During your many years of commitment to WHI, you've met fellow Dietary Change participants in the pages of this newsletter. Women, just like you, who work hard to stick with the WHI eating pattern while juggling responsibilities and interests. We caught up with some of these women to see how their lives have changed, what they struggle with now, and how they've overcome some challenges.

Mother and Daughter Deal With Life Changes

When we met Davis Clinical Center participant Julia Carvalho and daughter Judy Dimock, a participant at the Phoenix Clinical Center, in the very first issue of WHIse Choices in 1996, the pair was just getting started with WHI. Mother and daughter encouraged each other to follow the eating pattern during their frequent long-distance phone calls. When they visited one another, they were especially aware of their shared dietary habits. Seven years later, both are still involved with WHI, but circumstances have changed, especially for Julia.

Julia and her husband of 61 years moved from their home to an apartment in a continuing care facility. Both have had some health problems, and the facility provides extra help if they need it. They attend dinner nightly at the communal dining room, which presents Julia with the daily challenge of eating out. “I usually have fish for dinner and I’ll ask for sauces and gravies on the side,” she says. “I have salads with low-fat dressing on the side, too.” Ever-present desserts test her willpower: “They’re hard to turn down!” admits Julia. Years of cooking for her family are over, so she keeps things simple now. “I don’t do any cooking outside of the microwave anymore,” she explains.

Driving is difficult, so Julia stopped attending dietary group sessions last year. “I miss the group. It keeps you focused,” she discloses. Her peer group meets regularly, so Julia joins their luncheons if they’re meeting nearby. “Some of the women are still very active in WHI and they share what they’ve learned,” says Julia. She also keeps in touch with her group nutritionist.

Julia has two great-grandchildren now and she’s enjoying her life of fewer responsibilities. She savors finally having enough time to read. She counts plenty of the residents as friends and she has two volunteer jobs: working at a soda shop in her community and selecting the movies shown on an in-house TV station.

Daughter Judy’s life has slowed down a bit, too. She and her husband, Bud, sold their music store, and Bud retired. Judy, now 60, works part-time at an independent bookstore, glad to be free of all of the responsibilities that come with owning a business. The couple enjoys travel, including a trip to Italy last year, and Judy’s active in a Bible study.

“I still attend the group sessions,” says Judy. “It keeps you aware of what you’re doing and seeing people reinforces my commitment to the study.” She keeps a food diary for three days each month. “I probably slip more often than in the beginning,” she confesses. “But if I do, I just go back to low-fat eating and try to budget my fat grams.” Portion sizes and getting enough...
grains are challenges for her, but meeting her fruit/vegetable goal is easy. "I always have fruit with breakfast and two or three vegetables with lunch and dinner," Judy explains.

**Still Riding, Ready to Retire**

"Life is not a french fry" was Jeanette Schwertfeger's motto as she shared her healthy WHI habits with us in a 1999 newsletter. Lowering her fat grams led this Nevada Clinical Center participant to lose weight, which enabled her to ride her horses again in the pastures around her rural Reno home, as well as experience better health.

"I'm proud that I stuck to it," says the 67-year-old of her WHI commitment. "I'm in great shape and I don't take any medicine." Jeanette, also part of Calcium/Vitamin D study, hasn't missed a single group session. She writes down what she eats every day: "It's a good monitoring tool for me." She works to keep her fat grams down. She eats fruits and vegetables "by the ton," including the tomatoes, squash, cucumbers, beans, radishes and peas she grows in her garden. "Grains are a little more of a challenge," Jeanette admits, "so I eat cereal, multigrain bread and popcorn with no fat."

Jeanette's still working as a casino host at night, but she's eyeing retirement soon. Her role requires her to eat often with guests, so she usually has a salad with dressing on the side and a roll without butter. When coworkers bring her homemade treats, she might take a small bite so she won't offend anyone, but then she quietly passes the goodies along.

Jeanette frequently rides her beloved horse, Buddy. Retirement, she hopes, will bring her plenty of time to ride, garden, and use her season pass at a nearby ski area. "People think I'm kind of crazy to ride horses and go skiing at my age," she chuckles, "but I never look at life as dangerous. I live each day as it comes."

**Traveler Takes Charge of Health**

We were lucky to catch Caroline Johnson at home for an interview in 1997. The Birmingham Clinical Center participant and her husband, Andy, are fervent travelers, on the road almost continuously in their RV. They own a smaller RV now and still travel, but not as often. Sadly, one of their sons, who lived in and cared for their home while they were away, died in 2000. The Johnsons moved to a rural home on four acres; their neighbors keep an eye on their place when they're vacationing.

