

## Connecting for Success: Bridging the Gap Through Collaboration

### Welcome

**Roberto Salazar, Administrator, Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Alexandria, VA**

Good afternoon and welcome, ladies and gentlemen, to the opening session of the United States Department of Agriculture's Second National Nutrition Education Conference. Please take a look around you. There are over 750 nutrition educators and program managers from all of the Food and Nutrition Services Programs from all levels, from local to national. There are folks from other federal agencies, as well as many of our public and private sector partners.

Thank you all for being here. Thank you for taking time out of your busy lives to come together and to make some connections. It is about having that opportunity to connect with each other here at this conference. I hope you do that, because every one in this room, every single one of you, is interested in improving the nutrition and physical activity behaviors of all Americans—especially those who are in most need.

You are going to have a great opportunity to learn about USDA's nutrition priorities and current and emerging initiatives. You will have a chance to hear from your colleagues and learn about new resources, new tools available to help you implement nutrition education programs that really work.

You have definitely come to the right conference, ladies and gentlemen. Our action-packed agenda with outstanding speakers provides you many opportunities to apply your networking and partnership skills as we work together to coordinate nutrition education across the Food and Nutrition Service programs and improve collaboration among State and community partners.

Most of all, make sure you make connections with others here at the conference. Our combined nutrition education efforts are so extremely important because the Food and Nutrition Service programs reach one in five Americans each year, giving us the potential to make a very positive impact on the lives of millions of Americans, especially and particularly the populations that experience a disproportionate share of diet-related problems and risk factors, including overweight and obesity.



## Keynote Address

### Charles F. Connor, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC

Secretary Mike Johanns specifically asked me to do several things here today since he was not able to be with you today as he is in Kansas. The first of those things was to recognize Eric Bost. Eric is an outstanding leader, he is a dedicated public servant and his work has done a great deal to improve the well-being of millions of Americans.

We are really honored to have Eric for the tremendous job that he is doing. With your help and with Eric's participation he is doing what most of us believe is some of the most important work that can occur in this Nation: helping those with limited resources achieve healthier and better lifestyles. So, Eric, thanks for being such a humanitarian and for being here with us today.

We are here because we share more than the same commitment and goals. We have a lot of common understanding on these issues, but we are here for a broader context as well. We share the need to touch base, ladies and gentlemen, with each other. We need to strengthen the collaboration that moves these programs to the States and into the hands of those who achieve so much for so many, and that is part of our goal here today.

The 2003 conference was truly historic, and we were honored to be a part and the instigators of that conference. It was the first time we brought everyone together and the interest then, as it is now, continues to be tremendous. Certainly the idea of healthier lifestyles has become even more prominent since 2003.

Nutrition educators, managers, and others working in all Federal nutrition assistance programs--from all across the country and at all levels of government--came together in 2003 to share their experiences and lay out plans. Now we are here to build on that partnership and, hopefully, keep that momentum going. I have some direct results from the 2003 conference that I will share with you today.

Before I do, I want to express again my deep concern, and that of Secretary Johanns, for the FNS employees and our cooperators at the State and local levels and all of our citizens affected by the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. I ask you to take back home our appreciation to everyone on the FNS team and our partners at the State who couldn't be here today because they are working tirelessly to get food into the hands of hurricane victims.

It would not be appropriate for them to be here at a time when they are needed for the distribution of life-giving food. Immediate human need is USDA's first priority, and you are at the heart of that effort.

My thanks to those from our Dallas Regional Office who drove to Baton Rouge in the early days of the crisis. Our Atlanta and Dallas regional offices have worked around the clock, 24 hours a day from the start and now, as evacuees move farther around the country, all FNS regions, as well as headquarters, are doing a tremendous job to aid their fellow Americans who have been so badly hurt by this event.

To prepare for the storm, as many of you know, USDA stored food in warehouses in Louisiana and Texas. This proactive decision made supplies more readily available to help those stricken by the hurricane almost immediately after it subsided.

Since then we have delivered more than 14 million pounds of food and baby formula and formula products. The Secretary has liberalized the Food Stamp Program and, to speed benefits to people displaced in their communities, he has authorized us to preload electronic benefits of up to \$50 in assistance on EBT cards.

Finally, we have encouraged States to take advantage of this offer as another way to assist people in moving from shelters to temporary housing so they can buy food immediately, since they have absolutely no other means to do so—in some cases, evacuated from their homes without identification; without anything.

To date, USDA has earmarked more than \$50 million in emergency food assistance for survivors. We are prepared to do more, if necessary, in order to make sure that these people are taken care of. We are increasing assistance available to those who are already receiving food stamp benefits, and we are providing food stamps to people who have never been on the program before in a very expedited fashion, thanks to the cooperation at the State level.

We are making sure that displaced students are receiving free school lunches in this process as well. This is critical, life-saving work and the Nation, I believe, sees and appreciates all of your tremendous efforts.

From time to time we have an opportunity in these kinds of positions where occasionally we feel like we're going through the motions and it is another day at work. But once in a while those opportunities present you a chance to know you are making a difference in people's well-being for the future. This is one of those cases where each one of you can take pride in knowing that lives are being saved as a result of our actions. We truly do appreciate that.

But you and I know that the core of what you are doing for the hurricane survivors is what many of you do every single day across the country. You are there in crisis and in routine. When Fox News and CNN may or may not be there, you are there and you see those who need and receive food assistance, and you make sure that they receive that with dignity and respect.



At the first conference 2 years ago our goal was to find a way to strengthen cooperation and maximize effectiveness. This afternoon I would like to give you a quick overview of the progress that has been made in that regard.

When President Bush launched the HealthierUS initiative, in 2002, it was more than an outline of the staggering costs of poor diet and physical inactivity. Those costs in health are obesity and range in illness from heart disease to diabetes. In dollar terms we can attribute to those two events more than \$120 billion in costs.

