

Envisioning a healthy nation where wellness is achievable for all individuals and communities



HONORING THE WORK, BUILDING WHAT'S NEXT

Dear Partners and Friends,

This will be our final *Wellness Matters* newsletter – for now.

As the Public Health Institute's Center for Wellness and Nutrition's (PHI CWN) current chapter comes to a close, we are taking a pause. As shared in previous newsletters, SNAP-Ed programs across the country will officially conclude on September 30, 2026. We are taking time to reflect on our work and consider what comes next for nutrition education, food security, wellness, and public health.

While this ending is bittersweet, it has many of us, and our partners, asking: **What does the future hold for nutrition education and food security?**

Nutrition, wellness, and public health, as we know it, are at a critical tipping point. I especially worry about two things:

- **The brain drain** of individuals and teams who have dedicated countless hours of their lives to sharing their skills, expertise, and passion to develop, innovate, and expand the field. This includes researchers, registered dietitians, health educators, behavioral health specialists, community engagement specialists, and marketing and communications professionals who have all made significant contributions to nutrition and food security. It also includes the intangible ways in which they have responded to and engaged with communities with care and respect.
- **The communities** who have counted on organizations and individuals to show up and provide community-centered, culturally appropriate nutrition resources that promote affordable, nutrient-dense foods, healthy behaviors, new skills, and overall wellness. These communities have also been essential partners in helping us understand how well we were doing our work by serving as ambassadors and members of community advisory boards. Trusting relationships were cultivated over time.

These two factors will be important to consider as we shape our strategies for a new phase of nutrition education and community wellness.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Honoring the Work, Building What's Next: Message from the Director - 1

2025–2026 Impact Report: A Look at the Work Behind the Impact - 3

Celebrating a Legacy of Impact: The SNAP-Ed Story in Georgia and North Carolina - 4

A Simple Tool, a Big Opportunity: Improving Childhood Nutrition Screening in Rural Kenya - 5

Stay Connected: Explore PHI CWN's Work and Resources - 6



HONORING THE WORK, BUILDING WHAT'S NEXT (CONTINUED)

Our current situation has provided us with an opportunity to reflect on our work, and I want to share some of those reflections with all of you. In this final newsletter, we are excited to present our **2025–2026 Impact Report**, featuring stories, data, and photos from our body of work spanning nutrition, global health, mental and behavioral health, and advocacy.

What I hope you will see throughout these stories is what I know as the **"secret sauce" of our team at PHI CWN: passion, integrity, and care** for the work and the communities we serve.

Our finance and administrative, evaluation and research, and programs teams all care deeply about our work. I want to take a moment to express my wholehearted appreciation to my team for all that they pour into our projects. They wear their hearts on their sleeves in all that they deliver to our clients and communities.

I also want to express my sincere gratitude to our vast network of partners who have trusted us with their passion projects and communities. It has been a pleasure and an honor to collaborate with you all. You will see an article and photos highlighting some of our final activities with our SNAP-Ed partners in Georgia and North Carolina in this newsletter.

As we move into this transition, we hope the work shared here, and in our Impact Report, serves as a reminder of what can be built through strong partnerships, dedicated teams, and deep connections with communities. Let this also be a call to action to continue to advocate for funding and sound policies that support nutrition education in our communities.

This newsletter serves as a launching pad for our next phase as we take time to rebuild with new energy. We look forward to carrying the lessons, relationships, and momentum from this work into the next chapter.

Finally, we are still here, so if you have any ideas or opportunities to share with us, please reach out to me at the email address below.

Here's to brighter days ahead!

With Gratitude,

Erika Takada

Executive Director, PHI CWN

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2025–2026 IMPACT REPORT: A LOOK AT THE WORK BEHIND THE IMPACT

What does a year of meaningful work look like? It looks like dedicated people, trusted partnerships, new ideas, and communities at the center of every effort.

Our **2025–2026 Impact Report** offers a closer look at the work, accomplishments, and outcomes that shaped PHI CWN over the past year. The report brings together stories, data, photos, and project highlights from across our areas of work, including nutrition, global health, mental and behavioral health, research and evaluation, advocacy, and community engagement.

Inside, you'll find featured projects that demonstrate the range of ways PHI CWN works with partners to address complex health challenges. From expanding access to nutritious food and supporting healthier communities to advancing youth behavioral health, conducting research, strengthening organizational capacity, and developing community-driven solutions, the report captures the scope of our work at local, state, national, and global levels.

The report also provides a closer look at key outcomes and measures of reach, including the organizations we partnered with, individuals we reached directly, training and convening participation, communications reach, and other indicators of our work throughout the year.

