



# Leadership success stories

## Diane Golzynski, PhD, RDN Growing America's Nutrition Leaders

**D**iane Golzynski always intended on becoming a professor. After earning her Ph.D. in Agricultural and Extension Education at Michigan State University, she began her career as an Assistant Professor at California State University in Fresno. However after having her second child, Diane became homesick and moved back to Michigan where she took a job at the Department of Community Health.

Not long after returning to her home state, Diane learned about the Association of State and Public Health Nutritionists (ASPHN) and became involved in its Fruit and Nutrition Council.

Regarding her experience with ASPHN, Diane says "It's the best thing I have ever done in terms of leadership development." ASPHN provided Diane with two things that she still regards as valuable to her career: informal support from like-minded colleagues and formal support through leadership training.

### Connecting with Colleagues

Working in public health nutrition can be an isolating experience for many professionals. "In Michigan, I was the only person who worked as the fruit and vegetable nutrition coordinator. It was not like I could go across the office and ask, 'How do you get electricity at a farmer's market or get internet access?' Serving on the Fruit and Vegetable Council introduced Diane to representatives from each state. Through her ASPHN relationships, Diane connected with other state nutrition professionals in order to brainstorm ideas and share struggles of getting policies passed. Smaller groups formed around specific topics such as community gardens or farm to table initiatives. "So if I was working on a how to use Electronic Benefit Transfer Cards at local farmer's markets, I could call someone and find out how they were working on that. Even if they had not yet been successful, we could talk it out," said Diane. After Diane presented at ASPHN's annual meeting in Seattle, she made even more connections. But it wasn't only the connections that she valued; it was the social support she received from her colleagues in public health nutrition.



**Pictured:** Diane Golzynski, PhD, RDN, School District Consultant, Michigan Department of Education

### About Diane

Diane is an Assistant Director at the Michigan Department of Education (MDE). She oversees the USDA Child Nutrition Programs including School Meals, Child and Adult Care Food Program, and Food Distribution. Diane joined MDE in 2012. She has experience in foodservice management and food safety regulations, developing and conducting training programs, monitoring/evaluating programs, and providing technical assistance to improve the quality and efficiency of foodservice and other nutrition programs. Prior to MDE, Diane worked as the Michigan Fruit and Vegetable Nutrition Coordinator for MDCH focusing on food policy and access to Michigan-grown fruits and vegetables.

## Understanding the Federal Viewpoint

Informally being around ASPHN leaders gave Diane access to CDC Project Officers and ASPHN leaders. She listened to the way the leaders discussed issues which helped her to hear how things were phrased. She was able to better understand the federal viewpoint and share that back with her state. The insight she gained helped her to connect and work with her counterpart in physical activity.

## Leadership Skills

According to Diane, ASPHN's leadership training has helped her to be a better employee. Diane applies much of what she learned from the Growing ASPHN Leaders Program in her work. For example, she learned about her own personality and discovered what she needs to be successful. Jean Weinberg, ASPHN leadership consultant, encouraged leaders to think about the many hats all people wear and used real hats to help ASPHN members grasp the concept. Today, Diane keeps her hats and uses this imagery to understand herself and to help others understand the message she is communicating. "I can explain how you talk to others based on the hat they are wearing. But I can translate now to help people understand the hat they are wearing."

From smaller mid-year meetings, monthly phone calls, to annual meetings, the variety of leadership opportunities helped develop Diane's leadership skills. ASPHN offered her a safe environment. "Sometimes you don't want to test things out with your employer. [With ASPHN] I could make a mistake and it wouldn't hurt my job."

In her current role, Diane supervises and oversees all child and school nutrition programs in Michigan and assures compliance to state and federal regulations. But she uses what she has learned through ASPHN every day. "The intangibles mean the most. I mean you can go back and look at the agendas and see what we accomplished. But the intangibles, like connections, a safe environment, and understanding micro issues that you can take back to your state — those are hard to measure."



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*"ASPHN made me a better employee. I learned through ASPHN in both formal and informal ways."*

## ASPHN in Action

ASPHN is a non-profit membership organization that provides state and national leadership on food and nutrition policy, programs and services aimed at improving the health of our population. Our vision is to create new environmental norms where healthy eating and active living are the easy and natural choices for all Americans.

At ASPHN, we build our members' skills as public health nutritionists by providing key resources and professional development. To learn more about ASPHN, please visit us on the web at [www.asphn.org](http://www.asphn.org).

***For over 60 years, ASPHN has been developing and empowering leaders in public health nutrition.***