Dezi Abeyta, alumni of both the NSC undergraduate program and Individualized Supervised Practice Pathway (ISPP) dietetic internship, recently had the opportunity to present at TEDxTucson's "Connect the Dots". Dezi's presentation focused on personal connections with food and making meals a fun way to connect with friends and family. Dezi is a father, Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN) for MLB team The Milwaukee Brewers, owner of FoodTalk Nutrition, LLC, and RDN at St. Elizabeth’s Health Center in Tucson.

Check out Dezi's TEDxTucson Talk at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OnRVzA5Qxb5
Spring and Summer 2018 Graduates

Jamie Coborn will defend her dissertation entitled, “Role of sex and orexin in sleep disruption-induced weight gain” and graduate with her PhD degree this August. Jamie was mentored by Dr. Jennifer Teske. After graduation, Jamie will begin a post-doctoral fellowship at Harvard Medical School.

Megan Hetherington-Rauth defended her dissertation entitled, “Soft tissue composition, cardiometabolic risk, and bone development in young girls” and graduated with her PhD degree this May. Megan was mentored by Dr. Scott Going. After graduation, Megan will begin a post-doctoral fellowship at the University of Lisbon in Portugal.

Matthew Koppinger defended his thesis entitled, “Effects of Lactobacillus Reuteri supplementation on serum cholesterol and cardiac damage” and graduated with his MS degree this May. Matthew was mentored by Dr. John Konhilas. After graduation, Matthew will begin Optometry school at Midwestern University in Glendale, AZ.

Sarah Lavelle will defend her master’s thesis entitled “Recruitment Strategies for Diet Intervention Trials in Cancer Survivors” in the summer of 2018. She has conducted her work with Dr. Cyndi Thomson focusing on lifestyle interventions among cancer survivors. Sarah plans to apply for a dietetic internship after graduation.

Melissa Lopez-Pentecost defended her thesis entitled, “Association between diet quality and obesity-related cancer in postmenopausal Hispanic women: Results from the Women’s Health Initiative (WHI)” and graduated with her MS degree this May. Melissa was mentored by Dr. Cyndi Thomson. After graduation, Melissa will start the Clinical Translational Sciences PhD program in the College of Medicine at the UA.

Thao Nguyen will defend her dissertation entitled, “Stimulation of salisphere formation from irradiated parotid salivary glands” and graduate with her PhD degree this August. Thao was mentored by Dr. Kirsten Limesand. After graduation, Thao hopes to secure a postdoctoral research position.

Congratulations!

Danielle Falber, RDN received a scholarship to attend the Nutrigenetics, Nutrigenomics, and Precision Nutrition Workshop at the University of North Carolina. The summer workshop is hosted by the UNC Nutrition Research Institute and the UNC Nutrition and Obesity Research Center and will provide attendees the opportunity to participate in personalized nutrigenetic data examination along with guidance from experts in the field.

Kristin Morrill received funding through the U of A Health Sciences Library Open Access Publishing Fund for a paper she authored that was accepted this Spring (see reference below). The award covers the $2,000 publishing fee.


Alumni Spotlight

Dr. Maria Morgan Bathke won the Outstanding Dietetics Educator Award in the North Central region of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics for her work with the Dietetic Internship Program at Viterbo University in La Crosse, Wisconsin.

Dr. Bathke is a 2013 graduate of the Nutritional Sciences graduate program and currently holds a tenure-track position at Viterbo University.
Tassneem Solieman Volunteers as a Mindful Ambassador

My name is Tassneem Solieman and I'm a senior Nutritional Sciences student with an emphasis on Dietetics and a minor in Psychology. I'm interested in community nutrition and food insecurity. After completing my degree, I hope to apply to Law School, and ultimately become involved in Public Health Law and Policy. I am currently a part of the Mindful Ambassadors Program, which is a student organization under CAPS at Campus Health. The goal of Mindful Ambassadors is to introduce students to mindful practices. We present Mindful Moments, or guided mindful practices, to student groups on campus at their request. We encourage students to incorporate mindful practices into their daily routines to reduce stress, increase emotional self-awareness, and improve overall health.