The President's initiative challenged us to see the whole problem and, of course, to do something about it. It challenged us to bring all resources at all levels to work as partners to improve America's fitness and health. To put this issue in the spotlight, USDA's 2004 agricultural outlook forum for the first time ever explored the connection between diet and health.

USDA felt that the barrage of media attention and information surrounding this subject--conflicting diet and weight loss plans, along with the implications of childhood nutrition, exercise, and health costs--had served to confuse the issue and create uncertainty in the public. USDA speakers looked at the Federal role in nutrition and educating Americans about healthy eating and about the importance of balanced diets.

Studies show that most people understand the health risks of poor diet and lack of exercise. But of course the problem is most Americans don't act on this information and, certainly, few change their lifestyles. There is a tough job to be done here, to communicate nutrition science in ways that empower the public and individuals that give them the skills and the motivation to take action.

Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services has made progress in this area, and I use the word "progress." We are working with partners in a number of projects that will help move Americans toward a healthier lifestyle. We are also recognizing schools meeting the HealthierUS School Challenge. They are changing their nutritional environments by offering students more nutritious, healthier choices in their lunch programs.

All of these changes require solid science-based information, and I will acknowledge that we are making progress in these areas, but also note that much, much more remains to be done.

Earlier this year USDA and the Department of Health and Human Services issued the 2005 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. For more than a century USDA has provided nutrition guidance that is constantly evolving with the Nation's needs and the growing science behind diet and lifestyle.

The *Dietary Guidelines* will help Americans live longer, healthier better lives if they put these recommendations into practice in their daily lives.

To give them the tools to personalize their approach to healthier choices, we also unveiled *MyPyramid* this year. This guidance system recognizes that one-size-fits-all has not worked. The online tools provided by *MyPyramid.gov* are among our many efforts to move Americans to healthier lifestyles, and we are updating the WIC Food Package, the School Meal Patterns, and the Thrifty Food Plan to comply with the new dietary guidance.

Two years ago, at the first Nutrition Education Conference, FNS convened State networking sessions that led to a new partnership and State Nutrition Action Plans. This is a perfect opportunity to connect our nutrition education and promotion efforts and reach more people in the process.

Thanks to all of you, to State and local leaders, most States and territories have now developed these plans and are putting them into action on the ground. This administration appreciates your enthusiasm for this kind of change, because I know change is often difficult.

We appreciate your willingness to explore new connections that cut across programs and jurisdictions within your own State agencies. This is one example of a network that makes better use of our separate strengths. It sharpens our goals, maximizes our effectiveness and helps us do a better job for the people that we serve.

We need all of you as partners, ladies and gentlemen, to make these efforts truly successful. We need the power of each and every community. That is why we support handing responsibility for developing wellness policies to the local districts, starting with the 2006-2007 school year.

Communities can best address the needs of their nutrition program participants and the general public. They can support the positive eating and health behaviors that work for them at the local levels in ways that we just simply cannot dictate from Washington. This is the philosophy of collaboration that is at the heart of President Bush's vision for a healthier Nation that connects people with the nutrition assistance that they need.

That is why the President's budget for 2005 supports our nutrition and health message with about \$623 million of nutrition education as part of the WIC, Child Nutrition and Food Stamp Programs. In terms of policy, USDA is looking ahead to the 2007 farm bill with forums across the country that are giving citizens, the citizens we serve, a voice in the development of a new farm bill and the nutrition policies that are a key part of that farm bill.

Under Secretary Bost will be hosting a series of nutrition forums starting September 29th and 30th in New York City and Cheyenne, Wyoming. These specialty sessions will focus largely, but not exclusively, on nutrition and food issues. I urge you to submit your comments both at these forums and at USDA's Farm Bill Forum website.



With a number of FNS programs up for reauthorization in the 2007 farm bill, the administration, I can assure you, remains committed to ensuring that every single eligible person has access to Federal nutrition assistance. We are committed to building on and improving these programs. They are the nutritional foundation for so many working Americans and their families.

Perhaps never before has the absolute importance of this foundation been so clear. Perhaps never before has your work, your knowledge, and your sensitivity been called on to do so much for so many.

At this unparalleled time of natural disaster we, as a nation, are committed to meeting the most basic, urgent needs of our citizens. The American people have seen the face of hunger in the last 2 weeks and the need for basic nutritional assistance in this large swath that has been cut through our southern region.

I believe I can speak for them in saying our thank you to each one of you for your partnership, your compassion and all that you do every day, but especially at this moment for the actions you are taking for those Americans so adversely affected. I thank you very much again for your partnership and for all of your efforts. Thanks, Eric.

### Opening Remarks

#### **Eric M. Bost, Under Secretary, Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC**

Good afternoon and welcome. We are so pleased to have all of you here.

A number of the statistics that I am going to share with you, you already know. But I think it is important for me to mention them because I want to set it up for 30 seconds.

Sixty-two to 63 percent of all American adults are overweight; 30 percent-plus are obese. We have seen a doubling in the rate of Type 2 diabetes among children in this country. \$123 billion is spent as a direct result of us eating too much of the wrong thing.

In addition to that, Disney World had to make its turnstiles bigger because we were getting stuck in them. They are charging us extra at Southwest Airlines because we can't sit in one seat. The people who make the buses are making the seats bigger, all because we eat too much, and essentially, it is killing us because of us eating too much of the wrong things and not getting any physical activity.

Over the course of the last 10 to 15 years, we have seen a significant decrease in the level of physical activity that we experience. We don't walk anymore; we definitely do not run any place anymore. We ride everywhere. We ride the elevator down one floor. This next one is

really going to get you all. We spend 20 minutes at the mall driving around looking for the closest parking. But when those gas prices hit \$4.00, I bet you will change your ways.

And my favorite one is the guy who comes home from a hard day's work, falls on the sofa and yells upstairs to the kids, "Would you give me that remote."

We have also seen a significant increase in the overall caloric intake of our meals—I think it is 300 for men and 500 for women—over the course of the last several years. So, we are eating more and moving less. But essentially, it's killing us.

