

WNY Food As Medicine Coalition Newsletter



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Over the past year, more than fifty regional organizations have been meeting regularly for discussion and learning opportunities as the Western New York Food As Medicine Coalition. Driven by passion, evidence-based data, and upcoming policy changes, we are all trying to find preventive and holistic ways for dealing with diet-related diseases through food as medicine interventions

The Center for Science in the Public Interest has reported nutrition- and obesity-related diseases such as heart disease, cancer, and type 2 diabetes contribute to approximately 678,000 deaths each year in the United States. In our Western New York counties, obesity rates range from 30-38.4% according to the 2021 NY State Department of Health 2021 Report. Knowing these statistics, working together to turn the tide on this public health crisis becomes imperative.

Whether you are involved in community-based organization, non-profit, healthcare institution, medical study, private sector, or personal mission, the Coalition is a place to share success as well as to learn how to meet challenges together. To keep connections flowing, the BNMC Health and Well-Being Department and the Coalition have started this newsletter. In these pages you can meet the people and organizations advancing our work, explore best practices using case studies, and learn about the Food As Medicine events happening throughout our community. We hope this will become a valuable resource for those devoted to this worthwhile cause.

In Good Health,
The BNMC Department of Health and Well-being

WNY Food As Medicine Coalition

A regional coalition formed to share and support our organizational Food As Medicine efforts by: educating and creating awareness; enhancing research and advocacy; and bridging local, state, and national initiatives.

Our Pillars

- Education
- Research & Policy
- Service Implementation

Any questions please contact
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Introduction to Western New York Integrated Care Collaborative

By Nikki Kmicinski, MS, RD, CDN, Executive Director



Western New York Integrated Care Collaborative or "WNYICC" is a regional Network of 48 community-based organizations (CBOs) servicing 15 counties in Western NY. As the Community Care Hub of the Network, WNYICC's role is to advocate for CBOs and pursue innovating funding arrangements allowing for the integration of the social care services, including Food As Medicine Programs, provided by our Network Members with the clinical care provided by medical providers. WNYICC provides centralized administration for CBOs to be able to participate in contracts with health care entities. WNYICC has over 25 contracts with health plans to deliver programs to health plans' beneficiaries which are reimbursed.

WNYICC has several Food As Medicine programs contracted with health plans:

- Post-Discharge Meals Delivery Program: assists participants with their transition to home by delivering up to 28 meals upon discharge after an overnight stay in an acute care facility.
 - We served over 640 participants in 2022 and are on pace to for over 900 participants in 2023.
- Medical Nutrition Therapy Program: Registered Dietitians provide nutrition counseling.
 - This program launched in October 2022. Our RD's have already counseled over 35 people.
- Diabetes Prevention Program: CDC-Recognized lifestyle change program
- Diabetes Self-Management Education and Support Program- Accredited by the Association
- Diabetes Care and Education Specialists (ADCES)

Medically Tailored Meals Program – launching in 2023.



Eat Well Buffalo

Eat Well Buffalo (EWB) is an organization that works with community groups and individuals in Western New York to increase the awareness about the importance of a healthy lifestyle and diet in preventing disease as well as possibly reversing disease. One of the groups we work with manages a Buffalo Public Schools Saturday Morning Academy at the Dr. Charles Drew Science Magnet School #59. The Academy meets at least once a month and is open to students at all grade levels and their families. EWB conducts healthy food discussions and hands on activities at these sessions to provide tips and strategies about healthy eating. Each Saturday session revolves around a different theme, such as, Tech-Tok, STEM-Tastic, and Merry Mental Health and EWB connects nutrition and healthy eating with the themes.

The most recent theme was Math is Everywhere and as we know, math is everywhere in the kitchen, cooking and nutrition. Measuring, dividing, fractions, planning and problem solving are just a few math applications we discussed. We focused on the USDA MyPlate example along with the basic food groups to demonstrate the health benefits each food group represents. We provided samples of a variety of foods including, whole grain crackers, carrots, cheese sticks, blueberries, popcorn, celery, roasted chickpeas and a whole grain cereal. Each student/family identified where the different foods fit on the plate and talked about the nutritional benefit of the foods. These Saturday sessions are very well attended and EWB's goal is to provide the students and their families a better understanding of the importance of their food choices. By discussing the nutritional benefits of each food and the nutritional synergy of eating certain foods together we are trying to encourage them to consider food in a more positive and healthy light.

What We Need!

WNYICC is seeking additional Meals Delivery partners interested in delivering 3 meals per day as well as looking for more Network Members and health care partners. Please reach out to us at <https://www.wnyicc.org/Contact>.

Big Big Table, Inc. is a pay-as-you can Community Café addressing hunger, reducing food waste, and building community. Help is needed with Food Prep & Service, Donation Collection, Education & Outreach, Fundraising. To get involved and fill out the form, please visit www.bigbigtable.org/get-involved





Field & Fork Network Policy Advocacy Update By Cooper Rohan



Field & Fork Network runs Double Up Food Bucks NY (DUFBNY), a SNAP nutrition incentive program that matches SNAP purchases \$1 for \$1 to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables, with an emphasis on locally grown produce. We were mostly funded through the USDA GusNIP grant program until receiving our first ever appropriation in the state budget last year for \$2 million. With the pandemic drastically increasing the rates of food insecurity in NYS, we went from distributing approximately 100k in DUFBNY in 2019 to over 850k in 2022, which led to our decision to seek additional state funding. This year, we are requesting the inclusion of \$4 million in the state budget, but we are excited to share that we have been included in the Senate One House budget proposal for \$3 million! While this is excellent news, the fight is not over, and we will continue working until the final budget is enacted.

In order to get to this point, it took a very strategic and organized approach in developing our advocacy campaign plan. We identified champions in the NYS Senate and Assembly that would write letters of support to share amongst their colleagues in Albany. We also focused on key committees such as the Agriculture and Social Services Committees and targeted these members to meet with and rally their support for our funding request.

In total, our multi-faceted approach consisted of meeting with over 50 different legislators, submitting written testimony, holding a lobby day in Albany, conducting a social media campaign, and sending out press releases with news outlets to share our progress. In order to get involved with your own issue advocacy, use this link to determine who your local, state and federal representatives are today: <https://myreps.datamade.us/>.



EVENTS

Food as Medicine Global Conference May 18-21- Virtual

Centers around nourishing community food systems featuring inspiring leaders working in the intersections of food, health, community, social justice, and planetary wellbeing. Registration at: <https://www.foodasmedicine.global/2023-Conference>

Food As Medicine National Summit (Tufts) April 26th - Streaming

Leaders across healthcare and policy meet to share and highlight advances, best practices, challenges, and next directions in FIM. The convening will build on momentum and actions from the 2022 White House Conference on Nutrition, Hunger and Health to advance Food is Medicine nationally. <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/food-is-medicine-national-summit-transforming-health-care-tickets-558130221517>

National Anti-Hunger Policy Conference from May 7-9 – Hybrid

Join FRAC, Feeding America, and thousands of advocates from all across the country to network, attend workshops, and exchange best practices. #Hungerpc23 <https://lnkd.in/e8tJmAbQ>

2023 Sugar Reduction Summit April 25- Three day Virtual

CSPI will bring together public health professionals, researchers, advocates, philanthropic sector, thought leaders, and other stakeholders working in the field of sugar and sugary drink reduction. The event is designed to deepen conversation and learning about evidence-based policies that will reduce the sales and consumption of sugar and sugary drinks, while building community capacity for advocacy, improving health, and centering health equity. The Summit is not open to food and beverage industry professionals. Register here today: <https://lnkd.in/enSY6DHj>