

NYCNEN Meeting Notes: November 13, 2015 9 AM – 12:30 PM
“Making Real Change: Nutrition Educators as Advocates”

Objectives:

- Gain an understanding about policy issues relevant to nutrition education and opportunities to strengthen the field through advocacy
- Learn the different ways to advocate, including through elected officials and executive branch agencies
- Hone a policy message when advocating for change

Welcome from Brett Klein, NYCNEN Chair

- NYCNEN mission
- With membership:

-free entrance to four or five meetings

-access to google groups

-if you join today, you have benefits for the entire year

Panel Discussion: Advocacy in Practice

Moderator: Claire Uno

Panelists:

- David DeVaughn, Manager of Policy and Government Relations, City Harvest
- Fern Gale Estrow, Founder of the FGE Food & Nutrition Team
- Erika Hval, Public Policy Coordinator, Greater New York Dietetic Association
- Stephen O' Brien, Director of Food and Menu Manager, NYC Department of Education

Stephen:

Q: How do you make change within an agency?

A: It's very humbling to see students smiling when they are drinking milk and eating banana bread. Amazing impact to make menus and feed children. Need to work together to advise an organization like ours. \$1.20 per student for a meat, grain, fruit, and vegetable to create a full school lunch. Also train employees in 2000 kitchens. Difficult to take the time to listen to every voice. You will find the change agency eventually. For example, the idea for the compostable round plate in school lunchrooms came from parents who did not want their students to eat off of Styrofoam plates. This new concept eventually evolved into Trayless Tuesday. Required many meetings and time to understand how to most effectively and financially use paper boats. Was able to bring down cost with collaboration to \$.05 per boat. Research and patience = change

David:

Q: How do you make change at the local level within city council?

A: Community food advocates and lunch for learning- these organizations have seen a lot of movement when they push the city with parents (President's Council) how can we advocate for or with? When there are power dynamics at play? How can we make change around food at all levels? What would it mean for all DOE schools to have USDA organic compliant food? What would it mean to locally procure food from NY state? If we look towards the LA model, they have many different components that they look at and their school system collaborates with a lot of different partners. Certain percentage of food from a local jurisdiction is a win. Lots of time, patience, and conversations.

Erika:

Q: How do you make change at the state level?

A: Erika works at the state level and policies at the state level trickle down to the city. Professional association of dietetics; helps get dietitians more involved in nutrition advocacy. The state is an interesting place for policy. Great intermediary between federal and city. New legislation being introduced at state level: food allergy posters department of health will be required to post in every restaurant. Bill proposed to restrict all sales of food with high fructose corn syrup within the state. Bill around GMOs that would require labeling of all products made with these foods, bill around soda sweetened beverages would require a label on all beverages. This product contributes to obesity, diabetes, and tooth decay. Bill to restrict sugar sweetened beverages over 16 oz. to be sold to minors. Minors would actually have to show an ID to purchase oversized containers. Bill to prohibit sale of additives such as sexual enhancement additives.

Fern Gale:

Q: What does change look like at the federal level?

A: There are different points where you can interface at the federal level. "Relentless incrementalization." Small victories are crucial. We do have to plan for future change. When something passes as law, it then goes into the regulation phase and sometimes this takes years. Implementation has to be done at the state level to make programmatic improvements. Time, patience, research, and evidence at the programmatic levels.

Q: When is it appropriate to work at the legislative level and the regulatory level?

A:

Stephen: Regulatory and policy is in the same bucket. Legislative is a macro change around law; when it is in place, the law will simply state the goal but the regulatory level is where the law is defined. Opportunities to work with an agency to see what is operationally feasible and can be implemented. Every organization needs to then determine how they are going to implement these regulations in training of employees.

Fern Gale: Different opportunities. What is mandated to be served in school was actually based on regulation changes so changes does not always have to go through federal law. Executive Board at the State level, the issue is when a person leaves, the legislation may not always move forward without that strong advocate.

David: It is important to understand how something is decided at the federal level and how it trickles down to the local level. Ie. WIC - how can we get WIC to be on par with the SNAP program, able to swipe a card at bodegas. Moving towards e-WIC how do we make sure fraud doesn't become an issue. If vendors are making more than \$5 million, the WIC program will be removed from the store. City Harvest is working to ensure that supermarkets and bodegas are maintaining food access. Too hard to regulate for stores with little revenue, may roll them off the WIC program. Example of controversy btwn state law and local implementation

Erika: What can we do to advocate for change? It's really important to know where your particular policy stands. Whatever is stated as law, you would need another law to change that. If there is an issue that gets you jazzed, important to talk to someone who knows if the law exists. Easier to change if it's part of a rule as opposed to a law. What is the path of least resistance to do advocacy work?

Q: How can we get involved in appropriations?

