

Aurora Calvillo Buffington (Uh-roh-ra Cal-vee-yo Buf-ing-ton) began her career with the University of Nevada Reno Extension in 2016 as a Health and Nutrition faculty instructor. She is a Licensed and Registered Dietitian Nutritionist and a Certified Exercise Physiologist and Physical Activity and Public Health Practitioner. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Nutrition Science, Master of Science in Exercise Physiology, and Doctor of Philosophy in Public Health at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). Upon completing her Ph.D. in 2017, Aurora accepted a tenure track faculty position as Assistant Professor and Specialist in Public Health and Nutrition. She oversees the Healthy Kids, Healthy Schools, and Healthy Food Systems programs. She also serves as the Extension's Health and Nutrition Internship Coordinator, providing interns and college students opportunities to complete didactic and supervised practice requirements in their academic programs.

Aurora transformed the previous nutrition education program for elementary school students at 13 Clark County schools, into a comprehensive school wellness program called Healthy Kids, Healthy Schools (HKHS) implemented in 5 counties, 42 schools, reaching 4500 students. The HKHS team helps schools meet school wellness policy goals with nutrition lessons delivered in the classroom, engaging chef demonstrations, and outreach at school family events. Team members also help school staff make contextual changes to school policies, systems, and the school environment using findings from School Physical Activity Nutrition Environment Tool assessments, a validated environmental scan created by Oregon State University. This scan enables HKHS team members to present school administrators with a report containing objective results based on best practices promoting healthy school environments.

Changes at schools facilitated by the HKHS team include replacing food rewards with treasure chest prizes for students, establishment of school wellness advisory committees, promotion of drinking water only in the classroom, and implementation of out of school physical activity or cooking clubs, among others.

Since its implementation in the 2016-2017 school year, HKHS evaluations comparing student pre- and post-intervention survey responses have consistently demonstrated increased in student intake, attitudes, and preference for fruits and vegetables as a result of HKHS nutrition education programming. Table 1 presents statistically significant differences from pre- to post-intervention in fruits and vegetables that were eaten by elementary school students as well as less juice being consumed.

Table 1. Pick a Better Snack nutrition education program evaluation, 2016-2019.

Measure	n	M pre-	M post-	Diff	S	p-value
Number of times per day fruit eaten						
2016-2017	2,353	1.62	1.77	0.15	89186	< 0.0001
2017-2018	2,605	1.63	1.71	0.08	58616	0.0022
2018-2019	1,760	1.55	1.70	0.15	45774	< 0.0001
Number of times per day vegetables eaten						
2016-2017	2,337	1.31	1.42	0.10	52956	0.0007
2017-2018	2,616	1.24	1.39	0.15	96484	< 0.0001
2018-2019	1,752	1.16	1.32	0.16	46040	< 0.0001
Number of times per day juice consumed						
2016-2017	2,345	1.39	1.39	-0.00	-1979	0.9002 ^{NS}
2017-2018	2,590	1.58	1.50	-0.08	-61917	0.0012
2018-2019	1,747	1.24	1.14	-0.10	-29815	0.0021

Notes: student data is self-reported. ^{NS} = *not significant*.

Other general findings that were statistically significant:

- Attitudes towards fruits and vegetables improved from pre- to post-intervention such that students reported an increased liking to try new fruits and new vegetables.

- Students indicated liking to eat more fruits and vegetables as snacks.

Aurora also created the Healthy Food Systems (HFS) umbrella with the primary aims of increasing food literacy, as well as healthy food access. This comprehensive program includes logistical support of the local food policy council, a food preservation certification program, site- and garden-based nutrition education, high school food system education, and a farmers market program called SNAP Into Farm Fresh Foods (SF³). These programs support qualitative research conducted by the local food council revealing that low-income Hispanic mothers and seniors desired to increase their food literacy skills and see environmental changes promoting healthy food choices in their community. Since 2017, 3150 people have participated in HFS classes helping increase food literacy, and the HFS team has helped two farmers markets increase access to healthy foods for the local community by accepting SNAP and nutrition incentives.

Aurora has received several awards and honors during her time at Extension. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (AND) Latinos and Hispanics in Dietetics and Nutrition (LAHIDAN) Member Interest Group presented her with the 2018 Distinguished Trinko Service Award, recognizing her contributions made to the profession and to LAHIDAN. Aurora helped create the LAHIDAN Mentoring Program and has served in various Academy leadership positions at the local, state, and national levels, including President of the Nevada affiliate of the Academy. In 2019, she became a Fellow of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (FAND), an honor recognizing her service to the dietetics profession and her commitment to optimizing health through food and nutrition.

