealth.org for general nutrition appointments. We miss the face-to-face interaction, especially with brand new families, and we look forward to doing video appointments when the state gets a contract in place. A few times we have allowed a participant to quickly pick up a breast pump or WIC card in person, and our lactation consultant has done a few in-person consults for participants whose needs could not be met by phone only—with appropriate sanitation, distancing and face coverings.

*Kelly Wilson, Director, Glenn County WIC*

*The [USDA] waivers mean everything when trying to keep pregnant women and young families safe and fed. No has to make the hard decisions between having enough to eat and going to the WIC clinic, especially when not feeling well.*

—Debra Wilson, Senior Nutritionist  
Nevada County WIC

*These are times when we have to reach out to more families when they need our services most. The waivers are the means to that end.*

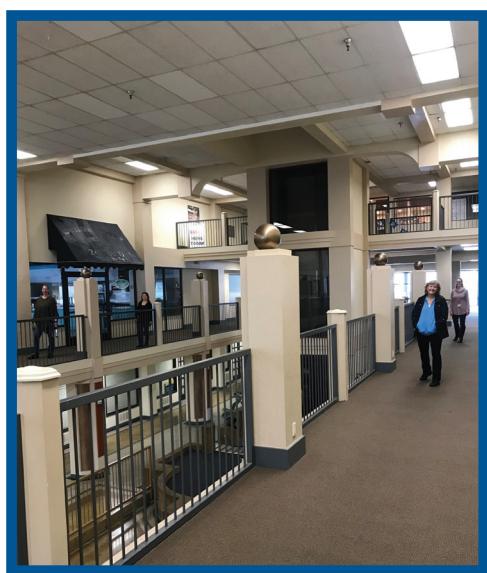
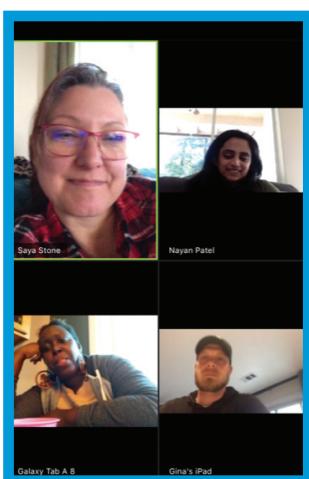
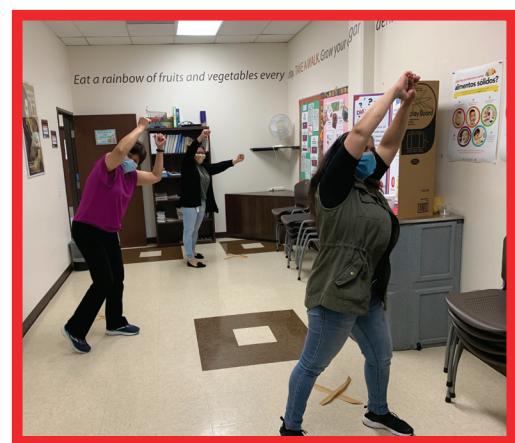
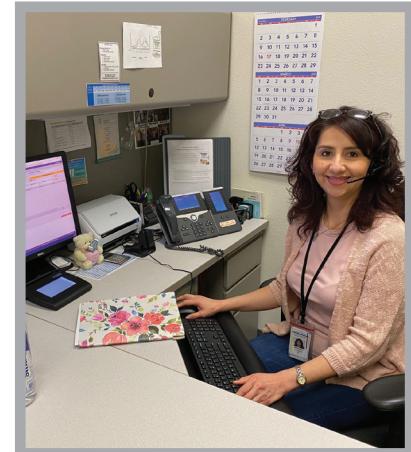
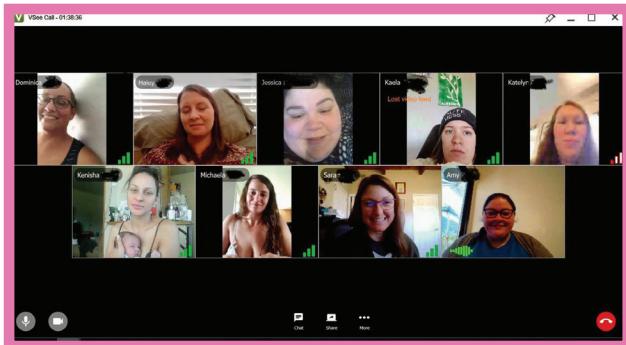
—Aldo Menhennet, WIC Director  
Tiburcio Vasquez WIC, San Leandro

*Providing WIC services by phone has been extremely effective. WIC participants are more relaxed and engaged with the WIC counselors and are asking more questions about nutrition and breastfeeding. As members of the community that they serve, WIC staff are also affected by this pandemic. Teleworking has enabled them to continue providing WIC services with limited interruption, and technology allows us to monitor staff productivity. Providing WIC services remotely has had other benefits. For example, there has been a dramatic decrease in the number of angry participants and a total elimination of conflict between participants that at times breaks out in the WIC lobbies and parking lots. Telecommuting also reduces our environmental impact and, of course, reduces COVID-19 spread in the community. In addition, our caseload has climbed sharply, by 28% in just three months, while staff absenteeism has decreased dramatically and customer satisfaction is at an all-time high.*

—Amelia Schendel, Director  
Sacramento County WIC

*The waivers have allowed us to move expeditiously into utilizing and maximizing technology to provide remote services. We hope to see some of these waivers transition into permanent policies. Our participants feel supported, and they feel like they have easier access to healthy foods.*

—Sarah Smith, Director  
Tulare County WIC



## Compassionate Reach to CA WIC

WIC services have not been interrupted during the pandemic. Doors might have been locked, but most staff have continued to work in clinics. To protect staff and participants, new ways have been instituted to ensure benefits are delivered. Staff have been meeting participants at the door, providing curbside pick-up, and in some cases providing on-site breastfeeding support.

Personal protective gear, including masks, are in high demand and often difficult to acquire. Let's connect the reach of the many helping hands. Karen Gillian, WIC Director of Merced County Community Action Partnership, and a mother, assisted in acquiring some masks through a generous donation from a family in China. Fang Yang, a parent and an international womenswear designer (whose label is called "By Fang"), wanted to support mothers in the United States. Working alongside the Merced agency connection, the Yang family donated 2,000 medical-grade masks to be used by local WIC agencies. After extensive customs approvals and delays due to reduced air freight shipments because of the pandemic, PHFE WIC staff welcomed the mask shipment. CWA had worked with the local agencies to determine need; using that information, PHFE sent masks to local WIC agency staff all across California. Thank you, Fang Yang and your family, for supporting WIC staff and mothers and their families.



PHFE WIC staff receive the masks from China.



Fang Yang with her children donated masks to CA WIC staff.



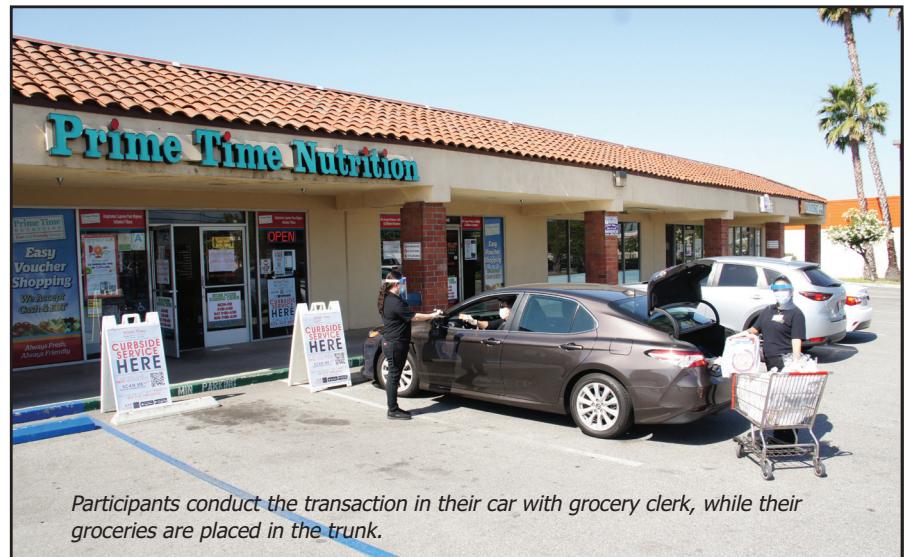
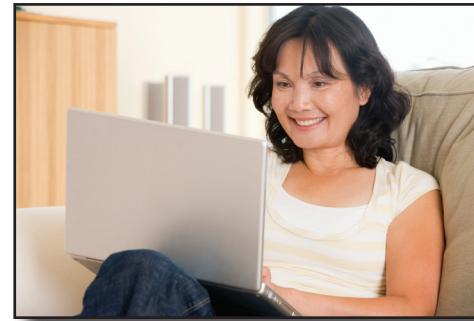
Lundquist WIC staff in Los Angeles, stay safe while using their masks.