I don't like to talk about obesity. What I do like to talk about is moving Americans toward a healthier lifestyle, because it is not only how much you eat, what you eat, but some level of physical activity. It is getting Americans to change their behavior in terms of what they do.

And not only is it an American issue, because we are having an international conference on Wednesday that I am moderating. My colleagues from Israel, Germany, and China are also seeing a significant increase in rates of their citizenry being overweight. They will tell you that it is all because of American food. I'm sure that they will tell you about other things, too.

But, we need to change our ways, and that is where you come in. All of you—except I did see a woman with a baby walk in—are adults and make your own decisions about what you choose and decide to do, but you do have a responsibility to your children. You also have a responsibility, in many of your professional careers, for the well-being of children, and that is what I want to talk to you about.

You all are mature. You all make your own decisions. If you want to make changes in your own life, I'm right there with you. If you don't want to make those changes, I'll come and visit you in the hospital when you are sick. Maybe.

But I'm much more interested in the types of changes that I want you to think about in terms of children. But before I get to that point, I want to tell you a story to make a point, because it was an epiphany for me that truly crystallized the severity of this issue that we are facing in this country.

Two years ago I had the opportunity to visit a school in the Midwest. I arrived there in the early morning. Kids were pulling up in school buses. They got off the school bus and were running into the schoolhouse. From the front door of the bus to the front door of the school was no further than this point to the back of the room. How far is that? About 25 or 30 yards. These kids were 8-, 9-, and 10-year-olds. They should be healthy. They should be primed.

The vast majority of those children, when they got off the school bus with their backpacks, by the time they left the school bus and got to the front door of the school, were out of breath. They were so overweight that they could not cover that distance without getting to the front door and on their hands and knees all catching their breath.

It was an epiphany for me, ladies and gentlemen. It told me that we have a serious problem in this country when our children who are 8, 9, and 10 years old, and should be able to rip and run all day, could not cover this distance without bending over and attempting to catch their breath. It is pitiful and it is sad.

I also had the opportunity to visit another school, a brand new school; I think the school had been open for 2 years. I got there and saw these parents driving up and dropping their kids off. I went inside. I had breakfast at the school with the kids. I talked to the principal and my question to the principal was, “I see all these parents driving and dropping their kids off. Where are they coming from?”

And then I said, “Wait a minute. Let me ask you this question another way. Tell me how far the furthest child has to travel to come to school.” Since I saw the parents dropping them off. Brand new neighborhood; brand new school. Three blocks. Three blocks.

I had an opportunity to talk to some of the parents and I said, as tactfully as I can, “Where do you live? Why doesn’t your child walk?” I’m concerned about safety and all, and I understand that. But the other question that I had was, “On nice days”—and obviously some of the parents could use it too—“why don’t you walk with your child to school?”

I killed two birds with one stone. Children get to walk and parents who need to walk also get to walk with their child. Three blocks. Those are the types of things that I see that I’m very concerned about.

The Deputy made reference to some things that we are doing to help address those issues and move Americans and other people around the world toward a healthier lifestyle, but I want to mention something because I think it is real important.

We released the new *MyPyramid* food guidance system on April 19. Dr. Hentges is here and he will talk about it this afternoon. But I want to mention it because it is individualized, and we have gotten over 800 million hits to that website since April 19. That is remarkable. That indicates, I believe to all of us, that there is an interest. But we need to take it a step further because we need not only for people to have an interest, but, for people to also look at doing some things differently in their lives—that is where you come in and why you are here.

I know that you are coming to D.C. to have a good time, and you are going to go out and have a wonderful time with your friends. You are going to drink, and eat, and party, and have a good time. I want you to do all of those things.

But I also want you to keep this in mind: What are you going to do differently when you get home? What are you going to do to help us address this issue for fellow Americans and people all over the world?

I'm glad that you are here and that many of you are going to participate. I want all of you to be involved. But my father always says to me in times like this, "What are you going to do?" "How is it that you are going to make that difference?"

We are so hopeful that we--USDA and all of your other colleagues here--will provide you with some additional information, suggestions, ideas, tools, whatever, that will afford you the opportunity to go back home and make a difference. It is not easy, and it will not be easy because we are attempting to get people to do something differently. I think it was Henry Ford who said, "The only change that people like is what they hear rattling in their pocket."

What are you going to do differently, especially for us as Americans when it comes to this issue? We have some of the cheapest, best-tasting, most plentiful food of any country in the entire world. And as Americans, and I am one and I love this country, we don't like to be told what to do. As Americans, it is just not in us.

The other thing is that we love a deal. You can go to this place and get this much food for \$10.00, but you can go across the street and get that buffet for \$11.00. We love that deal. And so, when we look at what we can do to change those behaviors, we need to look at tapping into what can occur to have us change.

Let me give you an example of what I'm talking about; one of my favorite ones. What month is it that you have more people in this country going on a diet and trying to lose weight? March. Do you know why March? "I've gotta get in that bathing suit. I've got to lose that weight so I can get into that Speedo, that bikini, thong." Whatever. January? We start out in January. We have wonderful intentions, but the vast majority of people who start out in January, by January 15th about 50 percent of them have fallen off the wagon. And come Super Bowl Sunday it is straight downhill, and I tell you why on Super Bowl Sunday.

Super Bowl Sunday in this country is second only to the Thanksgiving Day in the amount of food consumed by us. So, January is downhill. But come March, because we know that spring is right around the corner, that is the motivation. What can you do to tap into that motivation? What can you do to make a change? What can you do for people that you work with? What can you do to influence those systems out there? What can you do with your own children?

Now, remember what I said. I know it is not easy. I see the moms in the grocery stores, in the supermarkets with young ones hanging on them, saying, "Mommy, Mommy buy me this." [The mother says,] "Okay. Here. Just take it. Please, just take it. Just be quiet."

We can't fold. We cannot fold if we care about and are interested in making a long-term change in the health and well-being of our children. We can't fold. We have got to do it.

I had you get up and talk to folks that you didn't know because that is going to facilitate, hopefully, many of the things that you are going to experience while you are here with us these next two and a half days.