A:

- Budgets and appropriations are two different things. Appropriations are where you break down the budget. Really important to let people know what is important. Need to be careful about taking money away from already existing programs. One thing we try to do now is cost-neutral. Research to demonstrate success before requesting major amounts of funding. Non-funded mandates exist. SNAP is a mandate funded for as many people needed but WIC is not. Office of Management and Budget- bill is sent to this office and budget is negotiated. Lunch for Learning, Free Universal Breakfast (breakfast in the classroom) What should the budget look like for the next year? Start of 2016, will start to see advocates as part of a coalition or as an individual to advocate for programs. Important to understand how money is flowing, then budget meetings start to happen in the spring. Important to have these meetings early before we get into the next year's fiscal year. This is how Breakfast in the Classroom came about. Looking into getting kosher and halal foods as part of the budget in classrooms. Independent budget office can do budget analyses and provide you with quantitative tools to make your case during hearings.
- Change really needs to happen from top down and bottom up. You need to find your passion and identify what you care about most. Organizations can satisfy many demands. Many of the people in this room will work at the local level. You will want to show there is some success behind the idea and then try to pilot something that can be funded. At the city level, must prove that something can work. Can then take that assessment and show state and federal level. Pivotal to work with academia to prove the facts in research. Become a master salesperson and give your elevator pitch. Need to know how to be heard. Need data to be reviewed and validated. You can't just walk in as a feel-good person, you need evidence because energy and resources are limited. Coalition-building! Yes we can each have our ideas but there needs to be a consistent message.

Q: How do you suggest dealing with large corporate interests?

A:

- I.e. The ongoing soda dialogue- Fern Gale sat on a panel for the sugar board because she wanted to ensure that the right questions were being asked. Essential to be heard. The large corporations' job is to make money, and our job is to ensure there is health. We can threaten shareholders, and we can market our message similar to how marketing companies sell their message. Knowledge by itself does not work, emotional messages are much more successful. Facts with legislation. We are educators but we need to be marketers too. Make alliances but stay true to yourself. Know your values. Sit on panels and have dialogues with people; recognize when something is wrong, be present. When Coca-Cola or the Sugar Board goes after you with questions, that's how you know you are succeeding. Sometimes you need some blind stubborn optimism. When you are advocating for something for years, and it doesn't go anywhere, sometimes you see it as a win when a topic is on the table.
- What we are best at is communicating our expert knowledge base to our legislators. Make friends with your legislators. We need to convince them of the outcome. Call your legislator and influence other people. Industry is our friend; they are not the villain. We want people to have jobs and the economy to grow; we just need to understand that there are a lot of mechanisms in place and it is important to understand the food supply. Less than 6% of food is organic and less than 2% is school food. Who are the change agents and companies that align with your values? Naked was purchased by Pepsi Co. A lot of industries have their heart in the right place; their mission is to feed America but they are looking at the bottom line, but maybe they are making mistakes with adding ingredients. Visit farms, visit manufacturers. Remember Dietary Guidelines and sustainable food practices. Keep expanding the data and do the groundwork to show that we can save. It's not always evident what the long-term impact is on health, use your data.

*Trends in advocacy work around early childhood obesity, etc.

- A lot of people talk K-12, but it's important to think about nutrition before then. It's easier to develop as an adult if you raise children with the right health values. School lunch is what people knew but now we are talking about early childhood obesity.
- Obesity is part of the conversation but so is malnutrition. Have to be careful with our messages around fat and sugar for example. Really about health and lifestyle at an early age. It's not all about physical activity. Absolutely positive outcomes together. We have seen less fat, more veggies and beans, most of us working with children do not utilize skim milk because children need some fat so low-fat milk and dairy products are in school lunches. These are the conversations that have been happening but there is a lot to still be done.
- If you are going into a school and replacing soda, what are you going to replace them with to also meet a business' bottom line? You can find a different option to sell which can influence the way an industry looks at things. We don't do anything in isolation.

SkillBuilder: Defining Your Advocacy Message

Alissa Wassung Director of Policy and Planning, God's Love We Deliver

- Theory to practice
- Crafting a message is a learning experience and it is a way to dive deeper into our commitments. Think about how you and your perspective and how it can be heard within a group setting.
- What are messages: communication! **What is the problem, why does it matter, why should someone care, how do we communicate that message?**
- Effective messages: the source is different the commitment to our cause and mission. Not sound bites, a constellation of ideas. Reinforced by sound bites, phrases, statistics, stories. Ideas that can be explained in a sentence or two. Messages are consistent. And effective messages take time to craft and practice. Effective messages need to be repeated. Effective messages have no more than 4 points. Human beings can only remember **four key points!** Magic number of the day.
- Think about the strategy and environment. Clarifying your goal. What do you want to accomplish and these may change depending on where you are advocating. Who is the target audience and what does your audience care about? May not be what you care about? What holds your audience back from acting? Do they need to be educated? Money? Time?
- Need to do research and establish a common ground. You have to ask audience to take action and explain the benefit of acting.
- Avoid common mistakes: clearly define what is at stake. Do not assume everyone understands what you are talking about. Simple and specific. Accurate and cite sources. Avoid jargon, acronyms, and lots of numbers. Say the factoid and have the research if people ask. But don't go into detail. Don't fake it- you can always follow up, couple problems with solutions. Provide an action "menu" options! Help people see the cost benefit analysis. Need to help people do social math.
- Example of a message box: key message: food and nutrition services must be included in the ACA if the nation is going to accomplish its goals. Audience is Congressman who wants to get re-elected; *Threshold*: Malnutrition is a major source of re-hospitalization. 1 in 3 people in hospitals are malnourished. 5% of those individuals cost 50% of our national budget. *Solution*: research shows access to food and nutrition accomplishes the triple aim of national healthcare reform. Better health, lower cost of care, improved patient satisfaction. *Reinforcement*: use social math. You can feed a person for 1/2 a year for one night in the hospital. *Action*: what do you want people to do?