## Online Ordering & Curbside Pick Up for WIC

Online shopping with curbside pick-up for WIC-approved foods has arrived, offering a new level of convenience and safety for WIC families. Prime Time Nutrition and Quickeroo stores have begun to roll out a custom shopping app that allows WIC families to place an order for WIC foods and have it delivered to their car or pick it up at the store's front counter at store locations in California. Mike Amiri, company CEO, explains, "Serving WIC families is the heart of our business and the reason for our existence. Providing a safe and convenient shopping experience is just the right thing to do."

The company's shopping app was designed from the ground up for WIC shoppers. Products are listed in the app by food category and makes it easy for WIC families to order sizes and quantities that correspond to typical benefit amounts. **Multiple levels of order checking are built in to ensure that a WIC shopper receives their full order.** With the app, the WIC customer selects the products they wish to purchase, the store location, date, and approximate time for pick-up. The store team reviews the order. If any items are out of stock, a team member contacts the WIC customer and assists them in making a substitution or removing the item from the order. Arriving at the store, the customer parks in a dedicated spot near the entrance and notifies the store team via their phone or enters the store to pick up their order at the front counter.

Says Amiri, "We hope to have our app and curbside pick-up available at nearly all of our stores soon. As far as I know, ours are the first stores in the nation to offer WIC online ordering with curbside pick-up. This is a great example of the value that A-50 vendors can bring to the WIC program; because WIC is our focus, we have the greatest incentive to offer a convenient shopping experience to WIC families."



Participants conduct the transaction in their car with grocery clerk, while their groceries are placed in the trunk.

**As far as I know, ours are the first stores in the nation to offer WIC online ordering with curbside pick-up.**

## Federal Policy Updates

### Public Charge

Over the last few years, CWA and thousands of other organizations have tracked the progress of the Trump Administration's proposed changes to the "public charge" rule, which was first established by Congress in 1882 in order to allow the U.S. government to deny a U.S. visa to anyone who "is likely at any time to become a public charge." For the last several decades, direct cash aid and long-term Medicaid-covered care have been the only benefits considered under public charge, but under the Trump administration, the rule is being interpreted broadly to reduce the number of people who are eligible for green cards and other visas, by redefining what makes them dependent on government benefits — or "likely" to be in the future. On August 14, 2019, the Department of Homeland

Security (DHS) published a final rule in the Federal Register relating to the public charge ground of inadmissibility, which would apply to cases decided by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). The new rule was scheduled to take effect on October 15, 2019; however, multiple federal courts issued injunctions that temporarily stopped the rule from taking effect as

**WIC is NOT a part of Public Charge**

Public programs your child uses are NOT considered for Public Charge - children under 21 are exempt.

Medi-Cal services received for prenatal care and for 60 days postpartum are NOT considered for Public Charge.

The public charge test does not include all public benefits. ONLY CalFresh, Medi-Cal, and housing assistance (Section 8) are included.

You may not be affected by the public charge test. Speak to an attorney before withdrawing from programs you or your children need to stay healthy.

[www.immigrationadvocates.org/nonprofit/legaldirectory/](http://www.immigrationadvocates.org/nonprofit/legaldirectory/)

scheduled. As the legal challenges against the new rule have continued, some of these injunctions were lifted. On January 27, 2020, the U.S. Supreme Court lifted the last remaining nationwide injunction which was preventing the rule from going into effect, and the new rule went into effect on February 24, 2020. On July 29, a federal court in New York granted a preliminary injunction against the public charge rule, ordering the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to halt enforcement of the new rule due to the COVID-19 pandemic nationwide. Then, in August, the injunction was lifted by the federal appeals court, except in New York, Connecticut, and Vermont. The public charge rule remains in place and enforceable in all other states.

#### Here are a few important points regarding public charge:

- The new programs considered for the public charge test under the expansion are SNAP, Medicaid, and Section 8 housing subsidies. Other federal programs, including

WIC, are explicitly excluded.

- Public charge does not apply to all immigrants. This law mainly impacts those seeking permanent resident status through family member petitions.
- Many immigrant categories are exempt from the public charge ground of inadmissibility, even if they might be applying for status or a green card. U visa holders, T visa holders, asylees, refugees, dependent children under 21, and other categories are exempt.
- Public charge laws do not apply in the naturalization process, through which lawful permanent residents apply to become U.S. citizens.
- On March 27, 2020, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services issued a statement exempting treatment or preventive services for COVID-19 from public charge considerations.

### Waiver Advocacy

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, local agency staff at WIC have moved quickly to adapt to the changing needs of WIC families and staff. WIC services are needed even more than ever before, but the in-person services we've always used are no longer appropriate to keep families and WIC staff safe. Fortunately, USDA granted waivers enabling WIC to serve families remotely, and loosen restrictions on the food package during supply problems and shortages. Through hard work and advocacy from the National WIC Association and WIC Ambassadors at local agencies, and WIC champions like Congressman Josh Harder and Senator Bob Casey in the legislature, the USDA waivers were extended until the end of June, and again until the end of September. In mid-September, with only weeks left until the waivers were set to expire, USDA granted a waiver extension through the end of the COVID-19 pandemic. Big thanks to NWA, local agency WIC staff and the policymakers who helped lead this effort. To learn how you can help advocate for these kinds of WIC issues, you can email Sarah to be part of local legislative visits - [sdiaz@calwic.org](mailto:sdiaz@calwic.org), and check out the National WIC Association's advocacy page: <https://www.nwica.org/advocacy>.



## State Policy Updates

### SB 142

CWA was thrilled to see Governor Gavin Newsome sign SB 142 in 2019, which we co-sponsored through the leadership of the California Breastfeeding Coalition and Legal Aid at Work, into law last October. SB 142 amends the California labor code and adds language pertaining to an employer's duty to accommodate lactating parents with regards to time and location. California's now requires employers to develop and implement



a lactation accommodation policy compliant with SB 142, including the employee's right to file a complaint with the Labor Commissioner. California employers must now provide a reasonable amount

of time to employees **each time they need to pump**, as well as provide a clean, private pumping location in close proximity to the employees work area that has seating, electricity, and a surface to put the pump, and a sink and refrigerator in close proximity. California's new law applies to ALL employers, though businesses with fewer than 50 employees may apply for an "undue hardship" exemption. CWA would like to express gratitude to Senator Scott Wiener for championing this bill, to California Breastfeeding Coalition and Legal Aid at Work for co-sponsoring, and to breastfeeding advocates throughout California for their hard advocacy work!