Together, these stories and results provide a snapshot of what PHI CWN accomplished in 2025–2026 and the many ways our work translated knowledge, evidence, and collaboration into action.

2025–2026 By the Numbers


75

Organizations
Partnered With


1,075

Training
Attendees


6,035

Individuals
Reached Directly


30,195

MarCom
Reach


5,291

Newsletter
Subscribers



CELEBRATING A LEGACY OF IMPACT: THE SNAP-ED STORY IN GEORGIA AND NORTH CAROLINA

In August 2026, PHI CWN joined partners in Georgia and North Carolina to celebrate SNAP-Ed as the program comes to a close. These gatherings offered a meaningful opportunity to reflect on years of collaboration, recognize collective accomplishments, and look ahead to the future of nutrition education and community wellness.

In Raleigh, North Carolina, PHI CWN's Dominic Bassah, Maggie Wilkin, and Amanda Tyler joined the state's final end-of-year SNAP-Ed celebration, marking a 10-year partnership between PHI CWN and North Carolina. The convening brought together all nine SNAP-Ed Implementing Agencies, outreach partners, and other public health and nutrition stakeholders to reflect on the program's impact across the state.

Partners shared successes and lessons from years of implementation, as well as the challenges of sustaining nutrition education with limited resources. The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services recognized the contributions of local, statewide, and regional partners and the lasting difference SNAP-Ed has made in communities.

For PHI CWN, the gathering was also an opportunity to reflect on its role as a statewide evaluation partner and convener of the Southeast Region Collaboration. Through this collaboration, partners from Georgia, North Carolina, and other states came together over the years to share learning, strengthen partnerships, and advance innovation in SNAP-Ed.

Later that week in Atlanta, Dominic and Amanda joined Georgia SNAP-Ed partners for their end-of-year convening. Implementing Agencies reflected on the strengths of their partnerships, lessons learned, and the many ways SNAP-Ed supported nutrition education and community engagement across the state.

The conversation also looked toward what comes next. The Georgia Health Policy Center shared current statewide health priorities and encouraged Implementing Agencies to continue building partnerships and seeking funding and resources to sustain their work. These discussions reinforced something that has been central to SNAP-Ed from the beginning: meaningful, lasting change is built through strong relationships with communities and partners.

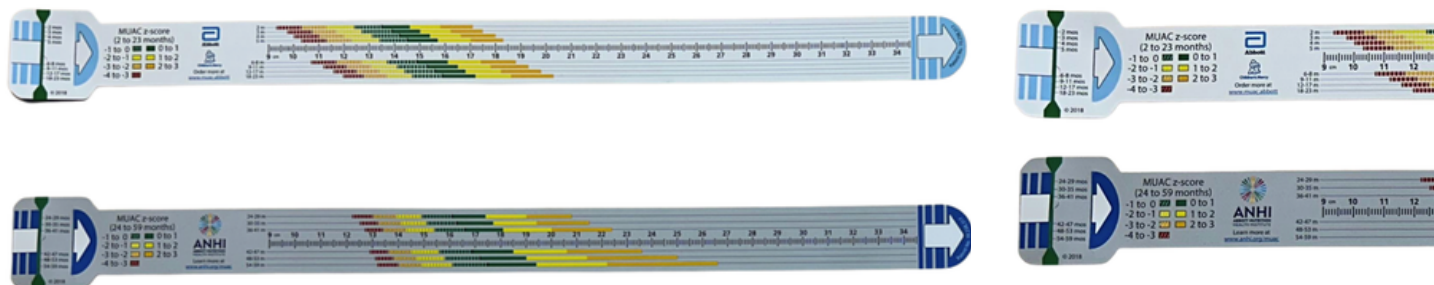
Together, these gatherings were more than celebrations of a program coming to an end. They were opportunities to honor the people, partnerships, and shared commitment that made the work possible. They reminded us that while programs may change, the knowledge, relationships, and community connections built through this work remain.

While SNAP-Ed may be ending, its legacy of collaboration and community impact will continue to shape the future of nutrition education and community wellness across the Southeast. PHI CWN is grateful to our partners for the opportunity to learn, grow, and build alongside you over the years—and for the many ways you will carry this work forward.

Bottom (left to right): PHI CWN team and North Carolina SNAP-Ed partners; PHI CWN team members with the Georgia SNAP-Ed team



A SIMPLE TOOL, A BIG OPPORTUNITY: IMPROVING CHILDHOOD NUTRITION SCREENING IN RURAL KENYA



Childhood malnutrition remains a pressing public health challenge. Millions of children under five experience undernutrition, while increasing numbers are also affected by overweight and obesity. Early detection can help connect children and families to appropriate care, yet many rural and low-resource communities lack access to screening equipment and specialized health services.

