

Melinda Aponte and the YWCA of Asheville Harness Community Collaboration to Maximize the CACFP

Melinda Aponte works with organizations across her region to promote child nutrition, both within the Child and Adult Care Food Program and beyond.

ROUND ROCK, TX, UNITED STATES, October 13, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Melinda Aponte has never met a barrier she and her child nutrition team at YWCA of Asheville couldn't overcome, and the same was demonstrated in her relentless pursuit of collaboration throughout the pandemic crisis. The nutrition program at YWCA of Asheville serves 50,000 meals to 600 children annually through

two separate programs. Forty-three percent of children in their Early Learning Program and 90% of children in the Empowerment Child care program qualify as low-income.



Melinda uses her role to improve food equity in her community. She serves on the Western North Carolina Food Justice Planning Initiative, a body centered on collectively improving the food system for Western North Carolina. The need for this group and Melinda's insight is critical. The YWCA of Asheville is in a food desert—there are no full-service grocery stores within walking distance of the neighborhood, and 36% of community-members in the neighborhood around the YWCA of Asheville do not have personal transportation to reach food resources outside the area.

Access, education and equity are emphasized on plates in the center too. Melinda developed a “Farmer’s Market Friday” fruit and vegetable tasting curriculum for students to get hands-on experience with a food they may not have had before. Children from food deserts are most likely to experience low diversity canned and frozen produce, but Melinda evens the playing field for her students. She stays up-to-date on the newest research and information regarding child nutrition and offers meals that highlight the diversity of cultures present at the center.

With Melinda already doing so much for the children of YWCA of Asheville, who could be surprised when she outmatched and overcame the pandemic too? Nearly 40% of the child care centers in Asheville closed at the onset of the pandemic, and the YWCA of Asheville encouraged many staff to begin working from home. Indeed, many of the nutrition staff were even furloughed. Melinda remained onsite with a skeleton crew, serving meals to the children of essential, frontline workers. The food needs remained the same, but the staff was smaller and burden of risk was higher.

Melinda developed critical partnerships across Asheville to help meet the needs of her center and community. She worked with Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project, an organization that connects farmers to local communities, and she called upon Grace Covenant Church's volunteer garden. These relationships flourished and generated fresh produce and strengthened community partnerships in a time of great need. Even better, the emphasis on locally sourced produce promotes sustainable eating habits and helps reduce the YWCA of Asheville's carbon footprint, another aim of food justice.

Luckily, Melinda doesn't keep her wealth of knowledge and skills locked away. She energetically collaborates with other local CACFP providers and meets quarterly with the regional director to report and give feedback. Her close working relationship has allowed for Melinda and the YWCA of Asheville to have a great deal of understanding and influence with the CACFP.

From professional relationships to community nonprofits, Melinda's collaborative work earned her a spot as a finalist for the Inspire Collaboration award. Award winners were named during the 2022 National Child Nutrition Conference.

Since 1986, National CACFP Sponsors Association has served as a national platform for the Child and Adult Care Food Program Community. The mission of [NCA](#) is to bring members information on legislation, regulation and advocacy issues, share resources among the entire CACFP community, and provide an engaging, informative annual conference offering the largest CACFP networking and training opportunities in the nation. CACFP is an indicator of quality care. When children and adults are cared for by providers who participate in the CACFP, they are receiving the best nutrition available.

Business Office
National CACFP Sponsors Association
+1 512-850-8278

[email us here](#)

Visit us on social media:

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2022 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.