

University of Mississippi

eGrove

Oral History Project (all interviews)

Oral Histories

12-17-2017

Beverly Cross

Beverly Cross

Institute of Child Nutrition. Child Nutrition Archives.

Follow this and additional works at: https://egrove.olemiss.edu/icn_ohistories



Part of the [Food Science Commons](#), [Other Education Commons](#), and the [Teacher Education and Professional Development Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Cross, Beverly and Institute of Child Nutrition. Child Nutrition Archives., "Beverly Cross" (2017). *Oral History Project (all interviews)*. 36.

https://egrove.olemiss.edu/icn_ohistories/36

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Oral Histories at eGrove. It has been accepted for inclusion in Oral History Project (all interviews) by an authorized administrator of eGrove. For more information, please contact egrove@olemiss.edu.

Beverly Cross Oral History

NFSMI/ICN Employee: 1990-2017

Background

NFSMI Beginning – 1990

Dr. Jeanette Phillips

Office Organization

Dr. Josephine Martin

Office #1 – Home Management House, University Avenue – 1990

Office #2 – Temporary Location, South Loop Drive – 1998

Office #3 – Permanent Building, Jeanette Phillips Drive – 2001

Building Dedication – March 23, 2001

Teleconferences/Satellite Seminars

Conference Participation

Breakfast Lunch Training (BLT)

Barely Bear Learns About Good Nutrition

NETPRO

Nutrition Management for Children with Special Needs Conferences

Orientation to School Nutrition Management Training

Nutrition Update Seminars

Healthy Cuisine for Kids

Purchasing/Procurement Training

Adult Day Care Resources

Marketing, Historical Calendar, Cooks for Kids Calendar

Rebranding the Institute

Training Growth

Current Responsibilities – Training Team

Training Requests

Consultant Trainers and Trainer Orientation

Reflection

One of the first hires for the new National Food Service Management Institute/Institute of Child Nutrition, Beverly Cross spent more than a quarter of a century working for the Institute. Here she shares her reflections as she prepares for her retirement in December 2017.

JB: I am Jeffrey Boyce, and it is December 18, 2017. I am here on the University of Mississippi campus at the Institute of Child Nutrition with Beverly Cross, the longest serving employee of the Institute, who has recently announced her retirement. Welcome Beverly, and thanks for taking the time to talk with me today.

BC: Thank you, Jeff.

BACKGROUND

JB: Could we begin by you telling me a little bit about yourself, where you were born, and where you grew up?

BC: I was born in Grenada, Mississippi, and grew up as a country girl just outside the small town of Coffeenville. I was the only child of wonderful, loving, hard-working parents. For the past 30 years, Oxford, Mississippi, has been my home.

JB: Coffeenville is where you attended elementary and high school?

BC: Yes, I went to both elementary and high school in the same building - grades one through twelve, graduating with the class of 1972.

JB: Wow, in one building. What was the size of your class?

BC: I think there were 86 students in my graduating class.

JB: Wow, that's bigger than mine. We had sixty-three. Were there lunch or breakfast programs there when you were going to school?

BC: Yes, a lunch program.

JB: Do you remember any of your favorite menu items?

BC: Friday was hamburger day, and that was probably my favorite. I remember that our lunchroom ladies made the hamburger buns, and they made delicious apple cobbler. The turkey and dressing Thanksgiving meal was always special, with homemade rolls, of course. I knew each of those ladies well – Mrs. French, Mrs. Martin, and Mrs. Williams. In the town of Coffeenville most everyone knew each other or at least the families. Our lunchroom ladies greeted us by name and took good care of us.

JB: That's nice. I still remember my lunch ladies. Did they all wear the white uniforms?

BC: They did.

JB: The white hose and the white shoes.

BC: Yes, and clean, white aprons. And hairnets!

JB: Once you finished at Coffeerville, tell me about your educational background. Where did you go from there?

BC: I attended Freed-Hardeman University, a small Christian University in Henderson, Tennessee. My parents steered me in that direction, and I had a great experience, earning a bachelor's degree in elementary education.

NFSMI BEGINNING - 1990

JB: How did you get involved in the child nutrition profession?

BC: That's a good question, because it really was quite by accident. My family moved to Oxford in 1988, and I was a stay-at-home mom with two young sons. In 1990 it was time for me to return to the workplace, and I asked a friend who worked at the University of Mississippi about available part-time positions. On a bus trip to an Ole Miss football away game, my friend had a conversation with Dr. Jeanette Phillips, longtime home economics professor and chair of the department. Dr. Phillips was working to establish a child nutrition institute on campus and needed help in the office. I was given the contact information, and in November of 1990, was hired as an assistant. Dr. Phillips was the Acting Executive Director of the new, federally funded National Food Service Management Institute. Mr. Jim Reeves, formerly with the Department of Continuing Education, was the Assistant Director of Administration.

