



Leadership success stories

Heidi Scarpitti, RD, LD Growing America's Nutrition Leaders

Heidi Scarpitti started her career as a registered dietitian in a clinical position. As a clinician, Heidi could see the impact of her work every day. Heidi now works in the School and Adolescent Health section for the Ohio Department of Health where she works as an expert in Childhood Obesity. This gives Heidi the opportunity to have a greater impact on the health of Ohioans. Working in public health nutrition, Heidi helps to educate people on the child obesity epidemic and the need for Body Mass Index (BMI) screening and surveillance training programs. For the past ten years Heidi has overseen Ohio's BMI Surveillance System and currently serves as ASPHN's President.

Breaking Down Silos

Heidi's work with ASPHN began nearly ten years ago when she won one of ASPHN's Blueprint Collaborative mini-grants. As part of that grant, Heidi disseminated the *Cornerstones of a Healthy Lifestyle: Blueprint for Nutrition & Physical Activity* document when she spoke at meetings and conferences across the state. She was asked to attend ASPHN's Annual Meeting in Portland, Maine. According to Heidi, "The meeting was an amazing experience because the information that was presented was vital to what I do in my job every day and the networking with public health nutritionists from other states was very valuable." Heidi was able to connect with and hear from public health nutrition professionals all across the country. She learned directly from her peers about what works and why and how other public health nutritionists are successful in their state. She left the 2007 Annual Meeting with new information that energized her for her work. "In state government, we tend to work in silos and learning from other states helps to break down the silos. I now have contacts in every state that I can reach out to for information and creative ideas on ways to address the nutrition concerns we are addressing in Ohio," said Heidi.

Leadership Skills

Heidi completed ASPHN's leadership program, "Growing ASPHN Leaders" which she credits as helping her develop her leadership skills. During this leadership program, participants read four books on leadership and then



Pictured: Heidi Scarpitti, RD, LD, School and Adolescent Health, Ohio Department of Health

About Heidi

Heidi served as President of ASPHN for the 2014-2015 term. Before that, she was the Chair of the ASPHN Policy Committee. Heidi has been employed by the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) for the last 15 years. As coordinator of the Ohio BMI Surveillance program, she travels the state training on the protocol for collecting BMI data in the school and preschool setting. She has published guidelines for collecting BMI data in the school setting, as well as numerous reports about BMI screening and surveillance programs and childhood obesity prevention. Heidi enjoys speaking about these topics at national, state and local conferences.

She is married and the proud mom of two children, as well as two dogs and a horse! Heidi enjoys horseback riding with her daughter, hiking in the Colorado mountains with her son, gardening and caring for her family, friends and animals.

discussed them as a group. Heidi, who admittedly is not a reader on her own time, enjoyed the resources that emphasized listening and communicating with others. As chair of the Policy Committee, Heidi strengthened her skills at organizing meetings and making sure that everyone on the committee was an active participant. "ASPHN offered me an endless supply of training opportunities." Heidi uses her leadership skills every day as she institutes the tracking of BMI data and provides BMI and childhood obesity prevention trainings. During her trainings and in other speaking engagements, Heidi puts her leadership skills to work. "I have learned to be more open minded to ideas that differ from my own and to allow everyone that I am working with to have a voice and share their thoughts and concerns."

Recognition as Experts

"Public health nutrition professionals are not always recognized as the expert in our field," said Heidi. "Quite often people who seek nutrition advice consult other health professionals. This is unfortunate; we definitely are the experts in our field and have the scientific research to back up what we say. As a member of ASPHN, I am provided with educational opportunities to stay up to date on nutrition issues that Ohioans are concerned with." ASPHN provides its members with the validation, social support, networking opportunities, and leadership development to further their careers. "If you want to know the latest and greatest of what's going on in public health nutrition, then become an active ASPHN member."

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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. To learn more about ASPHN, please visit us on the web at www.asphn.org.

ASPHN helps its members become better public health nutritionists through key resources and professional development.

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Association of State Public Health Nutritionists
P.O. Box 1001 • Johnstown, PA 15907-1001
[tel] 814.255.2829 • [fax] 814.255.6514
www.asphn.org