The opportunity to meet new people, the opportunity for an exchange of ideas and, more than anything else, to take something with you that you are going to do that will make a change—a positive change—in the well-being of people that we care about who live in our own communities. This will result in making all of us in this country and around the world healthier and stronger and improve the overall well-being of the human race.

Do you have the capacity to do those things? Absolutely. Will you do those things? I'm sure that many of you will give it a good go. We are here to help you succeed. We are here to be your partner. We are here to help that collaboration.

We, the collective we, cannot accomplish this alone. You need me. I need you. Together we can do this. Together we can make a positive difference in the lives of children and families. Thank you.

### **Connecting for Success: Bridging the Gap Through Collaboration Panel: From Science and Policy to Action and Positive Outcomes**

**Moderator: Kate Coler, Deputy Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC**

### **FNS Programs - Working Together Maximizes the Impact of Nutrition Education**

**Alberta C. Frost, Director, Office of Analysis, Nutrition, and Evaluation, Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Alexandria, VA**

Thank you very much. I want to add my thanks to those of the previous speakers for coming to the Second National Nutrition Education Conference, sponsored by the Food and Nutrition Service, and also to echo what they have said: to thank you all for the work you do to improve the health and well-being of the people you serve.

I am very pleased to see that so many who joined us for the first conference in 2003 have returned, but I am also very excited about the new faces here. Much of the work we began at the first conference has progressed substantially since that time, and we have organized this conference to support and advance those efforts to an even higher level in the upcoming years.

At the last conference I spoke of the transformation that occurred at FNS over the last decade or so, the result being that we have equal concerns about dealing with the issues of food security and hunger and of dealing with issues of diet quality. Those concerns may not be quite equal in months when hurricanes hit and we all recognize, as the Deputy Secretary said, that we turn our attention to the issues that are most immediately at hand. But in

general, we are paying equal attention to those two very compelling issues in the United States, and I think that dual emphasis is even stronger today than it was 2 years ago. Today, I want to review our Federal initiatives and policy and talk about the key components of the FNS vision for nutrition education, which really emphasizes cross-program efforts and partnership opportunities.

USDA is steadfast in its commitment to alleviating hunger—witness the record funding request of \$59 billion that is in the fiscal year 2006 budget. But as obesity rates continue to rise among adults and children, there seems to be this continuing desire among the public at large for quick fixes, for that magic diet or pill that will make us all lean and fit. We know that we must sustain our concern and leadership in promoting healthy diets, take full advantage of the power of the FNS nutrition assistance programs, help our target populations understand that behavior and lifestyle changes are critical to their long-term health and well-being, motivate and empower them to make healthy eating and active living a part of their lifestyles, and help them understand that even small change can have a positive impact on both short- and long-term well-being. To be effective, we know we must make our commitment personally relevant.

When we met 2 years ago, FNS focused on three improvement objectives to successfully realize our vision of our agency as a health promotion agency. These were, first, to deliver consistent family-oriented nutrition education within each of the FNS programs; second, to implement more comprehensive and integrated cross-program nutrition education; and third, to expand our partnerships and collaboration efforts with State and local community organizations, with the goal of encouraging the formation of sustainable State delivery mechanisms for our nutrition education efforts.

These are still our objectives, our path to reach our balanced nutrition and promotion food security goals. I have come to think of these objectives as distinct but parallel lanes in a three-lane highway.

The first lane continues to focus on increasing the intensity and use of science-based nutrition education directed at participants in each of the FNS nutrition assistance programs. The potential impact of dietary change on the incidence of a variety of diseases is considerable. We need to motivate people to take action and provide concrete steps they can take to avoid or delay the diseases caused by the excesses of some foods and not enough activity, so that they don't have to be treated later on for conditions like diabetes, clogged arteries, bad knees, or high blood pressure.

The second lane of our road that we are going on together takes us to the place where we collaborate among the FNS programs and together plan and implement interventions so that we reach the shared audience of low-income families with repetitive, actionable messages that really do lead to behavior change.

And, the third lane is the place for collaboration with others outside the FNS nutrition assistance community who have related goals—from programs designed to influence behaviors in the larger populations, to those engaged in disease treatment, to those that focus on changing the health and nutrition environments in the country. I like to think of this one as the HOV lane. For those of you who don't live in the D.C. area, that is what we call the lane that you can get in if there are three people in the car, and that is what we really need to do to work together.

Like a highway, we make use of all of these lanes to move forward, but we may shift emphasis from one to another for different parts of the effort. Let me say a few words more about each of these parallel tracks.

Why should we focus on nutrition education in the food programs? One of the reasons is pretty obvious: these programs are all about food. What better venues to have than those in which the participants, by their very presence, have already shown their interest in the subject. Be it the child in the lunch line, a mom in a WIC clinic, or a family seeking food stamps or food from a food bank, they have declared their recognition of the importance of the food benefit and signaled, we think, their potential interest in making it a healthy food benefit.

There are two other reasons we should be working to broker a stronger marriage between the food programs and nutrition education. First is the opportunity. Who is in a better position than those of us working with these programs? Who has a stronger interest in providing these services to low-income families and families who frequently have special needs because of life circumstances, literacy levels, or just plain lack of access to information?

No other set of programs has this kind of access to low-income populations. Thus, those who administer the Food Stamp, WIC, Child Nutrition, and Commodity Programs have a unique responsibility to these vulnerable groups.

Second, the nutrition programs have stability, longevity and infrastructure, which makes them great vehicles that nutrition educators can and should use. These are not programs that may be here today and de-funded tomorrow; they are an accepted part of the landscape. Wouldn't it be great if nutrition education interventions could achieve that same status? These programs, we think, can help make that happen.

One way that we are working to ensure that nutrition promotion and food assistance are better targeted at FNS is an increased focus on employee wellness to encourage our staff to model healthy behaviors as they work to promote them. We have established an ongoing program of nutrition seminars and fitness activities, motivational employee challenges, and an Internet site with a wide array of information on how to improve diets and increase physical activity.