### Family Leave Advocacy



The California Work and Family Coalition, of which CWA is a member, has been directing their energy toward family leave legislation this season in the form of two bills: SB 138 (Jackson), and AB 3216 (Kalra). Currently, 40% of workers can be fired when taking Paid Family Leave to care for a seriously ill family member, because they work for an employer with fewer than 50 employees. Even if they pay into the state disability fund through their tax contributions and would otherwise be eligible to receive paid family leave benefits from the state, they could be fired for taking even one day of paid family leave. A 2018 survey conducted by the California Employment Development Department (EDD) determined that a top reason for not using Paid Family Leave was fear of job loss. SB 1383 ensures that millions of Californians who already pay into the Paid Family Leave insurance program – which provides up to 8 weeks



Thank you to the 41  
assemblymembers  
who voted for 6 million  
Californians to have job  
protected paid leave!



AGUILAR-CURRY	GUNNINGHAM	JONES-SAWYER	QUIRE-SILVA
AKHMETZIAN	HAN	KRUEGER	RIVELLES
BERMAN	DEEP	LEVY	RODRIGUEZ
BLOOM	FLORA	LEVINE	RIVAS
BRENNER-HORVAT	FRANCIS	LIVINSON	RODRIGUEZ
BROWN	FREEMAN	MADIGAN	SALAS
BROOK	GALLAGHER	MATENSCHEN	SANTIAGO
CALDIRON	GALLAGHER	MCINTYRE	SMITH
CASTRO	GARCIA	MULLIN	SPERBER
CHAVEZ	GARCIA	NAZARIAN	WEISSER
CHIU	GONZALEZ	GRAYSON	WILLIAMS
CHUNG	GONZALEZ	JOHNSON	WILLIAMS
COOLEY	GRIFFIN	KRISTENSEN	WILLIAMS
COOPER	HARRIS	MCINTYRE	ZUMBAUGH

FILE:54 AYE 41 NO 15 VOTE:Majority  
Senate Third Reading SB 1383 Jackson

of partial pay  
– are able to  
use this benefit  
without risking  
their job, and  
would expand  
job protected

paid leave to all employers with more than 5 employees. AB 3216 would provide 7 emergency paid sick days, expand CFRA/job protected leave for people affected by COVID-19, and would establish right of recall for workers in heavily impacted industries. At press time, both bills have passed through the legislature, and SB 1383 has been signed into law by Governor Newsom, while AB 3216 is still on the Governor's desk awaiting signature.



SB 1383 is signed by Gov. Newsom in an online event

## WIC WISE/WIC CARD ROLLOUT

**B**eginning in mid-2019, California WIC undertook the enormous task of transitioning to the California WIC Card and WIC Web Information System Exchange (WIC WISE). The [Fall 2019 WIC Watch](#) reported on early results of the rollout from Pilot through Waves 1 and 2. From then, and including the last Wave, which had to be reconfigured in accordance with COVID-19 realities, the rest of the rollout proceeded smoothly through the final Wave at the end of March 2020.

That success was due to the thorough planning that had taken place, including intensive training of the trainers who went to each WIC region and oriented WIC staff to the new procedures, then returned to mentor them through the early steps. With each new Wave, feedback from the field was integrated to make the next Wave go more smoothly.

Even COVID-19 did not stop the rollout; rapid changes were made to adopt to online trainings and support.

Vanessa Herburger with CDPH WIC interviewed WIC WISE trainers and a Service Desk manager about their experience during the rollout. She found that they were aware of how major the move was—and how beneficial. As trainer Sophia Gaultney said, "I knew that the CA WIC Card and WIC WISE were

'historic' in the sense that the quality of life for WIC participants would improve. It wasn't until a few months into the job that I realized how big California's WIC program really was, and how the quality of many lives was about to change."

Alethea Darling added, "As trainers, we were able to take back lessons learned throughout this rollout to make improvements. What we did in Wave 1 improved in Wave 9. Then in Wave 10 and with COVID-19, we had to transition this training into a WebEx session. At the end of the day, we all worked together to make this historic transition happen."

Gaultney said, "We knew we had 10 Waves, two weeks each, and 10 Go-Lives. We just kept on trudging forward and tried our best to stay healthy and be there for each other to laugh and sometimes cry about this crazy experience we were all sharing."

Trainer Dawn Darling agreed that the transition was

massive: "In 30+ years of State service, I had seen a couple of database upgrades, but nothing like what just occurred in the WIC Program. In one fell swoop, every state worker, local agency staff, and vendor would have a new way to deliver the service to WIC participants. There are so many benefits to WIC WISE, but one that everyone can see is how the WIC participant's shopping experience has been elevated to a whole new level. No more food instruments to exchange at the grocery

store—that alone is reason for a celebration."

Having trainers at the agencies during their Go-Live week was hugely helpful. Gaultney reported, "The local agency staff were so happy to have someone with them for the first couple of days during their Go-Live week. Many of us wish we could have stayed longer with them—not because they needed us, but because we just enjoyed spending that time with them.

"I remember a specific Go-Live (Long Beach)," she continued, "when a staff member in the call center brought tears to my eyes. The staff person was very involved in her phone call—I don't even know if she saw me enter the room. It was apparent that the woman on the other end of the phone was pregnant and had no family or support in California. I heard the staff member say, 'That's not true, **you do have family here. You have your WIC family now and we'll be here to support you through your pregnancy. You can reach out to us whenever you need us. We are here for you.**' These types of staff members are what makes our WIC Program a success. And these stories are not uncommon."

Gaultney shared another touching story. "One evening during the rollout, I was in line at a grocery store. A WIC participant ahead of me was having a problem buying her food because the lactose-free milk was not WIC-approved. Another employee ran back to the milk section to get the WIC-approved milk, but there was none left—COVID-19 had started to make people overbuy all kinds of items. The WIC participant had to leave every item she had on the conveyer belt because she could not afford to forfeit her entire milk allotment. I knew the cashier's hands were tied. I remember thinking, 'This is why we just have to finish this





## The WIC Card is coming!

November 2019

Healthy Foods | Breastfeeding Support  
Nutritional Information | Community Support

Women, infants & children under 5 may qualify  
Working families can apply!

**562.570.4242**

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

LONG BEACH

rollout.' I knew that in two short weeks, that WIC participant would be able to buy any food she needed without having to forfeit anything that she didn't want or the store did not have in stock."

The Service Desk staff also went through a big change in their duties. Manager Fulvio Andriolo explained that the job now involved providing phone support to the local agency community and state agency users according to the training and information provided during the rollout. She described "countless hours on the phones" assisting users, "learning and re-learning system processes as the WIC WISE system was stabilizing," and "instilling tutelage on each Wave of new users."

The success of the rollout can also be seen in the numbers. As of mid-September, nearly 800,000 cards have been issued, and over 10 million purchase transactions have taken place with them. Nearly half a million users had registered on the WIC WISE mobile app. Moreover, more than 100 state staff had attended a training, and 99% of all WIC authorized vendors had become EBT-capable, with requirements to train their staff to transact the WIC Card.

Congratulations to WIC trainers and staff for the smooth rollout and successful transition to the WIC Card and WIC WISE app. With this transition, WIC has moved fully into the digital age, improving our services and our clients' lives along with them.

### PROGRESS AS OF SEPTEMBER 11, 2020

- Cards Issued ..... 781,609
- Families Issued Benefits ..... 712,241
- Purchase Transactions ..... 10,238,827
- CA WIC App Registrations ..... 556,149



## Standing Together

Our country has an opportunity right now to acknowledge and put a stop to the horrific pain and death of Black men, women and children due to the police brutality and systemic racism that are pervasive in our streets, neighborhoods, and homes. History has provided many opportunities to undo the injustices and inequities, but we have fallen far short of where we need to be. The violent murder of George Floyd and others has spurred people to raise their voices, creating another pivotal moment where change is possible and essential.

CWA stands in solidarity with the individuals, groups, and organizations around the country who protest and condemn institutional racism and police brutality and killings of Black people. In WIC, our daily focus is on family. Our children's best futures hinge on a society that is not racist and abusive. Their eyes should not be clouded by fear or grief but shine with excitement and possibilities. Young parents must be able to imagine a full life for their children and not be fearful that they or their child will be murdered by the police or struggle needlessly because they have been shut out of opportunities. Elders deserve to see, in the time they have left, resolution of the oppression they have lived with their entire lives.

