

A Prosperous Program: WIC

By Elizabeth Lampkins



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40 years ago, on April 1, 1978 the Community Educational Screening Center, (CoMES Center), the health and welfare arm of the Shenango Valley Urban League, Inc., received notification from the Pennsylvania Department of Health that they had received approval to function as a Pennsylvania WIC (USDA Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children) site.

WIC (Women, Infants and Children) currently serves 3,200 participants in Mercer, Venango and Forest counties and operates its main office at the Shenango Valley Urban League, Inc., office in Farrell, as well as a site office in Oil City and six satellite sites in Grove City, Mercer, Transfer and Tionesta. These sites are frequented every three months for the convenience of clients living in those areas and are operated at Community Centers, Mercer County, cooperative extension, Forest County assistance office and the Mercer State Health Center.

Pregnant women, non-breastfeeding moms who have had a baby in the last six months, breastfeeding moms who have had a baby in the last 12 months, infants and children under age 5 can apply for WIC.

The services are free to women, infants and children who reside in

Pennsylvania, have a nutrition risk and have a gross household income which does not exceed 185-percent of the U.S. poverty guidelines.

The WIC program improves the health of nutritionally at-risk women, infants and children and has earned the reputation of being one of the most successful federally-funded nutrition programs in the U.S. WIC is not an entitlement program.

Having become director of the program shortly after the initial funding due to the illness and retirement of the previous director, Reverend Sallie Saunders, I have found the program to be the most rewarding endeavor of my career. Through the partnership in 1986, Planned & Conducted Workshop addressed the needs of children and youth in Mercer County. The workshop also highlighted the continuing needs of families and was able to provide the



Patrice Lee, NT, with Danielle Pugh and son



Lauriethel Ward, RS-OR-CIT, Kendra Graham

HIGHLIGHTING PROVEN ACHIEVEMENTS:

- WIC reduces low birth weight, prematurity and infant death.
- WIC plays an important role in a mother's decision to initiate and continue breastfeeding. Peer counselors are provided on staff to assist the mothers and promote breastfeeding.
- WIC improves infant feeding practices and the quality of children's diet.
- WIC decreases the incidence of iron deficiency anemia.
- WIC participants are more likely to receive health care.
- Children who receive WIC demonstrate improved intellectual development.

necessary tools for their growing families to be productive members of society. WIC serves a vital vehicle toward that end, by providing nutrition education, breastfeeding counseling and support and most of all, the essential nutritional foods that help to supplement the diet. The program has continued to be a privilege to have been given the opportunity to serve in the capacity as WIC director through this 40th year.

This job found me during a critical period in my life during which I was recuperating from a life-threatening illness that caused me to wonder if I would ever return to any form of employment. Taking my daily walks to regain my overall strength, I passed by my family doctor's office (Dr. Theodore Yarboro), who saw me and asked me if I felt like volunteering some time to help the CoMES Center to start the sickle cell program. Of course I said yes.

I started initially as a volunteer in 1974, and after one month was hired as secretary, and later promoted to sickle cell counselor and counselor coordinator, and in 1978 as the project director.

I think back on one of my favorite Bible quotes from Luke 12:48; "From everyone to whom much was given, much will be expected." I hope I have fulfilled that quote, because I have wanted nothing less than to serve my constituents well. I was raised to understand that service to your fellow man is far greater than worldly treasures and I believe that wholeheartedly.

CLIENT LETTER:

Dear Mrs. Lampkins,

I wanted to write to let you know how much I have appreciated being a part of the WIC Program. My family has benefitted immensely from this generous program. I cannot express what a relief it is to know that every month my family would always have the basics (like milk, eggs and bread) without me having to worry how to pay for them.

Thank you so much for making this program work so that people who are struggling can still ensure that their families eat healthy.

My Best, WIC Participant

WIC Program's main office is located at SVUL, Inc., 601 Indiana Avenue in Farrell.

Information: 724.981.6154 or svurbanleague.org

SVUL, Inc., WIC Program for Venango/Forest County is located at 221 Center Street in Oil City.

Information: 814.676.0099

Elizabeth Lampkins



Elizabeth Lampkins, LPN, SVUL, Inc., WIC Director, graduated from Choffin School of Practical Nursing in Youngstown with medication course certification from St. Elizabeth Hospital, Youngstown, in 1961. Mrs. Lampkins has been employed with the SVUL, Inc., since 1974. She is the oldest employee in age and tenure and has served under every executive director or president/CEO since its inception with Earnest Prince originally at the helm as the first executive director. Having been director of the WIC program since 1978, Mrs. Lampkins is retiring after 40 years, though WIC will always flow through her blood and creak through her bones.



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