This initiative has energized many FNS employees to make the effort to improve their own behaviors. Our hope is that over the long term it will make us all more mindful of the importance of proper eating and physical activity and boost our interests and creativity in building these kinds of efforts into our programs.

Why are we pushing for collaboration across the FNS programs? Quite simply, because while each program has an important role in meeting the needs of particular groups, no single program alone can provide the scope and depth of nutrition promotion that can truly improve eating and physical activity behaviors.

There are a few things that we all know about successful nutrition education interventions. One of the most important is that intensity and repetition through multiple reinforcing channels of communication do make a difference.

So, here we have this shared population of low-income families. We have the perfect opportunity and responsibility to craft shared messages and even interventions that will reach WIC moms, children in school and in daycare and their parents, people using food stamps or getting a meal in a soup kitchen with coordinated, repetitive, behaviorally oriented actionable messages.

I heard a description of this the other day that I loved from Jane Monahan of our Southeast Regional Office. The way that she says it is that our messages should be inescapable, pervasive, and relentless. Inescapable, pervasive, and relentless.

What an opportunity we miss if we don't use the channels that we do have some control over—that is, where our programs are delivered—and beyond that, into the communities where our participants live.

Even with the synergy that all the nutrition assistance programs can bring to one another, we all know that this epidemic of poor dietary habits and sedentary behaviors goes far beyond low-income families and into the population at large. Obviously, we need to partner with all those who are concerned. That is true at the community level, the State level, and the Federal level. We need to think creatively about engaging partners who are not only from the health and medical communities, but beyond them.

I was at a meeting of the Land Grant University officials the other day and someone pointed out the potential influence that colleges and universities could have on their students both by bringing information to students and by establishing healthy environments and encouraging community activism.

Think about that freshman year 10-pound gain that many of us experienced and many of our children experience and how different it might be if there was a concerted effort on the parts of schools of higher education to teach and model the value of a healthy lifestyle. But my real point here is that we believe that nutrition professionals need to engage and inspire

a broad spectrum of partners to get involved if we really want to be successful agents of change.

So, what have we at the Food and Nutrition Service been doing to facilitate the traffic flow on this three-lane highway? Dr. Hentges will talk about this much more in a few minutes. One of the first things is the updating of the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, which is a joint product of DHHS and USDA, and the new food guidance system, *MyPyramid*, which has been developed by the Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion (CNPP).

Each of our major programs, as the Deputy Secretary mentioned, is in the midst of a detailed, exhaustive review to determine what the effects of the new *Dietary Guidelines* will be. That includes the meal patterns for the School and Child Care Programs, the WIC food package, the Thrifty Food Plan upon which the food stamp benefit is based and the commodities purchased by USDA. In addition, all our nutrition education materials are being reviewed and revised to align and utilize the *MyPyramid* icon and the new *Dietary Guidelines*.

Much progress has been made in the arena of improving program-based nutrition education, in revitalizing the quality of WIC nutrition services, and re-engineering food stamp nutrition education, which is something that I would like to come back to in a minute.

WIC and the Child Nutrition Programs continue to make advances through innovations, such as the Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program, the FIT WIC special project grants, the HealthierUS School Challenge, the soon-to-be-released Children's Pyramid, and the School Wellness and new Fruit and Vegetable programs.

To facilitate collaboration among the FNS programs, we have continued our commitment to the *Eat Smart. Play Hard.*<sup>TM</sup> campaign. I hope you all met Power Panther as you were going into the exhibits; you will see some exciting new developments on that front at the luncheon later in the week.

In addition, we have several new things that I want to bring to your attention, including emoticons, e-greeting cards, new images and screensavers, radio PSAs, Power Plans and Powerline, and new projects that we hope will make *Eat Smart. Play Hard.*<sup>TM</sup> a usable set of materials for you all.

Of course, the centerpiece of our efforts to encourage cross-program cooperation are the State Nutrition Action Plans, a process for putting collaboration into action. Much energy will be devoted to exploring the possibilities of SNAP at this conference.

At the risk of being repetitive, I will say again that no single program has the resources to support the type of ongoing and comprehensive interventions required to make behavior change a reality. SNAP offers the promise of making us more powerful and effective through more deliberate planning of collaborative implementation.

Last, I would like to note the beginning of a new initiative that takes our cross-program efforts one step further. That is our desire to focus on a small set of key behaviors across our programs. This could be achieved by developing and using common messages in the FNS programs, and even beyond them in other programs. You will hear more about this in the future, but we believe there is a need for and a value in developing a limited set of key behavioral messages that will help people take the first steps toward better health.

As nutrition professionals, it is understandable that you want people to get all of the information, all the facts about healthy eating. But sometimes this can be overwhelming to people. We all want to be very accurate and very careful about the science basis of what we teach, but sometimes this accuracy does not inspire people to action. I ask each of you to consider whether we would improve our outcomes if we focused on changing just a few key behaviors, such as increasing fruit and vegetable consumption or whole-grain intake.

We are also well aware that work needs to be done beyond the boundaries of our own organizations and programs. To that end, we are working even closer today at USDA with our sister agencies, such as the Agricultural Research Service and the Cooperative Extension Service.

We all know that we need to do much more to coordinate research and intervention strategies, and we are working diligently on that. We have working partnerships with CDC, FDA, The 5-A-Day Program, Action for Healthy Kids, and we are seeking, under Dr. Hentges's leadership, to develop public-private partnerships that will extend the messages of the *Dietary Guidelines* and *MyPyramid* into places where government programs alone cannot reach everyone who needs to be reached.

You will hear more about these and other initiatives as our week unfolds, and we at USDA will hear from you about your successes and challenges. I know that we will all learn a great deal. In that spirit, I offer you a small assignment. As you move toward the SNAP sessions, I challenge you to take your evaluation form and write down just one thing that you would like each of the FNS programs in your State to do that would help you and one thing that you could do for them. I also urge you, if you have not already done this, to identify existing partnerships in your State that SNAP could contribute to and perhaps one new, unique partnership that could be developed.