JB: They were the only two people working here then, right?

BC: Yes, in the beginning, Dr. Phillips and Mr. Reeves were the only two staff members. They had worked together previously with summer training of school foodservice employees throughout the state of Mississippi.

JB: Was that the NET Program?

BC: Yes, the Nutrition Education Training (NET) Program was a USDA grant-funded program administered through state departments of education.

DR. JEANETTE PHILLIPS

Dr. Phillips believed that education and training were vitally important to the successful operation of child nutrition programs. She loved the child nutrition profession and the people who worked in it, and they loved and respected Dr. Phillips. She was active in the Mississippi School Food Service Association and she worked collaboratively with the school nutrition program division of the Mississippi Department of Education.

Dr. Phillips was also a successful businesswoman and active in the community. In addition to her academic experience, passion for child nutrition, and business acumen, Dr. Phillips was politically astute and knew how to navigate within the legislative power structure. She was a person who knew how to get things accomplished and was willing to work for what she believed in. I fondly called her the original "steel magnolia." Her knowledge and leadership played a major role in the establishment of the Institute.

But Dr. Phillips would be the first to tell you there were many dedicated people involved in the work of building a national institute for child nutrition, not the least of whom were leaders throughout the country at all levels. Another key factor was the tremendous support from the University of Mississippi also known as “Ole Miss.” Child nutrition leaders were at the center of a robust collaboration among university administrators, legislators, faculty, and state and federal government. Extensive and tedious negotiations (and some good luck) resulted in the selection of the University of Mississippi in Oxford as the headquarters for the Institute. There was a stipulation in the agreement that the Institute’s Division of Applied Research would be located at the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg. The Institute would operate under the oversight of the United States Department of Agriculture’s Food and Nutrition Service.

OFFICE ORGANIZATION

JB: So you starting working part-time?

BC: Yes, for about a year I worked a regular schedule of $\frac{3}{4}$ time. But on November 1, 1991, I began a new fulltime position as Coordinator of Support Materials.

JB: What were some of your first responsibilities?

BC: Organizing the operation of the office, purchasing supplies and furnishings, conducting searches to fill positions, hiring staff, and planning meetings were some of the early tasks our small group worked on together. We had to strategically plan how to begin letting a national child nutrition audience know the Institute was open for business! Mailing lists for state agencies and professional associations, key government contacts, school nutrition leaders, and other interested stakeholders were a priority. Remember, there was no electronic communication at this time – no World Wide Web, Internet, or email. Communication was primarily by mail, telephone, or face-to-face meetings. Even faxing was fairly new. We developed simple information flyers and packets, began planning training topics and sessions, recruited members for two advisory boards, scheduled presentations at state meetings, and overall, tried to make the best use of staff and funding to market the Institute. There was a carefully thought-out plan of action in place, but a few things were learned by trial and error.

There were open positions for the Executive Director, assistant directors, technology coordinators, and education and training staff. National searches were conducted to fill some of the key positions. Among the first positions filled were Education and Training Director, Dr. Laverne Hellums, former Home Economics professor and also an instructor in the summer training programs for school food service employees throughout the state; Assistant Education and Training Director, Carolyn Hopkins, former director of child nutrition programs in Rankin County, Mississippi; and Assistant Director of Technology Transfer, Beth King, who had a long career with the University library system and brought knowledge of the “new” and evolving world of technology.

DR. JOSEPHINE MARTIN

Dr. Josephine Martin from Atlanta, Georgia, was selected as the first permanent Executive Director of the National Food Service Management Institute and began working in Oxford during the summer of 1991. She had recently retired from the Georgia Department of Education, having

served as state Director of School Nutrition Programs and Associate State Superintendent of Schools. She had achieved national recognition for her leadership and had testified before government committees at state and federal levels on behalf of child nutrition programs. She was one of the visionaries who participated in the early discussions about the importance of a national institute that would provide training and elevate the level of professionalism for child nutrition employees. Dr. Martin brought to the position a wealth of knowledge about the profession, many important contacts, political savvy, and an unparalleled determination for the dream of a national institute to become a reality.

OFFICE #1 – HOME MANAGEMENT HOUSE, University Avenue – 1990

The first Institute offices were in what was known as the Home Management House, located on University Avenue near the eastern entrance to the Ole Miss campus. The functioning two-story house had served as a classroom for home economics majors and included living areas, kitchen, dining room, and bedrooms. The students lived in the house for a semester, learning and practicing household and hospitality management. The class had been discontinued, so with some rearranging and the addition of office furniture, the Home Management House provided an ideal location for the headquarters offices of the newly established National Food Service Management Institute. When a fulltime staff assistant was hired and shown her upstairs office, she said with a laugh, “This used to be my bedroom.” As a home economics major, she had taken the course and lived there for a semester.