We honor and support WIC staff who both work to support WIC families who experience racism and who experience it themselves. Our work is cut out for us and we are all in.

Several CWA initiatives and strategies are moving us toward this goal.

### ● Ask the Community First Task Force

A volunteer statewide task force of thirteen local WIC and MCAH staff was established in 2015 to research, reflect and articulate community-based action items that ensure all local California WIC providers – as well as the state agency – are maximizing participation of African American women and families. The task force focused on encouraging culturally sensitive engagement via targeted outreach and marketing efforts, a carefully planned internal discernment and problem-solving process, and staff training and consciousness-raising.

Based on its survey of staff and participants and the resulting report, the task force developed and provided regional trainings for local WIC agencies. All materials can be found here: <https://www.calwic.org/what-we-do/engage-wic-families/welcoming-african-american-families/>.

At the spring 2019 conference, members of the task force were invited to meet and discuss interest in reestablishing the task force to address more opportunities for African American staff and participants.

### ● Communications

News stories, reports, advocacy, resources and other materials related to ending racism and implicit bias and improving equity have been regularly posted and shared in CWA communications and social media, including in the bi-weekly Flash newsletter, bi-annual WIC Watch magazine, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. A staff position is dedicated to communications, with the priorities of speaking out against racism and implicit bias and advocating for equity, as well as focusing on threats to immigrant populations.

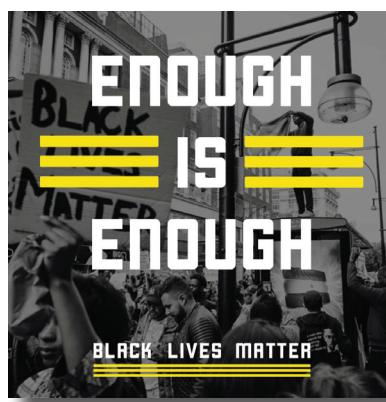
### ● Annual Conferences and Trainings

CWA conferences and trainings have prioritized equity as a key focus for presentations, either as a stand-alone topic or incorporated into workshops addressing breastfeeding, nutrition, wellness, or management.

### ● Work Force Educational Opportunities

WIC staff have two major educational opportunities: the WIC Leadership Academy and California Nutrition Corps Scholarships. Application information for both programs is provided directly to all WIC local agency Directors to be shared with staff, and it is also posted in the CWA Flash, which is received by many staff. All who apply for the Leadership Academy, operating since 2004, are accepted, and diverse membership is welcomed. California Nutrition Corps Scholarships have been available since 2003 to WIC employees completing their undergraduate or graduate degree in nutrition, public health or business, or Dietetic Internship to become a Registered Dietitian.

In the coming year and beyond we look forward to ensuring that WIC is an inclusive program for staff and participants and the hallmark of a welcoming place for all people, especially Black, Indigenous and people of color.



## Equality in Hospital Breastfeeding

There's a lot to be proud of in the latest report based on the California Newborn Screening Data as reported in the recently released annual fact sheets, [Achieving Breastfeeding Equity in California: Are hospitals doing enough to support at-risk families?](#) California continues to lead the nation in the designation of Baby-Friendly Hospitals, increasing from 34 hospitals in 2010 to 94 hospitals in 2018. For the first time,



exclusive state-wide in-hospital breastfeeding rates have reached 70.4%!  
Supportive hospital policies help all women to breastfeed their infants but policies alone are not able to eliminate disparities entirely. Therefore, we need to continue to work together to find

new interventions that can work with Baby-Friendly policies to address the diverse needs and experiences of birthing women.

As stated in the [fact sheets](#), researchers have identified several reasons why hospitals may have persistent disparities in breastfeeding rates. For example, not all mothers have the same experience with breastfeeding support even when optimal policies are in place. Differences in support may be related to limits on staff or other resources or differences in interactions with support staff as a consequence of implicit bias among hospital personnel. Even when policies and practices are standardized, differences in context, expectations, and beliefs can influence how patients experience them. If these differences are not identified and addressed, patients may be more likely to feel pressured rather than supported to breastfeed.

Working together, we can work to build on the foundation of optimal hospital policies by adding innovative, evidence-based approaches to address the needs of diverse mothers including: 1) promoting workforce development to increase

diversity, 2) bringing more peer counselors, doulas and family support workers into hospital settings, 3) using checklists so that all patients' needs are addressed, 4) making sure there is enough trained staff to implement new initiatives 5) developing partnerships with community groups, and 6) using technology to address immediate needs.

Let's build on the foundation created by widespread adoption of supportive policies to achieve breastfeeding equity in California hospitals. We must ensure that equitable structures, approaches, resources, quality improvement processes, and community partnerships are in place to meet the needs of California's diverse families.

Please visit <http://www.calwic.org/project/achieving-breastfeeding-equity-in-california/> to read more.

### We need your voice and creativity!

**Join the 2021 CWA Conference Planning Committee.**

The Spring Conference will be May 3-7, 2021. We will be hosting another virtual conference, and are hoping that we can build a solid conference planning committee with representatives of WIC agencies and offices across the state. It is important that we have a diverse set of voices and ideas so that we are presenting on topics that are relevant to you.

Please email Jodi at [jimulliganfile@calwic.org](mailto:jimulliganfile@calwic.org) if you are interested in being a part of this wonderful committee. Committee members help to plan key topic areas, identify and outreach to plenary speakers and session speakers, help to organize the wellness breaks, and decide upon themes for activities that bring our WIC family and community partners closer together.



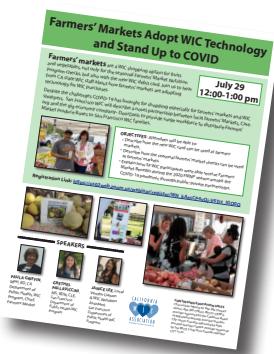
This is a time commitment of four to six hours per month until May, and committee members are responsible for outreach to at least four to six potential speakers, as well as crowdsourcing feedback from their respective coworkers and colleagues. It's a great experience to collaborate on something this big, so join us!

## Recent Webinars Address Food Insecurity & Infant Feeding

The pandemic has resulted in a lot of learning via webinar! Here are some recent learning opportunities that addressed access to fruits and vegetables and best practices for infant feeding. Many thanks to the partners and WIC staff who provided these timely updates.

- May 27 Local Partnerships Boost Access to Fruits and Vegetables
- June 10 EatSF & San Francisco WIC: A Partnership Speakers to Improve Dietary intake and Health Outcomes During Pregnancy
- July 29 Farmers' Markets Adopt WIC Technology and Stand Up to COVID
- Presented as part of the California Pediatric Obesity Collaborative Improvement and Innovation Network in partnership with CDPH/MCAH, WIC and Obesity Prevention, and California Breastfeeding Coalition
- July 16 The Baby-Led Approach to Feeding: What Does the Research Say?
- July 22 Supporting Responsive Feeding Using Baby Behaviors

You can access recordings of these webinars as well as others at <https://www.calwic.org/events/wic-works-webinars/#>



RDs at Community Medical Center WIC in Stockton also work in the health center and address diabetes and provide nutrition care.

## Nutrition and Breastfeeding Summit

With the largest nutrition and lactation workforce, WIC agencies are forming new ways to work, extending staff outside their USDA grant and working with health centers for not only maternal and early nutrition, but also pediatric, gestational and adult diabetes care, and senior nutrition. This work aligns with health care reform efforts to create new partnerships, address social determinants of health and health equity, and provides a needed work force for health care.