- Key points:
 1. Threshold message (what do people need to know, believe or care about to become engaged?)
 2. Solution message (what is the projected positive outcome? How will peoples' lives be better?)
 3. Reinforcement message (What obstacles do you need to overcome? What stats, anecdotes, and sound bites can you use to support and reinforce messages?)
 4. Action message (What will have an impact and call people to action?)
- Use this message box: only these four points. Veering touch and go. "I totally hear you and that is a really important platform, and the way that it relates to what I am talking about is..." Touch their question and go. Get out of quicksand if audience refuses to be moved. Multiple messages need multiple boxes.

Activity! One key takeaway, combine the action message and reinforcement message.

God's Love We Deliver message: Food is medicine, reinforced message as food is love. When you get food delivered with love, you know people care about you. Depending on audience, you need to refine your message to appeal to your audience. Spend more time thinking about your message!

Soda Politics: Taking on Big Soda (and Winning), Nutrition Advocacy in Action

Marion Nestle!, Paulette Goddard Professor, Department of Nutrition, Food Studies, and Public Health, NYU

- You can use soda corporations as a lens to look at the way that advocates are trying to do something about health. Soda is a really easy target and it's an extremely concentrated industry. No redeeming nutritional value in soda.
- Top sources of calories in American diets: grain-based desserts, yeast breads, fried chicken, sweetened drinks, pizza, alcohol. We are winning when it comes to sodas.
- Soda consumption reached a peak but in the late 1990s people started consuming fewer sodas mainly regular soda. Average consumption per day is 10-12 oz. per day. Why does this make a difference? Strong correlation btwn soda consumption and obesity, heart disease, stroke, tooth decay, etc. most evidence is correlation and then there are empirical studies where soda is removed from individuals' and then these individuals lose weight. The prevalence of obesity is in line with soda trends. As obesity declines, decrease in soda consumption.
- Decline is due to anti-soda advocacy. Strong and all over the place. Examples: soda companies said that they will not advertise on children's television for children under the age of 12. Marketing to minority groups and the minority communities are hit the hardest by obesity epidemic. Coca-Cola funds effort to alter obesity epidemic by promoting physical activity as the alternative. Even Fox News was shocked! President of Coca-Cola North made national apology. Google Coca-Cola transparency for a list of the organizations that received grants from Coca-Cola sponsorships. Organizations that were funded by Coca-Cola include a long list including the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Very controversial, and Coca-Cola ended relationships with Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. University of Colorado returned \$1 million grant.
- Coca-Cola and PepsiCo.:The strange case of Jekyll and Hyde. These companies claim to care about public health and now soda companies are bottling water and marketing only 7.5 oz. cans which cost more! Coca-Cola does establish a lot of alliances with conservative politicians so they are protected by big business. The big peak was in 2008-2009 where there may have been a soda tax but the soda industry put \$40 million into fighting the public in not taxing. Soda industries attacked science. When sales are down in U.S., go international. Invest \$4 billion in China. Between

2010-2020, Coca-Cola will spend \$29 billion in creating bottling factories and marketing to Africa's growing middle class.

- However, there is a tremendous amount of advocacy that is happening! Part of a much larger food movement. Single most successful example: Berkeley's soda tax win with a plurality of 76%. Framed the issue not as a health issue but as Berkeley vs. Big soda. Berkeley made people see big soda to be corporate and a major negative effect on the entire community. Every single area of Berkeley was canvassed and everyone was part of the discussion. The promise would be that money would be used for community health initiatives. Another big success was in Mexico. Highest levels of obesity and type 2 diabetes as well as highest amount of soda consumed, tax was passed and the tax has shown a 6% decrease decline in soda consumed in just a year. The key is to be inclusive to groups that share the same concerns.
- Food Movement Critiques: too many groups are competing for scarce resources, it's about eating yummy food and not systems change: these are myths. So should you be optimistic? Yes! More farmers' markets, better food everywhere!, more organic, more urban farms, more young farmers, better school food, composting, more food studies programs, less soda consumption, cleaner products

*Vote with your fork!