



Inside this issue:

<i>America Needs More Than MyPyramid</i>	2
<i>UD Offers Help For Upcoming Health Promotion Projects</i>	2
<i>Upcoming Professional Meetings</i>	3
<i>Skin Cancer Screening and Awareness Program</i>	3
<i>American Cancer Society's Relay For Life</i>	3
<i>A Recommended Resource from a HENOD Colleague</i>	4

MyPyramid: Trash or Treasure?

On April 19, 2005, the USDA unveiled MyPyramid, the long awaited replacement for the 13-year-old Food Guide Pyramid, an educational tool criticized for being too complex and restrictive. Based on thoughtful professional deliberation and the latest research, the new graphic was intended to improve upon the old version by providing the American public with guidance on healthy eating that was more appealing, accurate, and ac-



tionable. However, controversy has arisen in the health education world as to whether or not the new tool has fulfilled this purpose. While MyPyramid has received praise for its em-

phasis on physical activity and its ability to tailor nutrition messages based on individual differences, the graphic has also been criticized for being vague and uncommunicative.

Presented below are two alternative views of MyPyramid, illustrating both its strengths and its weaknesses. To evaluate the tool for yourself, visit the official website at www.mypyramid.gov.

A New Look For USDA's Pyramid

The familiar Food Guide Pyramid has recently taken on a new look as MyPyramid, a simple, colorful graphic that promotes an individualized approach to planning a healthy lifestyle. "Steps to a Healthier You" is MyPyramid's central message, promoting the themes of variety, proportionality, moderation, and activity. Interestingly, these are the very same themes of the original pyramid, with the significant addition of an emphasis on physical activity and energy balance. This new focus is a welcome improvement, given the ever-growing problem of obesity in America.

The online tool supporting this new initiative, www.mypyramid.gov, is an interac-

tive website offering 12 versions of MyPyramid customized for age, gender, and activity level. Features of the website include: general food guidance; suggestions for making food choices; a system for tracking food intake and physical activity; and in-depth information on each food group with tips on portion sizes and measures. Portion sizes are given in ounces and cups, with the expectation that these will be easier for consumers to interpret than servings. MyPyramid also incorporates the science that supports the health benefits of whole grains, unsaturated fats, and fruits and vegetables, as well as the need for physical activity to maintain energy balance.

While MyPyramid is designed to be simple and symbolic, its symbolism may be too complex for the average consumer to grasp. The MyPyramid graphic is made up of six colored vertical bands intended to represent food groups and relative proportions. However, translating the information in the new pyramid into concrete nutritional recommendations requires fine discernment of bandwidths and the ability to interpret color codes assigned to food groups. Therefore, in terms of user-friendliness, this graphic offers little improvement over the old Food Guide Pyramid.

Although MyPyramid may not be the ideal graphic for communicating messages of

HENOD wants to hear from you!

If you know of an event, a new finding or program, a job opportunity, or any other piece of news that you would like to share in the HENOD newsletter, please send a brief description to Linda Tholstrup, newsletter editor, at:

ltholstrup@hotmail.com

For the summer issue, please submit items by June 15, 2005.

(Continued from page 1)

healthy living to the American public, it does provide a step in the right direction by broadening the scope of the USDA's guidance from diet alone to energy balance. The new initiative

also nicely addresses the benefits of whole grains and unsaturated fats, information that was largely missing from the old pyramid graphic. In addition, MyPyramid acknowledges that individual differences are important, and offers

customized advice while still reinforcing the tried and true messages of balance, variety, and moderation.

Submitted by:
Mary Trotter, MS, RD, CDN

Americans Need More Than My Pyramid

Produce for Better Health Foundation (PBH), a non-profit organization which promotes fruit and vegetable consumption, expressed disappointment in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) new healthy eating education program MyPyramid. Noting a broad-scale effort is needed to change America's food environment, the foundation unveiled a national action plan calling on institutions and industries to help make the healthy choice the easy choice.

"MyPyramid misses the mark for most Americans, replacing an American icon with an oversimplified, uncommunicative visual that leaves out real guidance for a nation hungry for direction," said PBH President Elizabeth Pivonka. "Most importantly, it fails to stress the importance of increasing fruit and vege-

table intake for better health and to control weight. In the process, it fails Americans' public health."

"Furthermore, education alone will not build a healthier nation. To reverse the obesity epidemic and its health crisis, and to close the gap in important nutrients and phytochemicals in the American diet, we need an environment where healthy food choices are encouraged and convenient, said Pivonka. "That is PBH's objective in today unveiling our own national action plan."

PBH's *National Action Plan to Promote Health Through Increased Fruit and Vegetable Consumption* calls on government leaders, schools, fruit and vegetable producers and retailers, restaurants, workplaces, healthcare and others to take action to help consumers more than double their fruit and vegeta-

ble intake to meet the new dietary goals. It offers a host of short- and long-range strategies to create a food environment where the healthy choice is also the easy choice.

Priority actions outlined in PBH's national action plan include making more fruits and vegetables available on restaurant menus, advocating for federal policies that increase fruits and vegetables in nationally-supported food programs, increasing fruit and vegetable options and education in the workplace, and strong media outreach to educate consumers.

For more information on PBH's *National Action Plan to Promote Health Through Increased Fruit and Vegetable Consumption*, please visit www.5aday.org/commcenter.