In 2016 with partners, CWA sponsored a first summit, and with the promising ongoing developments in health care reform, addressing whole person and value-based care, it was time for a follow up. In January, working with California Breastfeeding Coalition, California Primary Care Association and California Food Policy Advocates, a day-long summit focused on reform through *California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal* (<https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/provgovpart/Pages/CalAIM.aspx>), and shared promising partnerships between WIC lactation and nutrition experts and health centers, health plans and medical groups. Summit attendees, representing over thirty organizations, provided feedback for next steps, including continued focus on WIC integration in health centers and health care, tapping WIC Regional Breastfeeding Liaisons for this work, improved ability to bill for services through licensure or other means, and engaging additional partner organizations including through future summits. Review the Summit materials or be included in future opportunities, contact [Meghan](#) at CWA.



### Connect with CWA

Visit CWA on [Facebook!](#)  
Follow us on [Twitter!](#)  
Find us on [Instagram!](#)

(Search for California WIC Association or calwic.)



## Exclusive Milk Expression Through Fire Power Outages

In the fall of 2019, the Kincade fire was burning in Sonoma County, just north of Ashley Morales' home in Santa Rosa. At the same time, PG&E was threatening power outages because of the high winds. Ashley was worried. She was an exclusive pumper. Since the birth of her daughter, she had been using an electric breast pump from WIC. Baby Martha, who was four months old, was never able to latch to the breast. Exclusive pumpers often have very little "wiggle room" on their stash of stored milk for their baby, so losing even one day of pumping can be devastating.

Ashley was given an eight-hour voluntary evacuation notice. She made the decision to not evacuate because she needed a power outlet to pump and a refrigerator in which to store her milk. Unfortunately, the power was then turned off. Instead of leaving her home, Ashley decided to pump with a manual pump and just deal with having no lights. It was a lot of work. She had pain in her hands from pumping each breast for fifteen minutes every three hours! She pumped from both breasts a total of three to four ounces. When using the electric breast pump, she normally pumped six to nine ounces of milk.

She felt fortunate that the outage lasted only one day and



that she didn't have to pour out any of her breastmilk stash or risk affecting her supply from prolonged use of the hand pump. She had 20 ounces of stored milk in the freezer and 15 ounces in the fridge. During this stressful time, Ashley's peer counselor stayed in touch and offered support. Although the Santa Rosa WIC office was closed for four days due to the fires, the Petaluma and Sonoma offices were both open.



**CAL FIRE** **BREAKING NEWS**

**90,000 PEOPLE ORDERED TO EVACUATE**  
**HELDSBURG & WINDSOR, SONOMA COUNTY**

**KRON**  
**ON**

**PLEASANTON**

<b>NOW</b>	Clear
	<b>66</b>
WIND: W 9	
<b>TODAY</b>	Clear
	<b>82</b>
<b>TONIGHT</b>	Clear
	<b>59</b>
<b>TOMORROW</b>	Windy
	<b>71</b>

**INSIDE**  
**BAY AREA**  
**POLITICS**  
SAT & SUN  
11 AM

**macy's**

**TERANS MEMORIAL BUILDING (PEOPLE AND SMALL ANIMALS) AT 1351 MAPLE**

## Putting WIC on the Map!

The PHFE WIC Program hosted a Press Conference on Monday, February 3, 2020 at the Rosemead WIC Center to celebrate the unveiling of the California WIC Card (the California EBT card.) The Rosemead WIC Center is located in the heart of the San Gabriel Valley in Los Angeles County. Multi-ethnic staff provide WIC services to Mandarin, Cantonese, Vietnamese, Spanish and English speaking families.

Congresswoman Judy Chu attended the event. She gave a meaningful and poignant message. She stated "The new California WIC card makes transactions as quick, easy, and private as using any other credit card! And although 60% of all infants born in California receive WIC services, an estimated 11% of all mothers with recent births are eligible but still not participating. The California WIC card can help to close that gap and ensure that every child born in the state receives the care and nutrition they deserve."

Congresswoman Chu also talked about expanded Public Charge rule, and the No Federal Funds for Public Charge Act that she introduced in June 2019. She presented PHFE WIC with a Proclamation. The Mayor of Rosemead, Margaret Clark, was also in attendance and gave a brief remark about how important WIC is for the community. It was a great event!



PHFE WIC staff celebrate the new California WIC Card with local dignitaries.

Putting WIC on the Map has looked a little different since March, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Normally CWA would have joined a team of 30 or so WIC Ambassadors in our annual trip to Washington DC for NWA's Leadership Conference, where we would endeavor to personally visit every California Congressional office. In a normal year, local agency staff might have hosted more visits of legislators to their WIC sites, and we might have seen members of Congress at WIC Card Rollout celebrations, Mother's Day events, or World Breastfeeding Week shindigs. This year, that kind of travel wasn't safe, so CWA and WIC Ambassadors have had to improvise. Like so many other meetings and events – we've gone virtual. While a virtual legislative meeting isn't quite the same as a face-to-face meeting, it has allowed meetings to include more local agency staff who may not have otherwise had the time or budget to travel for a meeting, and it has allowed us to book meetings with critical members of Congress – such as those on the Education and Labor Committee that handles WIC issues – when urgent advocacy is needed for pressing issues like USDA waivers that allow WIC to continue to safely serve families during the pandemic. So far we have "met" with over a dozen members of Congress from throughout California! While we are looking forward to the day when we can again go to Capitol Hill and meet with our decision makers in person, and local WIC agencies can invite their elected officials to come experience a WIC event, we are appreciative of both local agency staff and our Congressional staff's willingness to adapt! If you're interested in virtually meeting with your representatives, contact Sarah at [sdiaz@calwic.org](mailto:sdiaz@calwic.org).

**"The new California  
WIC card makes  
transactions as  
quick, easy, and  
private  
as using any other  
credit card!"**



Congresswoman Judy Chu addresses staff at PHFE WIC's Rosemead site.



PHFE staff, Congresswoman Judy Chu and Dr. Blayne Cutler, CEO, Heluna Health, (2nd from right) enjoy photo ops.

## In Memoriam

### Adriana Sanchez (1967-2020)

**I**t would be an understatement to say that our WIC family is saddened by the loss of Adriana Sanchez. Adriana passed away on May 29, 2020 from metastatic breast cancer. Adriana was a WNA for the Yolo County WIC program for the past 20 years; prior to that, she worked at Community Resource Project (CRP) WIC. Those job titles however, are insufficient to describe all she represented to those of us who worked with her. In her 20-plus years working for Yolo County, she trained and mentored most of the staff who now work for WIC. She provided guidance for us in the art of serving the public, she had an answer to most of our technical questions, and she taught many of us a thing or two about parenting. Above all, Adriana taught us to be kind, to smile, and to have chocolate on hand for the difficult days. You could always count on her to magically summon chocolate when it was most needed.



Adriana considered work her second home, she counted both her peers and her clients as part of her extended family. **We often heard her say things like: "I greet my first and last client with the same smile" or, "At the end of the day, I just want to go home knowing that I worked my hardest today."** Many of the mothers she worked with would seek her for parenting advice on a regular basis—at times just for reassurance and a smile. This was proof that **she treated all those around her with kindness and empathy.** She chose to continue working as her body fought her cancer. Against all odds, her sense of humor reassured all of those around her—a sense of humor that never left her.

Adriana was passionate about her work, her faith, and her "miracle baby," her son Adrian. She brought a smile to our faces every day with a new story about him.

In a professional world where change is constant, few manage to become as indispensable to those around them as Adriana was to the WIC family. She will be missed every day. To us she is truly irreplaceable.

## Robin Evans

In March PHFE bid happy retirement to Robin Evans this year, after forty-three years as a member of the PHFE WIC leadership team. As Robin looks forward to the next chapter in her life, we want to ensure her dedication, love, and passion for developing diversity in dietetics in Public Health Nutrition is recognized among her peers.

Robin began her WIC career working alongside Eloise Jenks, Executive Director of PHFE WIC managing hiring, policy and procedural decisions, and guiding the rapid growth of WIC services in the Los Angeles area. In addition to her WIC duties, Robin volunteered for Meals on Wheels and the Congregate Senior Nutrition Program.