Recently, I was given the opportunity to guide a Mindful Moment at an event titled “Civil Discourse: How do we do it?”. The event was organized by The Center for Community Dialogue and Training and involved discussions about principles and techniques of civil discourse and its application. The event opened with the Mindful Moment with the goal of decreasing stress levels and creating an environment open for dialogue. Civil discourse requires listening with the intention of understanding, and repeated mindful practice can create a mindset that is attentive and nonjudgmental.

In any field, the ability to engage in beneficial dialogue is important for progress. It is our responsibility as individuals to become skilled in our ability to listen and understand others. I believe mindful practice can play a large role in honing skills required for civil discourse.

Contributed by NSC major Tassneem Solieman: tsolieman@email.arizona.edu

Javier Aldama Volunteers at Banner UMC and Cancer Center

My name is Javier Aldama and I am a senior majoring in Nutritional Sciences. In Fall 2017 and Spring 2018 I volunteered at Banner University Medical Center at the weight loss clinic and the UA Cancer Center. During my first weeks at the weight loss clinic, I got to work closely with diabetic patients as well as patients who had gone through gastric bypass surgery. I had the opportunity to meet with large groups of people and talk about their weight loss goals. I taught patients how to read nutrition labels; and together we developed specialized diets to help them accomplish their goals. The objective of meeting in large groups was to share ideas and motivate each other to accomplish their goals whether they were diet related, exercise, or both.

The weight loss clinic was only a part of my experience; I also work closely with Dr. Amit Algotar at the UA Cancer Center where I’ve had the opportunity to do research focusing on nutrition interventions for prostate cancer patients. The main objective of this research was to find existing clinical trials that focused on Hispanics who were afflicted with prostate cancer. We then used results to develop protocols for a focus group and a survey. We did this to provide patients with a combination of nutrition and exercise programs to improve their quality of life. In November 2017, we met with eighteen cancer patients who were interested in being part of the focus group. In order to do this, I analyzed data to draw both qualitative and quantitative conclusions, developed potential nutritional and exercise programs, and compiled results into concise and actionable recommendations.

Contributed by NSC major Javier Aldama: javieraldama@email.arizona.edu
Putting Evaluations to Work in SNAP-Ed to Create Community Change

The Arizona Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-Ed) Evaluation Team contracts with the Arizona Department of Health Services to conduct research and evaluation of the statewide SNAP-Ed program. We are completing the cycle of evaluations for the current three-year work plan. It is an exciting moment for many reasons. As data are collected each year and results disseminated back to local SNAP-Ed agencies, we are seeing numerous examples of the evaluations being put to work in high-disparity communities around the state:

- SNAP-Ed staff at Cooperative Extension in Cochise County evaluated four written Local Wellness Policies with their school district and health department partners as part of a broader nutrition and physical activity initiative in the schools. As a result, the districts changed their policy language and enhanced their practices to support students’ healthy eating and physical activity.
- Two Maricopa health department coalitions evaluated the factors within their collaborations that are most likely to result in community-level changes. The coalition members used the results to improve their self-governing practices, and plan to evaluate again this year to continue to enhance their collaborative efforts.
- A pilot evaluation measured the cumulative effects of multi-level interventions in schools, which resulted in a new youth evaluation model across the state. The model has increased the number of students assessed annually to over 4,000, and it will increase the ability to detect changes in students’ knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors after receiving a combination of SNAP-Ed interventions.

These changes represent a collaborative effort between the Evaluation Team and the SNAP-Ed local agencies to: 1) align evaluations across the diversity of local interventions, 2) co-implement a shared data collection plan, and 3) ensure that results are disseminated to the right stakeholders, in the right format, at the right time. More importantly, the local agencies are progressing meaningful changes in our communities to reduce obesity and health disparities. As we move into the new evaluation cycle, we hope to strengthen the evidence-base for the effectiveness of SNAP-Ed. This is especially imperative as SNAP, SNAP-Ed, and affinity programs are reviewed during this year’s passage of the federal Farm Bill.

