

# Penn State Program Promotes Breast Feeding

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — One of the most important things a new mother can do for her baby is breast-feed. Yet statistics from the 1993 Healthy People 2000 Review show that only 54 percent of women in the United States breast-fed shortly after their babies were born. Five to six months after giving birth, only 19 percent were breast-feeding.

An even smaller percentage of low-income mothers breast-feed their babies. In 1992, the number of breast-feeding women enrolled statewide in WIC, the federally funded supplemental feeding program, was about 25 percent. The average length of time these women breast-fed was less than seven weeks.

A new Penn State program may help to change this. "The key is to educate women and provide encouragement," says Judith Heald, registered dietitian and manager of the federally funded Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) at Penn State. Heald helped develop the Breast-Feeding Peer Counselor Program, administered in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences.

"Many women are convinced

that breast-feeding is difficult and inconvenient," Heald says. "Others don't even consider breast-feeding because they know so little about it. When the women around them aren't breast-feeding and aren't encouraging them to do it, it's unlikely they'll even try."

Heald developed Penn State's Breast-Feeding Peer Counselor Program with Dr. Madeleine Sigman-Grant, assistant professor of food science and registered dietitian, and graduate student Meg Schmidt. Begun last year, the program provides information and support for women in the state who want to learn to breast-feed.

"The U.S. Public Health Service wants to increase the number of new breast-feeding mothers to at least 75 percent, and the number of mothers breast-feeding until their babies are five to six months old to at least 50 percent," says Sigman-Grant. "The Peer Counselor Program is an important part of that effort in Pennsylvania."

Participants in the Breast-Feeding Peer Counselor Program are recruited from pregnancy classes and hospitals. EFNEP nutrition education advisers, who have been trained as breast-feeding

educators, visit these women in their homes both before and after their babies are born.

"These are crucial times for new mothers," says Judith Wahl, breast-feeding educator in Blair County. "Their bodies are going through dramatic changes, and without advice and encouragement, they may think there is something wrong with them and decide they can't breast-feed."

"If we can help women at these early stages, many of them should have little trouble," Wahl says. "The women are very excited when they hear that I'll come and speak with them in their homes. It's important for them to have someone they can talk with face-to-face. Bottle-feeding has been considered the best choice for so long that breast-feeding is a mystery to a lot of women. We want it to make a comeback."

Participants who successfully breast-feed can receive training to become peer counselors. "When enough mothers take part in the program, there will be a tremendous amount of community support," says Heald.

The program also educates women about the many benefits of

breast-feeding. "Breast milk contains important proteins, minerals and vitamins," says Sigman-Grant. "It has antibodies to help newborns fend off infections and nutrients for tissue development and growth."

Breast-feeding also is more economical than feeding infant formula and may help women return to their pre-pregnancy weights more quickly. "At the same time, it strengthens the bond

between mother and baby, which is important for the child's emotional development," says Grant.

The Breast-Feeding Peer Counselor Program currently is available in Blair, Bradford, Carbon, Columbia, Huntingdon, Lackawanna, Northampton, Northumberland, Pike, Snyder, Tioga and Union counties. For more information about the program, contact Judith Heald at (814) 863-3447.

## Retirement Planning

RUTGERS, N.J. — Everyone who faces retirement, voluntarily or otherwise holds the hope that the retirement years will be "the golden years" they're supposed to be. Whether retirement is the best time of one's life or the worst depends upon the amount of planning and effort invested in preparation for it. To have a successful retirement means doing the things we'd like to do, going where we'd like to go, and being free to make choices. All

of these require that we attain at least a reasonable level of financial independence.

Rutgers Cooperative Extension is offering a retirement series titled "Retirement Planning: Get An Early Start." This five week series will begin on Monday, March 20 and run through April 17, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. at the Extension Center on Route 31, in Flemington, NJ. To register or receive more information, call Rutgers Cooperative Extension at (908) 788-1342.

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**CORN TALK**  
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Corn Talk, Lancaster Farming, Saturday, October 8, 1994

### Know Farm's 'Microenvironment,' Says Corn Grower President

ANDY ANDREWS, Lancaster Farming Staff, MONTGOMERYVILLE (Lycoming Co.) — You have to know the micro-environment of every place you farm in order to be able to make an intelligent choice in seed corn selection, said Curt Rakestraw, newly elected president of the Pennsylvania Master Corn Growers Association, Inc. During an interview early last month with Lancaster Farming, Rakestraw toured several of the 31 different farm sites he visits in the farm valley north of Lancaster, Pa.

Rakestraw farms about 1,100 acres of crops (700 acres in corn, 150 acres in small grain and 150 acres in hay) with his brother Dave. Curt said that a farmer must know the qualities of the soil and the environment as a whole. "We have some clay and rock," he said. "They say this is where the glacier did their most damage. The edge of the glacier was right here. So we get a little bit of everything around here." Rakestraw said a lot of the land he rents to grow corn has a lot of different varieties of soil ranging from a Hagerstown silt loam to shaly loam to red brown silt loam to shaly loam to red brown silt loam near the Lycoming



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### For Snook, Standability's Most Important Factor

CAROLYN N. MCILRATH, Bradford Co. Correspondent, JERSEY SHORE (Lycoming Co.) — Some people say it's the rich river bottom soils that allow Ed Snook to take home the first place ribbon in the Pennsylvania Corn Club's annual production contest. But according to the long-time corn grower and hog farmer, there are many factors that contribute to bumper corn crops. In the Five-Acre Corn Club, I don't enter the same fields every year. I've had them in the Nippese Valley on limestone

ground along the river. It's always pushed up to me that I have pig manure and river field but we've had the Five Year Corn Club in seven or eight locations and we've won awards on all of them, he said. In this year's contest, Snook placed first in the three-year average shelled grain class for the regular harvest size. His yield in 1992 was 191.8 bushels per acre. In 1993 he produced 201.6 bushels per acre and in 1994 he produced 194.1 bushels per acre for an average



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