The exponential growth of PHFE WIC, to become the largest local agency in the country, created the need for more Registered Dietitians (RDNs) to provide high risk nutrition counseling for multilingual clients. In the 1990s a multicultural workforce of RDNs did not exist. Robin developed the first WIC Program Dietetic Internship (DI), focusing on preparing culturally diverse dietetic internship graduates. This involved writing the first self-study to accredit the DI with the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND). Robin has passionately encouraged, mentored, and supported 23 DI classes since the first class of 3 dietetic interns graduated in 1996.

In that time California WIC established the State Career Coordinator position, under the leadership of Nancy Nesa, and four dietetic internships. Robin has worked closely with Nancy and her DI colleagues. Diversity remains a core objective of all of the WIC DIs to ensure the healthcare workforce can serve the diverse population of California and address health disparities.

In 2008, Robin was honored again by the California



*In 2000, Robin was recognized by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, with the Diversity Action Award for efforts to recruit and retain students from diverse groups.*

WIC Association with the Legislative Advocacy Award for her work to educate state and national legislators on the benefits of WIC.

As a founding member of our Worksite Wellness "Health is Wealth" program, Robin recognized our staff of over 600, were just as much at risk for obesity as our WIC families, yet not getting personal attention regarding health and nutrition messages. Robin provided engaging presentations, such as "Preventing Chronic Inflammation" and "Preventing Diabetes" at agency-wide employee trainings., with simple illustrative examples to explain complex metabolic processes.

We will miss Robin and wish her all the best in her next adventures. She can retire knowing she made lasting changes to close the diversity gap, so dietetics professionals resemble culturally, linguistically and ethnically the communities served.

## Pat Gradziel, PhD, RD

The California WIC community thanks Pat Gradziel, fondly referred to as Dr. Pat, for her 30 years of service to the WIC program in California. With a PhD in Nutrition from Cornell University, Pat started her WIC career in 1989 as the WIC Director of the Yolo County Health Department before coming to the CDPH WIC Program in 1992. As a lead on WIC participant and local agency program research and evaluation activities, Pat managed numerous statewide and national research efforts, including evaluations of food package changes, food purchasing and consumption behaviors of WIC participants, and examination of trends related to retention, re-engagement and recruitment in the WIC program. Pat played a crucial role in maintaining the California food list and developing and implementing the regulations related to the 2009 food package changes, and was instrumental in studying and implementing formula rebate contracts. She also contributed extensively in the development



*Pat and Shannon Whaley, PHFE WIC, (R) enjoy time together as fellow scientists.*

*Continued next page*

of educational and training materials related to WIC foods for participants, staff and vendors. Pat has contributed to a long list of thoughtful and important publications about WIC program impacts that continue to be cited and to affect WIC policy changes.

Pat served on numerous committees and work groups that extended her impact outside of CDPH WIC. She represented CDPH WIC on the Maternal and Infant Health Assessment study (MIHA) starting in 2011, collaborated with the Coordinated Chronic Disease Prevention Program (CCDPP) and worked with the California Health Interview Survey (CHIS) to include additional questions relevant to WIC. Outside of California, Pat was an active member of the National WIC Association Evaluation Committee from 2010 until her retirement, coauthoring the annual NWA Research Needs Assessment Recommendations and providing input, recommendations and guidance on WIC research issues nationally. Pat also worked on two NWA task force groups to help move the dial on the food package recommendations that became our 2009 food packages. We thank Pat for working tirelessly to ensure cultural sensitivity in the new packages and for running nutrient analyses too numerous to count for a position paper on the topic.

Pat is known as a mentor of many. Her thoughtful approach to her work and her kind interpersonal style made Pat an ideal preceptor and mentor for many students and colleagues. She was also a top-notch collaborator, providing relevant advice and examples from her day-to-day work to collaborators and colleagues inside and outside of WIC. Even after her retirement, her contributions live on through her numerous collaborators.

Pat started her career as a Peace Corps volunteer, working with a remote indigenous tribal group in Mindoro, Philippines to identify available food sources that could help with seasonal food shortages and to develop and evaluate inexpensive food preservation methods. When Pat first came to California to run a county WIC program, she and Dr. Lucia Kaiser shared a position where they could both hold leadership positions part-time and be at home part-time with their young children. Pat maintained her commitment to her work and to her family throughout her career.

Pat is truly a woman of many talents, with a legacy rich in accomplishments. We thank her for her decades of commitment to WIC families.

## Linda Sinclair

I recently retired from the Humboldt/Del Norte County WIC Program as a Health Program Coordinator after almost 35 years. In March, 1985 I was hired through the Health Dept. in



Crescent City as a Vocational Assistant in an 18 month grant to keep in touch with the Spanish speaking people in Crescent City, Del Norte County. Once the WIC office next door learned I was translating for the Health Dept., I began translating for WIC. WIC offered me additional hours and so began my time with WIC. My Supervisors were Jim Sousa and Janice Crowe. They began the WIC program in Humboldt

and Del Norte County. Little would I have imagined I would be working for WIC this long! Back then, we were using the credit card machine to issue checks. That same year, I got married. Before long I was working full time for WIC and had my first child. This was wonderful as I was learning and practicing what I learned on my family and sharing with our participants. I was, and am so fortunate to have had this opportunity. In our small office of 3 with a case load of about (600 when I started) to 900, we had to do everything. I even survived E-WIC!

I am so grateful for the "real life" education I received working for WIC. Our participants come from all walks of life. Some with no problems and some with great issues. This has not changed.

WIC taught me empathy for all the folk I came in contact with. It also taught me to detach myself from emotional situations to better help our participants so that we are not burned out with all their issues. I truly believe we help many people by sowing seeds of better health for themselves and their families and for ourselves and our families.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve.



# Happy Retirements!

## Pauline Sakamoto, MS, RN, PHN

In January, the California Breastfeeding Coalition awarded Pauline Sakamoto the 2020 Legacy Award for over 30 years of service to the San Jose Mothers' Milk Bank. She started her affiliation with the milk bank as a volunteer donor 34 years ago, donating excess milk from her two kids for over three years' time. At that time, the milk bank consisted of 1.5 employees and distributed roughly 2,000 oz. of milk. She has served as a Board Member and volunteer fundraiser, bottle



washer, nurse screener, driver and collector of milk. The only hospitals using pasteurized donor milk were the 3 hospitals in Santa Clara County. In 1998, she took over the Executive Director position with 1.5 employees and \$51,000 for operations. When she stepped down from the Executive Position, the San Jose Mothers' Milk Bank continued to be the only non-

profit milk bank in operation in California and in North America. During her leadership role, she has successfully defended the operation in Federal and State review and steered legislative mandates to assure families have access to donor milk. During her tenure, she has served on the Executive Board of the Human Milk Banking Association of North America (HMBANA) and as President and Vice-President of the Executive Board of the US Breastfeeding Committee and currently serves on the Guidelines Committee and Medications Committee for HMBANA and HMBANA Representative to the USBC. She also served on the Breastfeeding Technology Committee for PATH, an NGO, and developing standards for milk banking globally. Her goal is to provide access to breastfeeding support as well as donor milk to all families. She has mentored milk banks in Portland Oregon, Missoula Montana, New England and Tokyo, Japan. Today, the San Jose Mothers' Milk Bank serves over 120 hospitals in 7 states, over 65% of the NICUs in California and multiple infants in the home including Medi-Cal recipients. With a staff of 20 employees and a new building in 2016, over 512,000 oz. of milk were distributed in 2019. She wants to thank the WIC personnel in California and Nevada for playing a large role in assuring the Milk Bank receives donor milk for the families we serve. Without WIC, there would be less success for breastfeeding mothers. Pauline continues her work as the Operations and Regulatory Consultant for the San Jose Mothers' Milk Bank.