One last word before I close about Food Stamp Nutrition Education and our new policy document which has just been released. A great deal of time, thought, and dialogue has gone into this document, and we believe that over time it will move us toward better service for those eligible for the Food Stamp Program.

I urge all of you to take a look at it, not only as it may influence food stamp nutrition education in your area, but also because of what it says about FNS' current thinking about nutrition education in general. In crafting it, we tried to be mindful of the features of WIC nutrition education and Team Nutrition that have seemed to contribute to their success over

the years. What you see in this document is not only our views on best practices for the Food Stamp Program, but also for nutrition education in general.

Again, thank you for your dedication and commitment to working to improve the lives of the people we serve. We hope you have a great week, and Power Panther and all of the gang at FNCS wish you well this week. Thank you very much.

## **From Dietary Guidance to Public Practice: Implementing the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and MyPyramid**

**Eric J. Hentges, PhD, Executive Director, Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Alexandria, VA**

Good afternoon. I appreciate being able to discuss with this audience some of the aspects of how we actually put our dietary guidance into action. What I want to focus on directly today is the 2005 *Dietary Guidelines* for Americans, public practice, and implementing these guidelines for Americans.

The 2005 *Dietary Guidelines* for Americans were introduced by the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of Health and Human Services this January. Deputy Secretary Conner alluded to this action and what went forth with it. This is the Federal policy that guides all of our nutrition assistance programs. It is the policy that dictates how the government speaks with one voice to consumers on diet and health issues.

The challenge then is how to move from the science to action. Many of you are familiar with these guidelines, but you may not know all of the background and the science aspects. The 2005 *Dietary Guidelines* Advisory Committee had the advantage of the work that was done at the National Academy of Sciences revising the Dietary Reference Intakes. That was the basis for moving to a *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* Advisory Committee report, and then moving to the actual policy document, *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005*. All of these impact *MyPyramid*. There was a consumer document, *Finding Your Way to a Healthier You: Based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, that went along with the *Dietary Guidelines*. All of this information will affect the nutrition label in the upcoming year and a half as well.

As professionals, you have the policy document, *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005* as a resource for the *Dietary Guidelines* themselves. You have the science document that the Advisory Committee put together to get to that policy. Additionally, there is a *Dietary Guidelines* Toolkit that is available to you, as well as PowerPoint presentations to discuss this with various audiences.

But, the challenge here is actionable implementation. The *Dietary Guidelines* have 23 key recommendations for the general public. There are an additional 18 recommendations for specific populations. That is an awful lot to communicate.

That is why, when we put together *MyPyramid*, we talked about a systems approach. That systems approach includes the graphic symbol and the slogan, consumer messages and interactive tools that help personalize and individualize this information, as well as the traditional print materials that are available. There are also materials that are designed for professionals, such as yourselves. What we wind up with is a sound science foundation for *MyPyramid*, and a consumer research-based implementation for *MyPyramid*.

You are familiar with the *MyPyramid* graphic now, and there are six basic messages that are incorporated into the design of *MyPyramid*; four of them deal with the *Dietary Guidelines* and two of them are more related to the implementation. There is variety, and that is noted by the different colored bands showing the variety of foods that are to be consumed. There is proportionality, which is embodied in the different widths of the bands.

Activity is represented with the staircase and the individual moving on the stairs. Regarding moderation—this is one of the toughest concepts for us, the idea being that foods with less added sugar, less added solid fat or fats, and more nutrient-dense foods, would be at the wider part of the band. As you add more sugar and solid fats, those would be at the narrow part of the band.

Then, there are two aspects of implementation: One is personalization of *MyPyramid*. The other is gradual improvement. We know and this audience knows where most of America is and that you are not going to go from where we are today to implementing all of the *Dietary Guidelines* in one big jump. The communication strategy is to take gradual steps. Just get started and make those steps in increments.

The symbol in the slogan was deliberately designed to be simple and motivational. Again, with 23 key recommendations, there was no way we were able to have the symbol carry all that nutrition education. The consumer materials that are available from USDA's Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion are the image itself, posters, mini-posters, and an interactive website with tools. In the future, you will see the addition of the Pyramid for Kids. The website and materials will also be made available in the Spanish language.

The real change from the 1992 original *Food Guide Pyramid* is the Internet access. But, it is not the only thing. Traditional materials are still available to all of you. But, if you look at these statistics, you can see why it was so important to have the Internet and the interaction there, with 75 percent of U.S. households having access, 99 percent of public schools, and 95 percent of public libraries. It would have been a grave oversight not to have been able to incorporate this.

We have two interactive tools that are available on *MyPyramid*. One is a more introductory level, *MyPyramid* Plan, and the other is *MyPyramid* Tracker, which is a more advanced interactive tool. When you have gone to the website—and hopefully all of you have visited it—you will see this on the opening home page. For the introductory tool, *MyPyramid* Plan, you put in your age, gender, and choose one of three activity levels. This will then give you the right food pattern for you.

One of the problems that we had with the original *Food Guide Pyramid* is that one-size-fits-all type of approach. If you took, for example, the grains area where there was a range of six to 11 servings, if you were supposed to be eating 1,600 calories or 1,800 calories, you were not supposed to choose the 11 servings of grain. But that didn't communicate. So hopefully, being able to individualize and personalize this aspect will help that. You can print out that pattern and print out a worksheet to help people get started.

In the more advanced tool, *MyPyramid* Tracker, you would also add in your height and weight. By the way, based on comments that we have received from educators, we expect to be adding height and weight into the introductory plan. So, you can look for that here in the future. But, in the Tracker you can put in all the foods that you ate, get a dietary assessment of how you fit the patterns, how you fit the *Dietary Guidelines*, and how you fit nutrient requirements. You can also put in your physical activity level and get an assessment of how you are doing with your physical activity.

The real important aspect here, as this group knows, is energy balance. You can get a read-out on your energy balance. In this example, you can see that the individual had plus 121 calories, and this is probably typical of where most Americans are and this is why you gain that 10 pounds a year if you do that every day.