As the Institute staff began to grow, the Home Management House could no longer accommodate the need for offices, meeting space, and work space. Never lacking in confidence, Dr. Martin approached the University Chancellor, Dr. R. Gerald Turner, with her ideas and urgent request for more space - and left with an agreement for adding temporary double-wide trailers to the property behind the Home Management House. Frankly, this was a shocking response from an administration that had made it a priority to set high standards for campus architecture and beautification. I think it was a clear demonstration of the University’s belief in and commitment to the Institute - and the fearlessness of our director, Dr. Martin. We were instructed to refer to the new space as annexes, one of which housed the Education and Training offices and a classroom for training small groups. Another served as a warehouse for materials, printing equipment, and the shipping operation, and the third provided additional offices for special projects.

The printing and shipping of training materials grew to represent a significant amount of the workload. A retired postal employee, Vernon Maples, was hired to organize and facilitate this operation. He knew postal rules and regulations - and he taught us that materials would arrive in good condition if boxes were packed tight and snug and sufficient tape was used. Another tip was that content labels should be placed on three sides of a box for easy identification. So we learned many bits of wisdom from Vernon Maples and his assistant, Ed Jones, another retiree. These two gentlemen operated an efficient shipping operation for several years, and they were a lot of fun, too. They were fishermen on their days off and once they hosted a fish fry in the parking lot, with staff providing all the “trimmings.” As you might guess, many Institute staff members were and are great cooks. I can’t begin to count the number of amazing potluck dinners, special occasions, and fellowship events through the years.

The Home Management House and the annexes were well-used for several years, but the University had other long-term plans for the property near the entrance to the University. With a sizeable private donation to the University in place, plans for the construction of a new performing arts center on this prime piece of real estate moved forward. So in 1998 the Institute had to move.

OFFICE #2 – TEMPORARY LOCATION, South Loop Drive – 1998

A spacious, vacant building on campus with a large open space suitable for dividing into offices was located. On the lower level was a warehouse space and loading dock – perfect to accommodate the rapidly growing shipping operation. The annexes also moved with us.

JB: Where was that?

BC: The building was on a little street called South Loop on the southern perimeter of the Ole Miss campus. Later the University fittingly named the street Jeanette Phillips Drive in honor of Dr. Phillips and her 40-plus years of outstanding service to the University.

In the new location, not only were we printing and shipping the training and resource materials developed by the Institute, but USDA/FNS had designated our facility as a storage and distribution center for many of its materials. The warehouse filled up quickly! Longtime employee, Vicki Howe, was a part of the production and shipping team. Vicki is now the Institute’s talented graphic designer.

OFFICE #3 – PERMANENT BUILDING, Jeanette Phillips Drive – 2001

The move to South Loop again provided only a temporary home for the Institute, but for a good reason. Directly across the street was the property for the new, permanent home of the National Food Service Management Institute. We were able to watch the construction literally from the ground up - the foundation, the beams, the walls, the brick, the columns. It was very exciting!

JB: It probably took a couple of years didn’t it?

BC: Yes, the groundbreaking ceremony was in the spring of 1998, but actual construction did not begin until later in the year and was completed by the end of 2000, so just over two years. I remember the day it was finally safe for staff to have a walkthrough. We were giddy, exploring and visualizing our new office spaces that we had so far only seen on paper. Years of planning and work had taken place to advance the dreams for the Institute to have its own spacious, state-of-the-art building that we, and the child nutrition professionals throughout the country, could call home.

Backtracking in my story, the long-term goals formed in the 1980s by the Institute’s visionaries included, of course, a permanent building. After the successful launch of the Institute and permanent authorization by Congress in 1994, building discussions began. After a feasibility study, when it appeared that funding was on the horizon, one day the Institute’s leaders joined Vice-Chancellor Dr. Les Wyatt in his van to explore the campus in search of suitable property. They literally drove on dirt roads and hiked through the woods to an undeveloped part of campus, finding what they considered the ideal location. As the story goes, they fashioned a sign from cardboard and staked it on the spot as “Future Home of the National Food Service Management Institute.”

JB: If I'm not mistaken, didn't they get the car stuck in the mud that day when they found the location?

BC: Yes, that's the story I heard, that the van got stuck and they had to call someone to pull them out. As I have made preparations to retire, obviously I've been going through a lot of materials and notes, and have often found myself wishing I could have another conversation with Dr. Phillips. Sadly, Dr. Phillips passed away in June 2017. But her legacy shines as one of those people who truly made a difference in this world, and her work will continue to benefit generations to come. This process has reminded me of how important it is to make time to visit with your mentors and friends while you can, hear their stories, and ask questions.

JB: That's true.

BC: The University was fully supportive of the Institute under the leadership of Chancellor R. Gerald Turner for whom the building was named in 2007. Dr. Robert Khayat followed Dr. Turner as Chancellor and he, too, was a supportive leader and champion for the National Food Service Management Institute.