## Sonja Beck

Sonja Beck, Breastfeeding Coordinator for the Antelope Valley WIC Program retired in March 2020. Sonja worked for the AV WIC Program for 35 years.

Over the last 35 years, Sonja elevated breastfeeding support and education for WIC staff, participants and Antelope Valley community. Sonja implemented the electric pump loan program at our WIC Program, she encouraged WIC staff to become Certified Lactation Educators, mentored staff to obtain their IBCLC, fought to get WIC CLE's in the hospital to provide breastfeeding support to WIC moms and assisted our hospital with obtaining the Baby Friendly Designation.



Sonja supervised our Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program and in 2016, we received the WIC Loving Support Gold Premiere Level Award for Exemplary Breastfeeding Support and Practices. She helped to establish the Antelope Valley Breastfeeding Coalition and received the 2017 Valiant Effort Award.

Sonja wanted the best for our community and was instrumental in bringing top rated experts in the field of breastfeeding to the Antelope Valley such as Dr. Thomas Hale, author of *Mother's and Medication* and Karen Peters, Lead lactation consultant for Birth and Beyond (California Breastfeeding Training and Quality Improvement Project).

Sonja's enthusiasm for her work with the WIC Program continued to be evident even after 35 years of employment. The WIC staff and breastfeeding advocates in the Antelope Valley will miss her.

In Sonja's words, "My career at WIC started in 1985. I was a first time mom with a 6 month old breastfeeding infant. Antelope Valley WIC served a few hundred participants at the time. I had a second child who I also breastfed and so the position of Breastfeeding Coordinator was offered to me. That really fueled my passion for breastfeeding and I would go on to earn my CLE and then IBCLC.

Why have I stayed at WIC all these years? The people. Families that needed support and help with breastfeeding were getting what they needed at our agency and I am very proud to have been a part of that. My co-workers are a group of people that I enjoy and can share a common goal with. They have been with me through life's ups and downs, we are family.

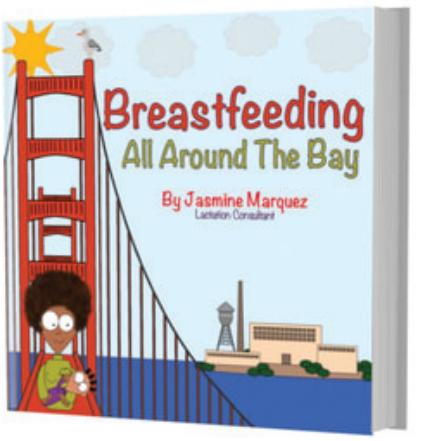
My time with WIC is ending and I am grateful for the journey!"

## Jasmine Marquez

Last spring I slowly plugged along with writing and illustrating my first children's board book, *Breastfeeding All Around The Bay*. It's something I've always wanted to do and after having my daughter, Margot, I was inspired to make it happen.

In the many board and picture books I have for Margot, not one shows a baby being breastfed, few have Black characters, and none show interracial families, so I wrote and illustrated a book that has all of the above. It is important to me that my daughter grows up reading stories that have families that look like ours.

My hope is that *Breastfeeding All Around The Bay* helps normalize breastfeeding in public while also bringing much needed diversity to children's literature.



Sacramento). I learned so much about the world of breastfeeding and became an advocate for WIC and everything it stands for.

*Breastfeeding All Around the Bay* is currently available for purchase through my website, [BreastfedBaybies.com](http://BreastfedBaybies.com), and on [Etsy.com](https://www.etsy.com). Bulk pricing is also available.

Jasmine (Pettis) Marquez, MPH, IBCLC

Board Certified Lactation Consultant

BreastfedBaybies | Bay Area Lactation Consulting

Instagram: @breastfedbaybies

## Serene Knight

Hello! I am Serene Knight, belly dancer, licensed massage therapist, WIC mom, and author of three children's books: Bucky, Life Is Like That You Know, and Kaya's Journal, which children love. In my first book, Bucky, an old squirrel called Bucky, who in his youth fell in love with a chipmunk, is now dying of old age in a pile of autumn oak leaves under Grandfather Tree. The story is continued in Life is Like That You Know, where years later, Bucky's old stomping grounds have become a park, and a young bongo player is sitting underneath Grandfather Tree. There he meets the love of his life, a belly dancer, and later they have a baby girl named Kaya. Kaya's Journal, my third book, is a coming of age story that follows Kaya's journey after she is gifted a trip to Hawaii and sets out to discover the true meaning of Aloha. These books can be purchased on Amazon.

I recently gave birth to my first child, a beautiful baby girl named Jade. I needed help to be educated and prepare for this new experience – WIC helps explain breastfeeding and nutritional needs. The staff at my WIC office in Siskiyou County is wonderful. This support and confidence is absolutely essential to me. Thank you WIC!!!!



## CNC Scholarship Winners

**S**ince 2003, WIC has provided scholarships to WIC employees who are completing their undergraduate or graduate degree in nutrition, public health or business, or Dietetic Internship to become a Registered Dietitian. Here are the stories of two recent California Nutrition Corps Scholarship winners.

**Terri Saldana León** began working at Family Health Network WIC in 2017. Her goal of becoming a registered dietitian nutritionist took her through 13 years of training, including, she recalls, "the last half of high school, two undergraduate institutions, one graduate institution, five employments, and four volunteer experiences." Thanks to WIC's CNC scholarship, she has now completed her dietetic internship with the Central Valley WIC Dietetic Internship program. Terri decided to become an RD because, she says, "I wanted to give the most credible advice to the people I work with."



Terri's parents immigrated from Mexico six months before her birth. Her dad, she recalls, "instilled [the value of] higher education for me and my siblings. Most of my family barely have a high school diploma and our social circles did not really encourage a college education, or there was the lack of support, whether

financially or academically, that prevented many of my family members from pursuing a college degree."

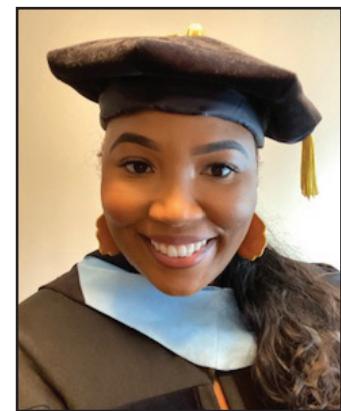
Terri wants to encourage and mentor others with backgrounds similar to hers to become registered dietitians, to "remove some of the mental and financial barriers that Latino students face," she said, and to bring "culturally appropriate, evidence-based nutrition information" to her community. "I want to be someone who looks like them, who people can turn to for nutrition advice relevant to their background." She says, "Working with the WIC program has allowed me to help empower those in my community to make healthy choices and find support in their own community for better nutrition and healthcare."

**Toncé Jackson** has come quite a ways to recently receiving her Doctorate in Educational Leadership. Dr. Jackson relates, "Starting my journey as a WIC Clerk in 2007, I had no idea that in 2020 I would be PHFE's Health Equity Manager, co-creator of CinnaMoms breastfeeding and motherhood program and Chair of the National WIC Association Maternal Mortality Task Force." This month she reported on the Task Force findings at the NWA conference, on a panel with US Surgeon General, VADM Jerome M. Adams M.D., M.P.H.

Toncé's studies looked at the social disparities that affect families using WIC services. She says, "At my local agency, I am determined to incorporate health equity into our WIC processes, policies, and procedures," including into future trainings of the new WIC WISE system. "There are questions about sexual orientation and gender identity, food and housing insecurity," she notes, "that may result in health equity issues if not addressed properly."

Now on the research and evaluation team at PHFE, Toncé explains that her focus is on "maternal and infant health outcomes, implicit bias, cultural humility, and childhood obesity." She plans to highlight the role of WIC in "closing the nutrient intake gap to improve health outcomes." She also wants to work with the agency's clinical partners to monitor the blood pressure of prenatal and postpartum participants.

