

# Diabetes, Nutrition, Obesity and Eating Disorders

## March 21-22, 2023 | Webinar

### **Wellness on Wheels: Integrating Childhood Obesity Prevention Strategies in an Outdoor Nutrition Education Program in a Community Facing High Rates of Childhood Obesity and Food Insecurity**

**Anastasia Schepers**

Cohen Children's Medical Center/Northwell Health, USA

**L**earning Objective: Upon completion, participants will be able to describe the steps for a school-based MyPlate nutrition education program that includes recipe demonstration, food access, and promotion of child-family home meal preparation.

Wellness on Wheels (WOW) is a nutrition education program through a mobile van with outdoor video monitor and awning to create an "outdoor classroom," developed to continue health education during the pandemic in food insecure communities where approximately 85% of the student population is Hispanic. Picnic baskets, life-sized food models and MyPlate posters with food stickers are used to teach grades K – 3 about the five MyPlate food groups, the importance of each group and the value of trying new foods. A video of a chef preparing a recipe using vegetables that will be distributed is shown. RDN and health educators imitate the chef's steps and invite children to join in. Students receive a fresh vegetable bundle, laminated MyPlate placemat, and bilingual cookbook with twelve recipes, including two blank pages to create their own recipes. Posters were returned to the classroom for continued education. Of 1,865 students educated, 52.3% completed a one-page evaluation tool; 88% correctly labeled 3 out of 5 food groups; 57.8% reported trying the vegetable; 91.3% checked off at least one healthy habit goal. Student comments: "My favorite part was the cooking video and we pretended to make it." "This was the best school trip." "Me and my mom actually cooked 'eksparagus' and I never thought I would like 'eksparagus.'" Our program demonstrates the potential benefits of hands-on learning to complement nutrition education to promote healthy eating behaviors. Future components of WOW will include units on hydration, physical activity, vegetable-planting, and expanding our reach with a second van

#### **Biography**

Anastasia Schepers is a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist in the Department of Community Outreach and General Pediatrics at Cohen Children's Medical Center/Northwell Health. She holds a master's degree in clinical nutrition and is a Certified Lactation Counselor. Most of her 40 years in the field have been spent educating youth and parents on making healthy lifestyle choices, focusing on food, beverages and physical activity. Under the Kohl's Keeping Kids Healthy grant, now transitioned to Wellness on Wheels, she and her team provide a variety of interactive and educational programs to children in Nassau and Suffolk counties aimed at reducing the prevalence of childhood obesity. Anastasia also works as a co-coordinator on a New York State Department of Health grant, Creating Breastfeeding Friendly Communities, and in the Eating Disorders program in the Division of Adolescent Medicine.

aschepers@northwell.edu

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