BUILDING DEDICATION

BC: The formal dedication of the new building and designation of Jeanette Phillips Drive was March 23, 2001. The picture-perfect, spring weather allowed the well-attended ceremony to be held outside on the front portico and circle drive as planned. If I remember correctly, there were over 300 guests. There was a grand reception inside where USDA representatives and friends; University administrators, faculty, and staff; local and state dignitaries; members of Institute advisory boards, past and present; child nutrition professionals from throughout the country; and NFSMI staff members, families, and friends enjoyed touring the beautiful building. It took almost ten years from the establishment of the Institute by Congress in 1989, the initial award of \$500,000 in funding, building the operational infrastructure, and growth and expansion of services and outreach, to the completion of our permanent building. The project costs were equally shared by the state of Mississippi and the Federal government. Reflection on the humble beginnings in a tired, converted office building underscores the efforts of dedicated leaders throughout the country to build a national institute for the purpose of child nutrition program research, education, and training - and the enormous progress that has been made.

TELECONFERENCES/SATELLITE SEMINARS

JB: Going back to the early days, one of the big outreach programs was the satellite seminars. How often were those done?

BC: For several years, satellite seminars or teleconferences as they were first called, were usually delivered 2-3 times per year. The first program, *Purchasing and the Dietary Guidelines*, aired September 23, 1992. I was assigned to develop a flyer to promote this new approach to training. I worked with the graphic designer in the University's Department of Continuing Studies and recall we had quite a challenge finding clip art to convey the message. With no Internet yet available, research was more of a challenge.

JB: They actually rented satellite trucks, right?

BC: Yes, there was a truck with a big satellite dish mounted on the back that was used in the delivery of the programs. Mark Miller was the Institute's Satellite Coordinator, and he collaborated with the University's Teleproduction Resource Center to produce and deliver the programs, far more tedious and labor intensive than the webinars we are able to deliver today. We had a specific transmittal time on a certain day of the week in the afternoon. We tried to deliver this live program at a time when the greatest number of school foodservice employees would be able to watch after their normal workday responsibilities were completed. The programs were recorded, VHS tapes were produced, and the tapes could be ordered from the Institute.

JB: Was it a two-way street? Could they (the audience) call in or ask questions, or was it just broadcasting a program?

BC: The broadcast was a live, interactive program, and viewers could call in and ask questions. There were many learning curves as we continually explored ways to improve the process.

In the months leading up to the delivery of a program, a topic was selected, a script was developed, and special guests and content experts were secured. My job was to support the script writing process, develop a packet of promotional and educational materials for each program, work on the program sets, and manage other training details. Camera-ready copies of the materials were produced and mailed in advance of the program to state agencies and other key partners to photocopy and distribute to assembled audiences. The first series of programs was called *Managing Child Nutrition Programs to Teach Healthy Food Practices* and included the topics of purchasing, preparation, promotion, personnel, and participation. Later management topics planned for a broad appeal and benefit for school nutrition employees throughout the country were healthy menus, productivity, equipment, receiving, cooperative purchasing, food quality, food safety, standardized recipes and portion control, production planning, financial management, work simplification, marketing, food recall, conflict and challenge in the workplace, coaching employees, emergency readiness, human resource management, summer food service, special needs, school breakfast, and local wellness policies. Reaching a large child nutrition audience via satellite was groundbreaking!

The Institute gained valuable recognition when USDA decided to use the April 1992 teleconference to announce the new Food Guide Pyramid. There were 800 viewing sites in 46 states for child nutrition professionals to watch the program. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Steve Abrams, traveled from Washington, DC to the Institute to participate and to answer questions from live callers. My role was to screen calls, relay questions, transfer calls, and monitor audio reception. The next day on the front page of the local newspaper was a picture of Steve Abrams sitting at a desk taking a call with me standing next to him - one hand on my hip, one hand holding a folder, and an intense expression on my face. It was not the most photogenic moment, but the story was good publicity for the Institute and its role in an important USDA initiative.

It was a very exciting time in the "infancy" of the Institute to be attempting new and innovative methods of training delivery for greater efficiency. Almost as soon as one teleconference was completed, it was time to plan for the next one. The programs usually included special guests who were experts or had demonstrated success in various management areas. Sometimes short videos were produced to be included in the program. One of my fondest memories is a video we made of

children singing an original thank you song to the school nutrition profession that was written just for the teleconference. We recruited local school children for the “chorus.” Children of staff members were well represented, including my own two young sons. It was beautiful and touching.

Although the Institute has made tremendous strides in the knowledge and use of technology, it occurs to me that many of the concepts we began with still apply today – innovation, efficiency, cutting edge topics, variety of delivery methods for training, excellent customer service, and heart.

CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION

In addition to producing satellite seminars, we immediately began developing resources and training materials. The largest gathered audiences of child nutrition professionals were at the annual national conferences and state conferences of the American School Food Service Association (ASFSA), now the School Nutrition Association (SNA). There were typically three key areas of Institute participation at the conferences: (1) providing pre-conference training and breakout sessions for continuing education hours; (2) distribution of training resources; and (3) convention center exhibit booth and staffing including poster sessions. In our spare time, this was also an opportunity for Institute staff members to attend education sessions for our own professional development.

In addition to ASFSA conference participation, we also attended and exhibited for several child care conferences including the California CCFP Roundtable Annual Conference, The Sponsors Association (TSA), the National Association for the Education and Development of Young Children (NAEYC), and the National Head Start Conference. Another important outreach was to the American Dietetic Association (ADA), now the Academy for Nutrition and Dietetics (AND) with regular participation in its Food and Nutrition Conference and Expo (FNCE). In this setting, we reached not only registered dietitians, but dietetic interns who were exploring career options. This gave us an opportunity to increase awareness of the wonderful careers in child nutrition programs and the support that the Institute could offer.

For many years a significant part of my job related to logistical planning and arrangements for Institute participation at conferences. This included training session proposals, working with convention hall services, vendor negotiation, identifying trainers and securing contracts, hosting sessions, selecting appropriate promotional items, updating and ordering exhibits, designing and printing handout materials, organizing shipments, exhibit booth setup, staff schedules, and sometimes making education session presentations; then breaking down the exhibit booth, packing leftover materials, shipping back to the office, evaluation, and planning for the next year! This was accomplished each year through a great team effort.

In the exhibit hall it was important for the Institute to “stand out” in a very large crowd. Staff responsibilities were to “meet and greet,” tell our story, and listen. In the early years the displays were cumbersome and challenging to set up, but we learned through experience what worked and what did not. We learned to be more efficient with handouts and what might attract individuals to our booth so we could engage them in a meaningful conversation.

The Institute quickly became recognized for quality training sessions at the conferences. Pre-conference training of 4, 8, or 12 hours provided great opportunities for attendees to earn

necessary professional development credits. Through the years we have presented a broad range of topics including food safety, nutrition, financial management, meal pattern, culinary, customer service, food production, train-the-trainer, and various child care topics. In addition, we offered one-hour breakout sessions, often highlighting a new training resource or providing information about the Institute.

Introducing and providing the Institute's new training resources at the ASFSA and later the SNA conference was a big deal. For about the first 20 years or so the signature curriculum package was called a "BLT" which stood for Breakfast Lunch Training. The resource typically consisted of four short lessons (10-15 minutes each) on a selected management topic, trainers' notes, posters, transparencies or slides, and a videotape nicely packaged in a binder. What started as a good idea became unmanageable at the conferences due to the popularity of the material. There were limitations on how much we could afford to print and ship to the conferences, as well as the physical aspect of management. The competition to attend the sessions and the long lines were frustrating for the attendees, and the last thing we wanted to do was to create ill feelings toward the Institute. This moved us toward a catalog system of order processing and improved methods of delivery, with the Internet ultimately helping to solve accessibility challenges.

It is gratifying to think how far we have progressed in national recognition compared to when only a small percentage of conference attendees knew about the Institute. Now many people search for our booth to gather resources and talk to staff members. The really great thing is that they not only know about us, but they give feedback such as "We use your training materials all the time!" or "Yes, we have your food safety posters in our kitchens," or "Could we possibly get a Basics at a Glance poster for each school in the district?" and "Oh, you have online courses? They're free?? That's great!" and "Can you come to our region to present training?" It's wonderful to see the recognition we do have, while acknowledging there is always MUCH more to be accomplished.

BREAKFAST LUNCH TRAINING (BLT)

More about the BLT - and not the sandwich. The concept for the Breakfast Lunch Training (BLT) was to provide simple, useful lessons which could be used for staff development at the local level. Realizing training time and skills were often limited for school nutrition employees, the goals were to design the materials in short segments and easy-to-use formats. Lesson plans, scripts, and activities were included.

The first published training material for the new Institute was a BLT titled *Recognizing Reimbursable School Lunches*. It was developed in 1991 and introduced at the ASFSA national conference. This was followed in 1992 by *Promote Healthy Food Choices*, and the third topic was *On the Road to Professional Food Preparation*. From this was born the *Basics at a Glance* weights and measurements poster. To date, this is the most frequently requested printed item produced by the Institute. We know that *Basics at a Glance* is used in hundreds of thousands of child nutrition program kitchens across the country, and we're very proud of that success.