Overall, Toncé describes her professional goals to be "integrating health equity across all WIC services, reducing breastfeeding inequities, and uplifting the voices of WIC participants to inform and transform service delivery." And her goals don't stop there: "I also want to become an adjunct professor and prepare for the Master's in dietetics degree shift. I want to be in position to facilitate learning for the next generation of RDs and public health practitioners."



# Congratulations!



## California Nutrition Corps Scholarship Winners

### Alejandra Arellano

South LA Health Projects  
Graduate Student

### Toncé Jackson

PHFE  
Graduate Student

### George Verastegui

Mendocino County  
Graduate Student

### Joanna Alejandra

Campos American Red Cross  
*Stefan Harvey Scholarship*

### Carlos Rojas Munoz

Riverside County  
*Anne Peterson Memorial Scholarship*

### Rocio Montes

West Oakland Health  
*Shirlee Runnings Scholarship*

### (Vanessa) Oi Ling Chan

PHFE  
*Anne Garrett Memorial Scholarship*

### Terri Saldana

Gardner Family Health  
*Dietetic Internship*

### Stephanie Macias

PHFE  
*Dietetic Internship*

### Olga Barraza

PHFE  
*Dietetic Internship*

### Sarah Alarid

Fresno EOC  
*Dietetic Internship*

## CALIFORNIA NUTRITION CORPS



**CNC**  
Meet the Future!

**EMPOWERED**  
CALIFORNIA FAMILIES

**UNITE, INSPIRE, UPLIFT**



### California Nutrition Corps Scholarship Recipients 2019—2020

*Congratulations to all awardees!*

#### Stefan Harvey Scholarship

Joanna Alejandra Campos, American Red Cross WIC

*This special scholarship honors the distinctive achievements of Stefan Harvey, former Director of the WIC Project at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities in Washington, DC. Ms. Harvey, who is Assistant Director of the California Center for Public Health Advocacy, led national advocacy for the WIC Program during its first 25 years.*

#### Anne Peterson Memorial Scholarship

Carlos Rojas Munoz, Riverside County WIC

*We dedicate this scholarship to the memory of a beloved WIC state colleague, Anne Peterson, whose unique blend of operational and technical skills combined with her passion for the WIC Program's mission. Anne really embodied the "heart and soul" of what it means to work in the WIC Program.*

#### Anne Garrett Memorial Scholarship

Vanessa (Oi Ling) Chan, PHFE WIC

*We dedicate this scholarship to the memory of Anne Garrett, RN, IBCLC and Breastfeeding Coordinator for San Mateo County WIC. Anne's professional dedication embodied the spirit of WIC, providing tireless leadership and mentoring at the local, state and national levels, and helped ensure California WIC would have the highest standards of breastfeeding support and standards of care.*

#### Shirlee Runnings Scholarship

Rocio Montes, West Oakland Health WIC

*Shirlee's actions showed how an individual can make a historic difference and better serve families for generations to come. When fruits and vegetables were being recommended for the WIC food package, Shirlee initiated local efforts to prove that WIC mothers purchased healthy fruits and vegetables, testified before Congress with her findings, and that information was used in the decisions to include fruits and vegetables in the WIC food package.*

#### Dietetic Internship

Edgar Alvarado, Riverside County WIC  
Terri Saldana, Gardner Family Health WIC  
Sarah Alarid, Fresno EOC WIC  
Stephanie Macias, PHFE WIC  
Olga Barraza, PHFE WIC

#### Graduate Students

Alejandra Arellano, Lundquist WIC  
Toncé Jackson, PHFE WIC  
George Verastegui, Mendocino WIC

## Leadership Attendees

### 2019 WIC Leadership Academy

Angela Abbott .....	PHFE WIC
Barinderjeet Bambhra .....	Delta Health Care
Lizeth Betancourt.....	Yolo County Health & Human Services WIC
Wendy Ceja-Garcia .....	PHFE WIC
April Eagan .....	Inyo County HHS
Maria Flores .....	LA Biomed/SLAHP
Sandy Friedman .....	Community Medical Centers Inc WIC
Jasmin Garcia.....	Community Action Partnership of Kern
Sandra Henderson .....	PHFE WIC
Sandra Herrera.....	United Health Centers
Yu Horng Nguyena.....	City of Long Beach WIC Program
Ana Klanjac.....	San Mateo County Health WIC Program
Ruben Lopez .....	PHFE WIC
Nelly Mallo .....	PHFE WIC
Camille Medina .....	Delta Health Care WIC
Alda Menhennet .....	Tiburcio Vasquez WIC
Rhea Napeek....	Yolo County Health & Human Services WIC
Blanca Perez .....	Merced County Community Action Agency
Veronica Plaugher-Macias .....	Stanislaus County Health Services Agency
Basthy Ramirez.....	PHFE WIC
Grethel Richmond Pallavicini.....	City and County of San Francisco
Sarah Smith .....	Tulare County WIC
Karen Steppat .....	Shasta County WIC
Jennifer Torres .....	PHFE WIC
Andrea Vega-Harris.....	LA Biomed/SLAHP
Lisa Westfall.....	Mendocino County WIC
Vivan Wong.....	County of Santa Clara

*Loved this experience! Hope it is not too late to submit. The leadership academy was an amazing experience, to grow, learn and explore ways to become better leaders. I truly enjoyed the activities and the different assignments to help us reflect and challenge what we currently know or are doing in the agency.*

— Angela Abbot, PHFE

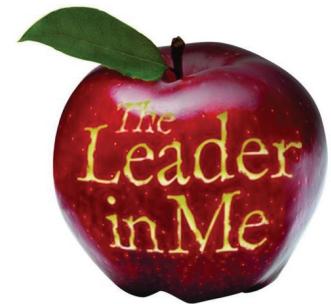
*Participating in the Leadership Academy was an invaluable experience to not only learn from an instructor with a wealth of information, but to also learn from a cohort, each with their unique skill-sets and insights.*

*Being part of this Academy allowed me the opportunity to expand my capabilities to grow as an individual and also enabled me to cultivate my abilities to effectively lead others. Thanks again to CWA for this wonderful opportunity! Stay safe! —*

— Barinderjeet Bambhra, Delta Health Care WIC

*I enjoyed the Leadership Academy very much, and the experience has been invaluable to me. It was a privilege to attend. I appreciated the camaraderie and support, and it was especially helpful to be in a room with other supervisors and managers with similar stories and struggles to my own. What I learned from the instructor, the concrete information she gave and the way she had us process the information for ourselves, continues to influence my work for the better every day. Thank you.*

— April Eagan, Inyo County WIC



## Become a WIC Ambassador!

Although WIC serves over 7 million parents, infants and children throughout the U.S. (roughly 1 million of whom reside in California), there are still an abundance of misconceptions about WIC – what it offers, why it's important, and who can use it – among the general public and, concerningly, among policymakers who make decisions about the funding and structure of the program. The California WIC Association (CWA) has been working to combat these misunderstandings for years, and in recent years has been growing a multi-pronged approach to raise awareness of WIC – what it provides, who it serves, the positive health outcomes it supports – and especially to cultivate relationships with state and national lawmakers and their staff. Over a dozen legislative visits have been made to WIC sites in the last two years, and California has been able to secure appointments with the majority of our 55 national legislators during our NWA Leadership trips. Have you ever wanted to connect with your member of Congress to talk about WIC issues? Invite your California Assemblymember to come for a visit to your WIC site? Maybe you're a former WIC parent who wants to talk about the difference that WIC made for your family! CWA can help you make those connections, which in turn lets decisionmakers know how critically important WIC is, and what the program needs from them to be the best it can be for families. Check out some WIC Ambassador tools here: <https://www.calwic.org/policy-center/wic-ambassadors/>, and watch a presentation on WIC Ambassadorship here - <https://youtu.be/P-pqxNwxitQ>.





**California WIC Association**  
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West Sacramento, CA 95691

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**Save  
the Dates**

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