A new study by PHI CWN's Dr. Raissa Sorgho and Dominic Bassah, in collaboration with research teams from the University of Bonn, Kenya Medical Research Institute, Siaya County Government, and Abbott, examined whether a simple tool could help close that gap.

Published in *BMC Public Health*, the study evaluated the use of a mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) z-score tape for community-based childhood nutrition screening in Siaya County, Kenya. The research was conducted as part of the *ALIMUS – We are Feeding!* trial and involved 575 households and Community Health Volunteers (CHVs).

Unlike standard MUAC tapes, which primarily identify severe undernutrition, the MUAC z-score tape provides age-specific information and can identify both undernutrition and overnutrition. Its color-coded design allows trained health workers to assess a child's nutritional status quickly, without growth charts or complex calculations.

Strong Community Use

Following hands-on training, CHVs consistently used the tapes during routine household visits. At least 85% of enrolled children were screened during each of the four screening rounds, and 78% completed all four screenings—demonstrating strong family participation and sustained use by community health workers.

The researchers also observed a decline in the proportion of children experiencing some form of malnutrition, from 18% at the first screening to 14% by the fourth. Among children who completed all four visits, 12% improved their nutritional risk status, while 7% worsened.

While the tape is not a substitute for medical diagnosis, the findings suggest it can serve as a practical first step toward identifying childhood malnutrition earlier and connecting families with appropriate care.

The study demonstrates how a relatively simple, low-cost tool, when paired with appropriate training and community-based health workers, can help make nutrition screening more accessible in underserved communities.

For PHI CWN, the research also reflects the importance of working alongside communities and local health systems to develop practical approaches that can strengthen nutrition and health outcomes.

Citation: Bassah, D., McClintic, E., Sharn, A.R. et al. Mid-upper arm circumference z-score tapes for childhood malnutrition screening: an implementation study from rural Kenya. BMC Public Health 26, 2344 (2026).

READ THE FULL STUDY

Explore the research and findings by clicking [here](#).

STAY CONNECTED: EXPLORE PHI CWN'S WORK AND RESOURCES

As this chapter of PHI CWN's work comes to a close, the expertise, knowledge, and resources we have built with our partners remain available to support the work ahead.

For more than 15 years, PHI CWN has partnered with public agencies, nonprofits, healthcare organizations, foundations, businesses, and community organizations to develop practical public health solutions that advance wellness, nutrition, and health equity.

Our Pillars of Service

PHI CWN's work is grounded in four areas that reflect our commitment to making optimal health accessible:

Education

We design evidence-based education programs, social marketing campaigns, and community outreach initiatives that promote healthy behaviors and lasting change.

Training & Technical Assistance

We provide customized training, workshops, and technical assistance to help individuals and organizations strengthen programs and advance their health and wellness goals.

Advocacy

We support strategic planning, coalition building, community engagement, and advocacy efforts that help advance policies and environments that promote healthier communities.

Research & Evaluation

We conduct research, evaluation, and data analysis to assess program effectiveness, generate actionable insights, and help organizations demonstrate and strengthen their impact.

Explore Our Resources

The work doesn't end with a program. The tools, knowledge, and resources created through our partnerships can continue to support practitioners, researchers, community organizations, and others working to improve health:

Nutrition & Education Resource Library

Find curricula, toolkits, guides, and educational materials developed to support nutrition education, healthy behaviors, and community wellness.

CYBHI Resources

Explore resources and materials from PHI CWN's work supporting California's Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative, including tools and approaches designed to strengthen behavioral health and well-being.

Research & Publications

Access peer-reviewed research, reports, evaluation findings, and other publications from PHI CWN's work in nutrition, global health, and public health.

Food Is Medicine

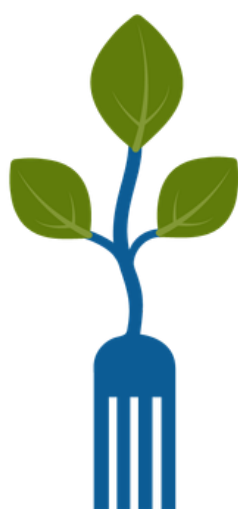
Explore resources that highlight the connection between nutritious food, health, and well-being.

Continue Exploring the Work

We are grateful to the partners, communities, funders, and colleagues who have helped shape this work. We hope these services and resources continue to be useful, spark new ideas, and support those carrying this work forward.

READY TO LEARN MORE?

Visit the [PHI CWN website](#), or [click here](#), to explore our work, resources, and publications.



CENTER FOR
**WELLNESS
& NUTRITION**

EDUCATION

TRAINING

ADVOCACY

EVALUATION