Contributed by Laurel Jacobs, DrPH, MPH, Principal Investigator for the Arizona SNAP-Ed Evaluation Project: jacobsl@email.arizona.edu

A SNAP-Ed Vision for Healthier Communities.  

Discussing Data at the SNAP-Ed Annual Conference in April.
Last fall, the University of Arizona Nutrition Network (UANN) held a community feedback forum to better understand how residents of a low-income neighborhood of Tucson perceive their neighborhood. The effort to understand residents’ perceptions of their neighborhood was related to a project to encourage walking and biking to the neighborhood school using maps funded by the UANN. The results from the community feedback was that residents did not feel that the neighborhood was safe. The UANN then convened representatives from the police department, local education agencies, the Pima County Health Department and a nearby after-school program to discuss the pedestrian safety concerns. The community-led committee, facilitated by the UANN, identified a need to survey parents of children of the school to understand why more families were not using the existing shared use paths to walk or bike to school. The UANN collaborated with the school principal to conduct a National Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Parent Survey in March 2018.

The UANN is currently analyzing the results from the SRTS survey and will share the results with the stakeholder group afterward. A potential project identified by the committee was starting a Walking School Bus program, with support from the UANN, which would alleviate parents’ safety concerns. The UANN will broaden the scope of this project by engaging other neighborhood schools with relationship building efforts to continue to assess physical activity and environmental needs while supporting walking and biking to school.

The Co-Principal Investigator for the UANN Pima County campus unit is Dr. Vanessa A. Farrell and the Principal Investigator of the UANN is Dr. Scottie Misner. Contributed by UANN Program Coordinator Gabriela Barillas-Longoria: gabibl@email.arizona.edu

Process of assessment and relationship building with low-income neighborhood

Outreach

The UANN Engaged the SNAP-Ed Community to Address Barriers to Walking and Biking to School

Conducted Walkability/Bikeability Assessments

Developed Walking and Biking Maps

Collected Community Feedback via Qualitative Methods

Convened Community Stakeholders to Address Neighborhood Challenges

Conducted National Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Parent Survey

Community engagement at the elementary school

Walking & Biking Map funded by the UANN
**Extension & News**

**Road to Change: Overcoming Barriers to Regular Physical Activity**

Regular physical activity is important for achieving and maintaining good health and fitness in all age groups. But sticking to a regular physical activity schedule is not easy. About 50% of people who start a physical activity program will drop out during the first six months. Exercise scientists, Extension agents, and health professionals came together to work on the project, “Overcoming barriers to regular physical activity.” This project provides evidence-based strategies to empower individuals to overcome the common obstacles to regular physical activity. One example is to use an office break for doing some fun exercise without leaving your workplace. To demonstrate, professors, students and staff in the Department of Nutritional Sciences enjoyed a “wall-sit” exercise!

The full article about overcoming barriers to regular physical activity is available on line at: [https://extension.arizona.edu/sites/extension.arizona.edu/files/pubs/az1757-2018.pdf](https://extension.arizona.edu/sites/extension.arizona.edu/files/pubs/az1757-2018.pdf) Contributed by Dr. Kay Hongu: hongu@email.arizona.edu

**Sports Nutrition Minor to Launch Fall 2018**

The new sports nutrition minor within the Department of Nutritional Sciences allows students to focus their education in the area of sports nutrition. Sports nutrition is fast growing field and is a specialization within the scope of a nutrition practice. It appeals to a wide audience, including active students who have a personal interest and health or science majors who have a more professional interest in the subject matter. Students who complete this minor will have a better understanding of sports nutrition and will be able to adapt basic nutrition concepts to meet the needs of athletes and active individuals. All interested main-campus, undergraduate students are encouraged to participate. Requirements include a minimum of 19 credit hours; 16 from upper division courses. There are five required courses and ten electives courses for students to choose from.

**Invest in Nutritional Sciences**

Supporting the Department of Nutritional Sciences has never been easier! All contributions are made to the UA Foundation, a 501(c)3 organization. Through this foundation donors may choose how their gift is applied. All gifts are tax deductible. Visit [http://nutrition.cals.arizona.edu/invest](http://nutrition.cals.arizona.edu/invest) for direct links to the UA Foundation for secure, online giving.