Aurora was inducted in 2018 to the Delta Theta Chapter of the Delta Omega Honorary Society in Public Health at the UNLV School of Public Health. The

organization promotes and recognizes excellent achievements in public health research, practice, and policy. She was selected by the Association of State Public Health Nutritionists (ASPHN) to participate in the 2018 – 2019 cohort of the Growing ASPHN Leaders Program, a competitive program designed to help participants develop their leadership skills to promote public health effectively. In 2020, she was officially appointed by Nevada Governor Steve Sisolak to represent Extension on the Council for Food Security. This Council convenes to implement goals to improve Nevadans' quality of life and health by increasing food security throughout the State. This year, Aurora was selected to participate in the Food System Leadership Network's (FSLN) Community Food Systems Mentorship Program. The FSLN program strengthens the capacity of food systems leaders to catalyze social change through food. Additionally, Aurora and her team have received several appreciation plaques and awards over the years from organizations such as the Quiet Storm Foundation, the Juvenile Diabetes and Research Foundation, and the Clark County School District Communities in Schools Program for educational activities provided to youth and their families.

Aurora's leadership training is put to good use through her participation in various professional organizations. She is a member of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (AND) and the state Nevada AND affiliate, where she served as Public Relations/Media Representative, President, and State Regulatory Specialist. She belongs to the Hunger and Environmental Nutrition Dietetic Practice Group (DPG) and the Public Health and Community Nutrition DPG. She served as the LAHIDAN Member Interest Group Nominating Committee Chair and as Mentoring Program Chair. She is an ASPHN expanded member, serving on both the National Fruit and Vegetable Nutrition Council

and the Healthy Food, Active Communities Council. She was the ASPHN Liaison to the National Physical Activity Society, linking nutrition and physical activity practitioners, and she belongs to the National Extension Association of Family & Consumer Sciences.

Aurora also serves in roles that complement her Extension Healthy Food Systems work, of which she is particularly proud. She is a steering committee member of the Racial Equity in the Food System (REFS) Workgroup, which consists of Cooperative Extension professionals and community stakeholders who connect, learn and collaborate to facilitate change within their institutions and society to build racial equity within the food system. As the Extension representative of the Council for Food Security, a Governor appointed position, Aurora has served on special subcommittees to create Council policy priorities and research senior hunger. Finally, she serves her local community as Chair of the Southern Nevada Food Council (SNFC), the local food policy council. Through the SNFC, Aurora has provided community stakeholders with experiential learning through food system field trips. She secured funding to pursue nutrition-related objectives supporting the local health department's Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health grant. This work includes leading qualitative research from Hispanic and senior residents of a food desert, a healthy food retailer workshop, and currently supports a food access and transportation workgroup facilitating activities that will expedite changes to the local food system.

Aurora's energy, passion for excellence and service to the community, her profession, and her team members is demonstrated on a daily basis. The outstanding accomplishments of Aurora Calvillo Buffington reflect great credit upon herself and the University of Nevada Reno, Extension.



EXTENSION

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Dear National Extension Association of Family & Consumer Sciences Awards Committee:

I am pleased to recommend Aurora Buffington for the 2021 NEAFCS Past Presidents' New Professional Award. I have had the pleasure of working with her since 2016, thus I know firsthand that she possesses the qualities expected of such an awardee. Aurora has contributed significantly to our work in Extension.

Aurora is one of two faculty members representing Health and Nutrition statewide. She is a Registered Dietitian who came to Extension with a rich background of community work during her time at the local health department. Those community connections helped her succeed in creating new partnerships with Extension. She facilitates the local food policy council where she provides a venue for stakeholders to network and rally efforts to improve the local food system. The regular convening of stakeholders has enhanced collaboration and taken their relationships with each other from one of networking to collaboration and coordination.

Aurora's passion for community health is evident in the way she strives to promote school wellness throughout Nevada. With her belief that schools are positioned to make a big impact on child health, she has focused her team's effort on helping improve the school wellness environments so students from diverse backgrounds may enjoy healthier surroundings. The Healthy Kids, Healthy Schools program that she created includes family engagement through outreach at family events, bilingual Spanish and English newsletters, and Bingo activity sheets that the whole family may partake in at home to promote the consumption of fruits and vegetables and physical activity. During the 2019-2020 school year, her team made over 1,023 direct contacts with adults and 41,888 direct contacts with youth in Clark County despite COVID-19 related school closures.

Aurora took her staff from providing nutrition education to also helping the community "make the healthy choice the easy choice." She has led public health trainings for Extension staff to build skills as "public health is everybody's business." She is highly motivated, willing to try new things, and enjoys helping others improve their ability to serve the community. Aurora possesses a democratic leadership style that extends beyond her team of 17 staff members to her community work, for example as Chair of the Southern Nevada Food Council.

Extension is a partnership of Nevada counties; University of Nevada, Reno; and U.S. Department of Agriculture. University of Nevada, Reno is an EEO/AA institution.

Aurora has many accomplishments, among them is adding variety and value to Clark County programs, as well as statewide, during her time with us at Extension. As such, I highly support Aurora Buffington as the next recipient of the NEAFCS Past Presidents' New Professional Award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eric Killian". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "E".

Eric Killian
Southern Area Director