Another big change in Caroline's life is exercise. She was overweight and her knees were causing her pain. "I decided I'd better do something now or I'd end up in a wheelchair." Now she's up every day at 4:00 a.m. to unlock a local rehabilitation center/gym, where she and her husband work out for an hour, five days a week. "Exercise has improved my health," says Caroline. "I lost over 40 pounds and my knees are no longer giving me problems. And exercise makes me less hungry, so I've gotten past binge eating, too."

Caroline makes a point of doing a daily food diary on her computer. "I've gotten so used to low-fat eating," she says. "We eat very little beef, and lots of chicken and fish. To meet my grain goal, I eat whole-grain bread and cereal with fruit and soy milk every day." Caroline's busy schedule doesn't give her time to cook each day, so she plans ahead and freezes meals. "We eat a lot of fresh vegetable soup. I'll make a big pot and then freeze it in two-person portions," she explains. "I also freeze fresh fruit and other meals." When she and Andy travel, Caroline brings along a basket of healthy snacks, including pre-measured bags of cereal.

Attending group sessions is a necessity for
Caroline. “Those meetings keep me on track. It helps knowing there are other people doing the same thing,” she says. “After knowing the group so long, it’s like having a family or class reunion.”

“Even after WHI is over, I don’t think I’ll ever change,” reflects Caroline. With three great-grandchildren now (and one on the way), she wants to keep fit for her busy life of traveling, singing in her church choir and quilting with her daughter.

Community Pillar Stays the Course

“When I look back at what I ate before this program, I’ve done a 180-degree turn,” admits Charlotte Richardson of the Pawtucket Clinical Center. Charlotte used to start her days with a fast-food sausage and egg biscuit, followed by a mushroom cheeseburger at lunch. She joined WHI for her four daughters and three granddaughters. “I did it for them, but I didn’t realize how I’d benefit,” she states.

“I’ve got so much energy. I can’t believe myself!” exclaims Charlotte. “I think WHI helps a lot.”

This energetic 75-year-old was featured in a 1999 issue of WHIse Choices. Charlotte was, and still is, very active in her community and was honored with a “Woman of Achievement” award by a Rhode Island women’s organization. She retired from the local Housing Board after 12 years, but she still serves as the executive director of the local senior center.

Three years ago, Charlotte was diagnosed with early glaucoma and night driving became difficult. Consequently, she switched from evening WHI group sessions to a day group. “The knowledge is great and it stays with you for a lifetime,” she says of her dietary sessions. “Everybody helps everybody. Everyone shares the same problems, so you find out you’re not doing so bad.”

Meeting her grain goal was once a challenge for Charlotte, but not anymore. “I eat sandwiches and croutons to get my grains, and I’ll have cereal at night if I need more,” she explains. Keeping up with her fruits and vegetables is easy, but self-monitoring is a struggle. “I know what I’m eating, but I don’t keep the records,” confesses Charlotte. “I broke the habit and I don’t feel good about it, but it doesn’t stop me from following the rules.”

Attending many meeting and functions once had Charlotte struggling to turn down tempting desserts. “Now I just tell them, ‘I’m very sorry, but I’m in WHI and I can’t eat that,’ or I just take a little bit,” she says. Charlotte’s husband of 55 years and her family are very supportive about offering low-fat choices at get-togethers.

“The biggest impact of WHI is knowledge,” declares Charlotte. “We learn through practice, theory, shopping, talking and cooking. I hear nutrition advice on the news and I know it already.”

---

**STAFF**

*WHIse Choices* is produced quarterly by the WHI Coordinating Center at Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center.

**Editor:** Colleen Steelquist

**Scientific Advisor:** Beth Burrows

**Design:** Express Genetic Design

---

**LETTERS**

We’d love to hear your feedback on the newsletter and your story ideas. We regret that we cannot answer questions about individual medical conditions. Send a letter to:

*WHIse Choices*

FHCRC

1100 Fairview Ave N, MP1002

Seattle, WA 98109

or e-mail: csteelqu@whi.org
Ways to Maintain My WHI Contribution - Sharing the Wisdom

Women in the Dietary Change group have discovered many different ways to maintain their commitment to the WHI Dietary Study and continue eating low-fat year after year. You have each found ways that work for you. Below are ideas that some of you have shared about what best helps you continue to eat a low-fat diet that includes lots of fruits, vegetables, and grains.

- Attend group sessions to reinforce your commitment and help stay focused.
- Support yourself with positive thoughts and a “can do,” not a “can’t do,” attitude.
- Meet with group members between sessions as a great way to share and learn from others.
- Keep track of what you eat to help stay aware.
- Stay motivated through pride in your accomplishments.
- Welcome the support of family, friends and other group members.
- Eat lots of fruits and vegetables to help limit higher-fat foods.
- Be creative in looking for the many ways you’re doing the best you can, whatever your situation.
- Pay attention to portion sizes.
- Keep going, and realize all your efforts count!