This concludes the basics of putting the *Dietary Guidelines* into action through *MyPyramid*. The Pyramid was introduced about 4 months ago, and I want to go through some of the statistics of where we are 4 months later.

We have over 770 million file hits to the website. We have almost 3.5 million individuals registered on the Tracker with over 300,000 people using it every day, and they are on for over-10-minute sessions. So, we know that they are actively using it. Our IT group tells us that it is the most used .gov website in history, except for the IRS. I don't know if that is good company or not.

One survey that was done a month after the release, *Opinion Dynamics*, noted that 40 percent of Americans report that they have seen the new Pyramid. Of those that have seen it, 28 percent believed it was more useful, 46 percent believed it was equally useful—which are great numbers to us and very encouraging with just 1 month in the field.

More importantly was this question—this was done by WebMD, but it was only 3 days after the release of *MyPyramid*: “How likely are you to make changes to your diet based on the

new food pyramid?” Twenty-six percent said very likely and 35 percent said somewhat likely. So, 61 percent. This group knows those numbers are huge.

If we got 20 percent of the population in the first year that made those behavior changes, I think we would consider that successful.

We have received over 7,500-plus e-mails with comments. Early on there were comments on improvement and there was criticism, some of it quite brutal, and we did have some technical problems. But fortunately, those were corrected very quickly. Now, when we get nutrition-related questions, usually they ask for more information, which are a great challenge and a great position to be in when more information is desired by those visiting the website.

These are just examples of some of those 7,500 comments: “My 12-year-old daughter and I have made a pact to get into shape together, and we think your website is terrific. We each got our own pyramid and weight loss tips.” Here is another: “I’m printing them daily to serve as my food diary.” This is exactly what we hoped to see, and it is very encouraging to see people getting started.

Our challenges? We have an interactive website. We did not have an interactive website before and customer and consumer support will be an issue for us. People want to interact with this a lot more, and we are gearing up right now to be able to have that sort of interaction and dialogue better with the public.

Regarding evaluation, this is a dynamic area, being an interactive website, and we will do a formal evaluation. We have those plans already laid out. We will be not only evaluating the communication strategies, but also the technology. Our plans are to be able to do that type of evaluation about every 6 months for the first 2 years so that we stay on that edge and maintain current numbers.

Our future plan is to continue with these surveys and enhancements to the interactive nature of the website. One of the things that we have planned for next year is that we know that the site works well for assessing diet and activity, but it does not work so well for users to plan the “what if.” “What if I change this thing? I can see what I’m doing, but what if I added broccoli or added fruit.” So, we are looking to add a dynamic tool that we would call the “Planner” so consumers would be able to make those corrections and do the “what if” scenarios.

Regarding database updates, we will continue to work with our partners at USDA’s Agricultural Research Service on being able to have the nutrient composition up-to-date for those foods that drive the Tracker and drive the database.

Alberta mentioned partnerships. Our traditional partnerships remain at the heart of getting this implemented. That means working with Extension nutritionists, public health

nutritionists, and dietetics associations. Those are critical. All of you are our first-line partners.

But, we also know that we have an option, a new challenge: to be able to work with public-private partnerships. Secretary Johanns has assigned CNPP that ability, and we will be looking to begin that. Those partnerships are a new area for us, so we will be looking for people who have educators collaborating with them. We will look at that kind of interaction.

That concludes my remarks. Here are some examples of things that are already on-going, and some of you, I am sure, will see some of the things that you were involved in. You can see the range of activities: From grocery stores, to food industry, to educators.

I look forward to your continued help in making this implementation possible. Thank you.

### **Connecting To Keep Health in the Balance - IOM Report on Preventing Childhood Obesity**

**Linda Meyers, PhD, Director, Food and Nutrition Board, Institute of Medicine, Washington, DC**

I am honored to be here to talk with you today. You all know about the epidemic of childhood obesity. You all know about the increases in numbers. Let me tell you a little bit about the Institute of Medicine's response and some work that we did 2 years ago and released last year having to do with the prevention of obesity.

In the 2002 appropriations bill for the Department of Health and Human Services, there was a directive to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to undertake a study that looked at prevention of obesity related to children. The CDC, several institutes of the National Institutes of Health, the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion—all in the Department of Health and Human Services—and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation all joined in to sponsor this task that the Institute of Medicine had been given.

The Institute of Medicine is part of the National Academies. The National Academies are the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, and the Institute of Medicine. We were congressionally chartered by President Lincoln to be an advisor to government. The National Academy of Sciences and the Institute of Medicine are nonprofit advisors. So, we are not a Government agency. We are an independent advisor.

The task, as I mentioned, was a prevention-focused action plan. A 19-member committee of experts from a variety of disciplines was assembled. The committee was chaired by Jeffrey Koplan. These members deliberated for about a year and a half. They worked entirely voluntarily, except for their travel and hotel expense. They wrote a report. That report went

through a very rigorous external review and a very formalized review process, which is one of the characteristics of the National Academies. The report itself was issued on September 30, 2004.

The committee looked at the evidence that was available on prevention and realized, as I am sure all of you do, that it is a very developing and active research area. They chose to make their recommendations on the best available evidence in obesity prevention, and they also decided to draw on evidence from other public health issues. They looked at tobacco and at seatbelt control to see what kind of prevention actions had been used and the timing of those actions. And then they also looked at the diet and physical activity literature.

The key conclusions from the report were, as you all know, that obesity is a serious nationwide health problem that requires urgent attention and population-based prevention. It involves healthy eating behaviors and regular physical activity, and recognizes that it is going to be individual efforts and societal changes, and therefore, must involve multiple sectors and stakeholders.

So, what is needed? Leadership, efforts at all levels, changes in societal norms, evaluation, and resources. Obviously, obesity prevalence is increasing, and the goal is for healthy eating behaviors and physical activity to become the norm.

