



PA NEN Member Highlights - finding the story that hasn't been told so many times

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Director of Nutrition and Active Living at Health Promotion Council

Where do you or have you worked?

I have worked as a physician, researcher, and program director in the areas of chronic disease, maternal and child health, food insecurity & nutrition, pulmonary hypertension and HIV/AIDS and syphilis in Latin America. I have been fortunate to work across the spectrum of organizations including international and national healthcare systems, academic institutions, and non-profit organizations. In my current role as Director of Nutrition and Active Living at Health Promotion Council, I am responsible for overseeing nutrition education, technical assistance and capacity building services to individuals and organizations to promote healthy lifestyle behaviors.

What are your strengths?

<i>Honesty:</i>	<i>Determination:</i>	<i>Analytical Thinking:</i>
It is important to me to lead my personal and professional life with integrity, transparency and honesty. I strongly believe that these values are critical for building creative and motivated teams.	I push myself to get things done, to connect with the right partners, and to constantly look for better ways of doing things.	I strive to use evidence and data to inform programs and decision-making. Without it, I feel lost.

What about the health and wellness profession excites you?

I became interested in public health while serving as a volunteer for the Argentinian Red Cross. For several years, I provided relief to victims of disasters and helped prevent, prepare for, and respond to emergencies. Following this experience and as a medical intern, I worked in rural Argentina providing basic medical services and education on healthy lifestyle choices. Throughout these experiences, I always believed that significant health impacts will only be achieved by interacting with entire communities, not only with isolated individuals. This combination of experiences made a significant impact in my decision to become and continue my career as a public health professional.

Any big projects ahead of you?

Renovating my “fixer-upper” house! My husband and I recently purchased a house built in the 1800s in Philadelphia, and I am learning about plumbing, electrical, and foundations at the speed of light!

Favorite food?

I have always been exposed to a variety of cultures. I was raised as an Armenian living in Argentina, which I believe allows me to embrace diversity and find my comfort anywhere I go. Thus, my favorite food continues being Armenian food, and Manti is my top dish. To make Manti, you need the patience of an angel - which both of my parents thankfully have - and an entire family willing to help. We usually make it together, filling tiny little pieces of dough with meat and layering them tightly on a baking sheet. They get baked dry until golden in color, and then drenched in broth until the pasta soaks it up. Finally, it is usually served with a yogurt sauce, garlic and mint. Simply delicious!