Among other BLT topics were *Healthy Cooking for Kids* in 1995 and *Cooking for the New Generation* in 1997, both reflecting changing tastes and preferences in our customers, but increasing the focus on healthier practices. *All-Star Receiving* was developed in 1998, *Working Safe: Accident Prevention*

in Child Nutrition Programs in 1999, and *Inventory Management* in 2000. The popular *Focus on the Customer* debuted in 2003 and *Food Service Assistant - You Are Important* in 2004. *Nutrition 101: A Taste of Food and Fitness* was first introduced in 2005 and has been updated several times to stay current with changing nutrition guidelines. *Nutrition 101* is classified as a core curriculum by the School Nutrition Association for members who are working toward certification. It is also now an online course, as are many other topics that had their beginning as BLTs. I will leave the discussion about the amazing growth of the Institute's online course system for someone else.

BARELY BEAR LEARNS ABOUT GOOD NUTRITION

I would be remiss not to mention *Barely Bear Learns about Good Nutrition*. This was my first major curriculum development project. During the NET Program days mentioned earlier, Dr. Phillips and Dr. Hellums worked with a kindergarten teacher to develop this character. Barely Bear was a teddy bear so cute and lifelike that he was just BARELY a bear. Barely Bear was interested in eating good food, playing outside, and getting plenty of rest to build a strong, healthy body. The target audience was young children, and the purpose was to encourage school nutrition staff to interact with students, teachers, and parents, providing them with materials to use in visits to classrooms.

In 1993, with incorporation of the *Food Guide Pyramid* well underway, USDA asked the Institute to develop resources for children to support the messages of the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and the *Food Guide Pyramid*. The Barely Bear character was used as inspiration for a new story that focused on the Pyramid. The module included a storybook, games, activities, songs, lesson plans, ideas for tasting parties with students, a poster, and a new Barely Bear video. The storybook was called *Barely Bear Learns About Good Nutrition: The Path to the Pyramid* and featured Barely Bear's adventures with food characters Bonita Banana, Casey Carrot, Freddy Fish, the Slice twins, and a trio of peas named Snap, Snow, and Sugar. A local artist drew illustrations for the new characters. We had a lot of fun with Barely Bear, and introducing this new curriculum was my first presentation at the ASFSA Annual National Conference in Boston – also first flight to a major city airport alone and first time to hail a cab!

JB: Sounds like you enjoyed it.

BC: It was a very special, memorable project.

NETPRO – EARLY FRAMEWORK FOR TRAINING

A part of the Congressional mandate for the Institute was to “establish a national network of trained professionals to present training programs and workshops for food service personnel.” (P.L. 101-147) Using the train-the-trainer model, a series of workshops called *Network for Professionals for Staff Development* or *NETPRO* were developed. The first phase, NETPRO I, was launched in May 1992. The objectives were to build a network of trainers for staff development, identify guidelines for increasing leadership skills and teamwork, and demonstrate effective training skills. The training included small group activities and brainstorming by participants to develop tailored action plans. Employee Skills training packets were provided to each participant. The workshop series of *NETPRO* I, II, and III provided a building block approach for training development and outreach to broader, larger audiences. This concept led to the later development of *Foundations for Training Excellence*, now the train-the-trainer curriculum for the Institute.

NUTRITION MANAGEMENT FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

JB: Talk about your work with training and resources for special needs nutrition.

BC: During the 1990s there was a great deal of emphasis on nutrition for children with special needs. My first document project was to create the *Annotated Bibliography of References and Resources for the Nutrition Management of Children with Special Needs*. Beth King, our library specialist, taught me about AGRICOLA and searching for bibliographic records from USDA's National Agricultural Library. The bibliography was printed, bound, and mailed to federal and state agencies and other key partners.

We planned two large national conferences in consecutive years, 1992 and 1993, focusing on nutrition management for children with special needs. The first was in Kansas City and the second in Columbus, Ohio, co-sponsored with the USDA Midwest Regional Office. Kansas City was chosen partly because it was "in the heartland" and partly because of Dr. Martin's previous work with the Senate Agriculture Committee, of which Senator Bob Dole, R-Kansas was a member. Senator Dole was supportive of child nutrition programs, but he had a deep concern that the nutrition needs for children with disabilities and special dietary requirements were not being met. He felt that the Institute should provide training for child nutrition employees that would enable them to respond more effectively to the nutrition requirements of children with special needs. This constituted an immediate call to action for the Institute. A research project was launched, and Dr. Martin began conceptualizing the plans for a conference that would bring together policy makers, special needs healthcare professionals, state departments of education, and school nutrition professionals.

This was my first conference to organize and coordinate. I really knew very little about the logistics of a conference of that magnitude, but I plunged in with guidance from the directors. The 2 ½-day conference was held at The Westin Crown Center with nearly 300 people in attendance. It still ranks as the most complex conference I worked on while at the Institute.

