Are You Willing and Available to Be a Preceptor?

At the Opening Session of the Academy’s 2015 Food & Nutrition Conference & Expo (FNCE), I talked about the ongoing challenge of providing supervised practice opportunities for dietetics students. “One of the most pressing issues facing our Academy and our profession is the shortage of internships,” I said. “We need preceptors to work with potential interns. I am committed, as president, to doing all we can to create more internships and encouraging more members to get involved and to serve as preceptors.”

And I asked our fellow members the same question that I ask now: “Are you willing and available?”

I’m happy to say that hundreds of Academy members have answered the call: As of this writing, the Find-a-Preceptor Database (www.eatright.org/preceptors) includes more than 900 practitioners—over 100 more than at this time last year.

EXTRAORDINARY PRECEPTORS

Thank you to all those who are serving as preceptors. You are making a real difference! The Academy has designated April as National Preceptor Month to honor the preceptors who provide valuable training all year long.

The Accreditation Council for Nutrition and Dietetics’ (ACEND) website (www.eatrightacend.org) contains a page, complete with photos, dedicated to students thanking their preceptors for all they do.

It’s vital that we thank those who give their time to assist students. Each year, the Nutrition and Dietetics Educators and Preceptors (NDEP), with the Academy’s Foundation, recognizes seven extraordinary preceptors from a variety of practice areas—one from each NDEP geographical area—with $1,000 awards. At FNCE, it was my pleasure to recognize these 2015 winners:

- **Area 1:** Janet Fabling, MS, CNSC, CSP, clinical dietitian, Madigan Army Medical Center, Tacoma, WA
  I have had the privilege of impacting the lives of dietetic interns for over 25 years. My three goals are always the same: to help them apply didactic education to the practice of nutrition support; to encourage an appreciation for the value of multidisciplinary patient care; and to inspire them to become lifelong learners.

- **Area 2:** Susan Keyes, MS, RD, LD, CNSD, clinical dietitian, Missouri Baptist Medical Center, St Louis
  The students that we are precepting today are the future of our profession, and there is nothing more rewarding than knowing that I have helped shape that future.

- **Area 3:** Sara Long, RDN, LD, patient food service manager, Arkansas Children’s Hospital, Little Rock
  Nutritional Services typically isn’t the preferred option for a rotation, much less a career, but I love my position! I strive to ensure every intern feels like part of the management team during their rotation.

- **Area 4:** Rosanne Wolochuk, RD, clinical dietitian, Children’s Hospital Colorado, Aurora, CO
  I was fortunate to have had some exceptional preceptors who instructed, guided, and challenged me. As a result of their example, I committed, at the start of my career, to being a preceptor that would engage, educate, challenge and support students.

- **Area 5:** Jennifer Kerner, RDN, LD, clinical dietitian, University Hospitals Case Medical Center, Cleveland, OH
  I love finding connections between textbook knowledge and real clinical situations and find it rewarding to see an intern understand a concept for the first time as we discuss a patient.

- **Area 6:** Melanie Brede, MS, RD, student health dietitian, University of Virginia, Charlottesville
  I feel fortunate for the excellent training opportunities I received when I was a student, intern and young professional; I see serving as a preceptor as a way to give back.

- **Area 7:** Gayle Ziv, MA, RDN, CDN, clinical nutrition manager, Saint Francis Hospital, Port Washington, NY
  Although I am towards the end of my career, my goal is to continue providing a positive learning environment for our students. I want to make sure that we are handing off knowledge and skill sets to a new generation of dietitians that will demand respect and make us proud!

THE NEED STILL EXISTS

Despite the strides that have been made in recruiting, we still do not have enough preceptors to meet the demand. Hundreds of students each year apply for supervised practice placement but are not matched because the supply of openings is far less than the numbers of students seeking placement. ACEND estimates we may need at least double the current number of registered dietitian nutritionists and nutrition and dietetic technicians, registered, to serve as preceptors to meet supervised practice needs.

Please consider serving as a preceptor and help all our students live their dream of joining and leading our profession.

Dr Evelyn Crayton, RDN, LDN, FAND
President@eatright.org

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