The committee organized its report and its recommended actions in five different areas, or settings. They spent a lot of time discussing how best to organize the report and kept coming back to settings as something that seemed to resonate with a lot of people. They also wanted to make the point strongly that this needed to be a national public health priority. So, there are also recommendations in that area as well.

From the national priority recommendations they called for increases in Federal coordination. Looking at the *Dietary Guidelines* that were issued earlier this year, it seems that there really is strong Federal coordination. They also called for programs and research to prevent childhood obesity, resources for State and local programs, support for public health agencies, an independent assessment of Federal nutrition assistance programs and agricultural policies, and research and surveillance.

In the Healthy Marketplace and Media area, they made a couple of points that obviously have marketplace implications. One is there is a need to change food and physical activity behaviors to achieve energy balance.

Industry can be instrumental in changing consumer behaviors and many opportunities exist to influence consumer purchase decisions. The recommendations focused on products, meals, and opportunities. Their first recommendation was that industry should make obesity prevention for children and youth a priority by developing and promoting products, opportunities, and information that will encourage healthful eating and regular physical activity. Then, the report gives a number of suggestions, because this is just advisory. This is meant to try to be helpful to a broad sector of the population.

They also made recommendations about labeling, including more emphasis on calories. The report recommended a national conference to set guidelines, industry self-regulation and then, only if that didn't work, should Congress give Federal Trade Commission (FTC) the authority to monitor to compliance.

The national conference was actually held in June with the FTC and the Department of Health and Human Services as the sponsors. And then the report had some specific recommendations and called for a multi-media and public relations campaign. A lot of the report was devoted to schools, which obviously is exceedingly important. They called for developing nutrition standards for all school foods, an increase in physical activity to at least 30 minutes a day, understanding that 60 minutes a day is the recommendation for physical activity; thinking 30 minutes a day would be reasonable for schools where kids spend a lot of their time.

They called for enhanced wellness curricula and reduction of in-school advertising. They encouraged engagement with school health services and provision of individual student BMI assessments to parents. There is a discussion in the report of the care with which this would need to be done and a recognition that this would need to be done very carefully, after substantial testing to figure out the best way to do it. They also suggested bolstering after-school programs and using schools more like community centers.

A number of recommendations for communities centered around building diverse coalitions, addressing barriers for high-risk populations, developing and evaluating community programs, enhancing the built environment, revising city planning practices, prioritizing capital improvements, improving physical activity opportunities, and improving opportunities for access to healthy food.

There were some recommendations focused on parents and families in the home, including the goal of promoting healthful eating behaviors and regular physical activity for children. The report has aspects that are targeted to very broad sectors of society and also indicates that there are things that individual parents and caregivers can do.

They recommended exclusive breastfeeding, providing healthful foods that considered nutrient quality and energy density, encouraging healthful food decisions regarding portion size and number of eating opportunities and so forth, encouraging and supporting regular physical activity, limiting recreational screen time to less than 2 hours per day. They also recommended that parents should be role models and that it is important to discuss the child's weight with the health care provider.

Research priorities in this report focused on three specific areas: One, the need for evaluation of interventions; there are a lot of interventions going on. Their evaluation for efficacy, effectiveness, cost-effectiveness, sustainability, and potential for scaling-up is really important to move the field and to move forward in this area. Behavioral intervention research needs to look at factors involved in changing dietary, physical activity,

and sedentary behaviors. I think the committee was struck that there is some very good research ongoing, but it is very limited. And then, of course, community-based population research especially targeted toward health disparities in high risk populations.

That summarizes the high points of the report issued at the end of September 2004. In followup to that, obviously a number of presentations have been made to professional audiences to help let people know that this is available as a resource. The Institute of Medicine has also undertaken two additional studies that I want to tell you about very briefly. One is a project on the effect of food marketing on the diets of children and youth. This was requested by the CDC's Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity. That Division has been directed by Congress to undertake a look at the effect of food marketing on the diets of children and youth, and they came to the Institute.

So, the Institute has established a committee. The task is to review the effects of food and beverage marketing on the diets of children and youth and recommend ways to foster healthy food and beverage choices by children and youth. That is, what it is in the marketing of food and beverages that can be applied to marketing healthy foods. The report is in review and we are hoping we will have it out of review by the middle of November. If not, then very early in December. That committee is chaired by Michael McGinnis, who formerly worked in nutrition policy for a number of years in the Federal government. It is a very broad committee including expertise from nutrition scientists and marketers.

The last study I want to tell you about is called Progress in Preventing Childhood Obesity. It was started after the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation saw the 2004 obesity prevention report and wanted to help disseminate the findings. A small committee has been asked to develop an evaluation approach to assess progress in obesity prevention and then to look at implementation of the report's recommendations.

The process includes three regional workshops. There is one focusing on schools. There is another one coming up in October in Atlanta on community and government, and there is a third one in December on the west coast looking at industry. We recognize that these are very small activities that are contributing to a much larger effort. The product will be a report on progress in the summer of 2006. This is going to be a real challenge to the committee, to come up with suggestions for useful comments on progress after such a short period of time, and they are working on it. The information on this report is available, and the report itself will be available, on the National Academies Press website, which is [www.nap.edu](http://www.nap.edu).

If there is one take-home message I would like to leave at this meeting, it is that all of the Institute of Medicine's executive summaries--that would be all of the executive summaries for the Dietary Reference Intakes and other reports that have been done by the Institute of Medicine--are available for you to download for your own use at no cost--the whole thing, not page by page. But it is really hidden. If you go to the National Academy Press website, if you search on the name of the report or some of the key words in the book, it will call up a

picture of the book. If you click on that, it will give you a page and down where you see a red arrow pointing, where it says PDF, that is your entry point. It takes some working, but it really does work, and I hope you will be able to look at it in more depth.

I also wanted to let you know that there are information fact sheets that you may find of use, about six or seven, front and back, that relate to each of the different sections of the obesity report. Those are available at [www.iom.edu/obesity](http://www.iom.edu/obesity). Thank you very much for your attention.