Policy speakers included USDA administrators Stan Garnett and Bob Eadie, who presented on the legislation and policies which they helped to write, along with Senator Dole's legislative assistant, Stacy Hoffhaus. Dr. Martin, of course, spoke about the Institute and its role in providing resources and training. Highly respected expert in nutrition for children and adults with disabilities, Harriet Cloud, from the University of Alabama at Birmingham, provided the clinical foundation. Other presenters included a pediatric nutrition specialist from the University of North Dakota School of Medicine, a food service director from Virginia, a nutritionist and Individualized Education Program expert with California Children's Services, a representative from the Office of Rehabilitative Services in the U.S. Department of Education, and a school superintendent from Baltimore City Schools. But the crème de la crème was keynote speaker The Honorable Bob Dole. His sincerity, experience dealing with his own physical disability, and non-partisan stance with regard to this topic earned him respect and appreciation from the audience.

One of the expert speakers we recruited for both conferences was Teresa Carithers, at the time the Director of Nutrition Services for the Mississippi Department of Health. She impressed the audience with her knowledge and compassion. Fast-forward about 20 years and our paths crossed again as Dr. Carithers joined the faculty of the Department of Nutrition and Hospitality Management at the

University of Mississippi. She became the Associate Dean of the School of Applied Sciences, which has institutional oversight for the Institute of Child Nutrition. Dr. Carithers is currently the Interim Dean and Institute liaison – so that’s a good story about life coming full circle in an unexpected way.

Every word of all the sessions of the Kansas City conference was recorded on a cassette tape player, and I put on my transcription hat when we returned to Oxford. The presentations were typed, printed, bound into a thick book, and distributed to the participants, state agencies, and other partners. We recorded other training sessions through the years, but I believe this is the only time we transcribed a complete conference.

ORIENTATION TO SCHOOL NUTRITION MANAGEMENT TRAINING

Orientation to School Nutrition Management is a face-to-face training course designed to provide a comprehensive overview of the various management topics for school nutrition employees who aspire to become a program director or who have fewer than five years of experience. The course also appeals to a range of participants wanting to learn more about program management, such as state agency staff, chefs, school administrators, child care sponsors, and college students.

The course made its debut in 1994 in a two-week format, and for several years was offered once each summer. Numerous instructors were involved, sometimes as many as a dozen. Topics included the history of child nutrition, USDA rules and regulation, financial management, nutrition, customer service, food safety, facility design and equipment, production records, procurement, meal pattern, special needs, and more. Participants could opt to take the course for graduate or undergraduate credit, registering as a University student and paying tuition. This was an important opportunity, as more states had begun requiring college credit for certain positions.

We began to look at how this course could be a more practical experience for busy people. It was a challenge for many to take two weeks off from their jobs, to be away from their families, and to incur significant lodging expenses. We experimented with ways to incorporate learning activities both before and after the course, and in 2005 transitioned to one week of intense training with a smaller instructional team that was trained to teach multiple topics. The one-week course is more cost effective for participants and for the Institute, and it is easier to standardize and manage.

The course is usually limited to about 35 participants. This group size works well for facilitating discussions and activities. Hundreds of people from all over the country have taken this course, and they not only learn from the instructors, but also from each other. In a given week we might have participants from many different regions of the country with a variety of backgrounds. It’s the greatest feeling to see communication barriers broken down, perceptions changed, knowledge gained, and confidence built. The course is now offered several times a year at the Institute and upon request in locations throughout the country.

JB: I’m sure it’s a great opportunity to network so you have these people to fall back on after you’re gone.

BC: It absolutely is an ideal scenario for networking. The participants share many experiences and get to know each other in a week-long training. We’ve had reports from people who say they have made helpful contacts and lifelong friends. For certain nutrition and hospitality management

majors the Orientation course is required, so typically there are 6-8 college students interspersed with school nutrition practitioners. We believe that the positive interaction, in addition to the child nutrition program knowledge acquired, is making an impact on students' consideration of child nutrition as a great career opportunity.

NUTRITION UPDATE SEMINARS

For about thirteen years, beginning in 1994, I worked with a series of trainings called *Nutrition Update*. School nutrition professionals needed to receive the latest information related to the science of nutrition, and to be able to separate factual information from the many fallacies or gimmicks in the marketplace. They also needed to gain confidence in relaying accurate information to students, teachers, coaches, administrators, and parents. This two-day training was presented at the Institute, in selected locations throughout the country, and frequently for conferences. Our core group of presenters included Judy Dodd, a registered dietitian and recognized expert in nutrition marketing; Dr. John Allred, a nutrition and biochemistry professor at The Ohio State University; and Fran Sizer Webb, nutritionist and textbook author of *Nutrition Concepts and Controversies*. Other presenters sometimes included physicians, sports nutritionists, and eating disorder clinicians. A registered dietitian and mother of a teen with an eating disorder courageously made a presentation that helped the audience gain a deeper understanding of the problem from someone with a personal perspective.