UD Offers Help For Upcoming Health Promotion Projects

The University of Delaware is offering a unique opportunity for community agencies to take advantage of the time and talents of Health Promotion graduate students.

As part of the graduate experience in UD's Health Promotion masters program, students are required to participate in an authentic learning experience with an outside health agency/organization. Specifically, students in HLPR 803, Advanced Health Promotion Programming, act as consultants to help organizations accomplish some health programming need or address an unresolved problem. This work is done independently, so that it imposes no cost to the agency, requires little staff time, and is overseen by the graduate faculty at UD.

Examples of prior projects include

evaluation and assessment of existing programs, needs assessments for the development of new programs and initiatives, and development and/or assessment of program materials, strategies, and services.

Requirements from the sponsoring agency are very minimal, and include an outline of the proposed project, an initial meeting with the students to provide instruction and direction, provision of access to facilities and data required to complete the project, and communication with students as necessary.

In order to accommodate the semester schedule at UD, the maximum duration of potential projects is 14 weeks (all work should be able to be accomplished in this time frame), and work will begin in September 2005.

This project is an excellent opportu-

nity to address an issue that you do not currently have the time or resources to tackle, while also allowing students to improve their skills and gain valuable real-world experience.

To solicit a student consultant, simply prepare and submit a 1-2 page outline of the proposed project, including the purpose, scope, deliverables, and project contact at the agency. All projects must be submitted by August 1, 2005.

To submit a proposal or to obtain more information about this opportunity, please contact:

Dr. Michael Peterson
Professor/Director
023 Carpenter Sports Building
University of Delaware
Newark, DE 19716
pmpeter@udel.edu
302-831-3672



Upcoming Professional Meetings ...

Delaware Dietetic Association Annual Conference

May 12, 2005
Christiana Country Club
Newark, DE

The 2005 annual conference of the DDA is titled "The Colorful Spectrum of Dietetics." Come here national and local speakers present valuable information about topics ranging from national nutrition policy to the health benefits of cranberries!

For more information, go to:
<http://www.dedietassn.org/>

HENOD Quarterly Meeting

May 17, 2005
8:30-11 a.m.
Buena Vista Conference Center
New Castle, DE

This quarterly meeting will feature speakers on two very interesting topics, health education advocacy and the indoor environment. Please note, HENOD meetings will now be starting a half hour earlier at 8:30.

Help build HENOD—
 bring a colleague!

23rd DHPE/CDC National Conference on Health Promotion

May 25-27, 2005
Minneapolis, MN

Titled "Health Promotion and Education at the Crossroads: New Public Health Directions," this conference will focus on such topics as cultural competence and community engagement.

For more information, go to:
www.kevric.com/DHPE/

Skin Cancer Screening and Awareness Program

Springtime brings wonderful things—flowers, warm weather, sunshine, and the opportunity to educate those around us about how to enjoy the spring and summer safely. Christiana Care is seizing this opportunity by offer-

ing a skin cancer screening program on May 9, 10, and 17. This program provides participants with a free skin exam and information about skin cancer prevention. Attendees will learn how to protect their skin from the sun, what

factors increase the risk of skin cancer, how to perform self-exams, and when to see a physician or dermatologist.

For more information or to register, call (302) 428-4100.

Skin Cancer Screening and Awareness Program

May 9, 10, & 17
5:15-7:45 p.m.

Helen F. Graham Cancer Center
(Christiana Hospital)

American Cancer Society's Relay For Life

Relay For Life is the signature fundraising event for the American Cancer Society. In cities across the nation, communities come together to celebrate survivors and raise money for cancer research and programs to support those who are currently fighting the disease.

Relay For Life is an overnight event where teams of people are sponsored to take turns walking or running laps. Each

team tries to keep at least one team member on the track at all times.

across Delaware. The University of Delaware and the Wilmington Riverfront will both be hosting events in May. To participate in either of these events, or to find out about Relay For Life opportunities in other areas of the state, please call 1-800-304-0779 or visit www.cancer.org.

Local Relay For Life Events

May 7—University of Delaware

May 13—Wilmington Riverfront

June 3—Middletown

June 10—Hodgson, Newark

June 10—Polytech, Dover

June 17—Pike Creek, Hockessin

This year, Relay For Life events will be taking place in many communities





A Recommended Resource from a HENOD Colleague

May is National High Blood Pressure Education Month

Look no further than *Prevent and Control High Blood Pressure: Mission Possible*, the latest initiative from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute.

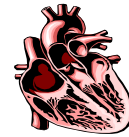
Searching for some new tools to fight high blood pressure?

Look no further than *Prevent and Control*

This initiative, launched just in time for National High Blood Pressure Education Month (May), is aimed at reducing the percentage of Americans with high blood pressure, thereby preventing the devastating health consequences of this condition. *Mission Possible* is designed to help communities fight high blood pressure through promotion of healthy lifestyles. Among the many tools offered to achieve this objective are educational ma-

terials, a community kit, an online network for the exchange of event information, and ideas for partnership activities. Most materials are available to download, however print copies may also be ordered. To obtain materials, or for more information about *Mission Possible*, visit:

http://hin.nhlbi.nih.gov/NHBPEP_Kit/index.htm.



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Enhancing the health of Delawareans through health education and promotion.

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