For several years *Nutrition Update* was presented as a preconference at the Annual National Conference of the American School Food Service Association. When the conference was in Houston, Texas, we partnered with the Children's Nutrition Research Center, had guest speakers from their facility, and provided a site visit for our participants. We closed out this series of trainings in 2007 with a final successful event at the Institute with over 100 attendees and numerous presenters.

HEALTHY CUISINE FOR KIDS

Healthy Cuisine for Kids is another beneficial training conducted through the years that has continued to evolve. It is a hands-on, highly interactive culinary training now taught by a registered dietitian and a trained chef. This training was launched around 1994-95 with workshops conducted in each of the seven USDA regions. Originally, we contracted with chefs from the Culinary Institute of America, and the team included a school nutrition professional.

Participants engage in classroom instruction and then move to a training kitchen for chef demonstrations and practice. Ideally there are 16-24 participants who are divided into 4-6 teams. They receive coaching from the trainers in applying culinary techniques in the preparation of approximately 20 flavor-enhanced, healthy recipes. Prepared dishes are taste-tested and evaluated. This is another example of a training that provides great networking opportunities.

PURCHASING/PROCUREMENT TRAINING

It is impossible to single out one training topic that is most important. There are so many management areas critical to the success of an outstanding school nutrition program. Food Safety, Financial Management, Customer Service, Culinary Skills, and then there is Procurement – one of the most requested, most needed, AND most complex training topics offered by the Institute. I can't

discuss procurement training without paying tribute to Marlene Gunn, one of the most intelligent, no-nonsense procurement specialists in the history of child nutrition programs. She developed the first procurement training resources used by the Institute and traveled throughout the country presenting the training. Marlene not only taught the basics, but she also illustrated policies and procedures with countless anecdotes - sometimes hilarious, sometimes scary - related as only she could. *First Choice: A Purchasing Systems Manual for School Food Service*, followed by a 2nd edition, was in use for over 15 years before a major overhaul of purchasing systems and guidance by USDA occurred, and the resource was retired. Thousands of child nutrition professionals and school business managers were trained using this outstanding resource.

JB: Didn't she institute the statewide bidding process for the state of Mississippi?

BC: I would have to research that, but I know she played a key role during the time she was Mississippi's State Director of Child Nutrition. She recruited Mr. Charles Kirby, former director of the USDA's Southeast Regional Office, to work with Mississippi in the development and implementation of a purchasing cooperative that became a model for other states.

Due to the high volume of requests for Procurement training, we recruited a few more trainers. Marlene Gunn taught from the resource she wrote, but there was no trainer's manual for others to use. In about 2003, my assignment was to assemble a task force to organize the resource into teachable modules with trainers' notes and slides, locate a curriculum developer/graphic designer with a solid knowledge base of procurement, and deliver a finished product within six months. Mission accomplished! Curriculum consultant Dr. Sandra Flores was equipped with the expert skills we needed to complete the project with Marlene Gunn's input, and with the help of a dedicated task force. Sadly, both of these gifted, dedicated professionals passed away several years ago.

ADULT DAY CARE RESOURCES

Another project I enjoyed working on was developing resources for adult day care providers participating in the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). A resource manual, fact sheets, and nice set of mini-posters were components of this package. This project was not given a long-term emphasis in the Institute's plan of work due to other higher priority initiatives at the time, but it was helpful to learn more about the needs of this audience and provide information for caregivers and providers. I have a personal story related to this project. We were unable to find good quality stock photographs of elderly citizens in a mealtime setting to use in the graphic design of the materials, so a co-worker who was a photographer and I attended a senior citizens luncheon which happened to be at my church. My co-worker captured many beautiful images of this group. As I was packing up my office, I came across the manual we created about 15 years ago. It definitely was a poignant moment of reflection because so many of those dear people captured in the photos, my mother included, are no longer with us.

MARKETING

In our search for good marketing tools that were not too expensive, we found that calendars met the need. From our own experience in the office, we knew that a good calendar was essential. We developed and printed a variety of different designs, always striving to efficiently deliver basic contact information as well as key messages through the use of simple, attractive graphics. A year-

at-a-glance calendar printed on 8 ½" x 11" card stock became the most popular design for several years. Attendees at conferences would come to us looking for their calendars for the coming year. It was something useful we could put into their hands, and it was an ideal marketing piece that contained contact information and highlighted special projects. Calendars gave us a lot of bang for our buck. Through the years we offered a variety of items that included contact information, could be used in office settings, and were budget-friendly – rulers, rolodex cards, note pads, pens, pencils, file cabinet magnets, pocket folders, luggage tags, tote bags, and many informational brochures and leaflets.

HISTORICAL CALENDAR

If I had to pick a single favorite project it would probably be the development of a full-size, flip-page calendar celebrating the 60-year anniversary of President Harry S. Truman signing into law the National School Lunch Act in 1946. This 2006-2007 historical calendar contained nineteen 8½ x 11-inch sepia-tone reproductions of vintage photographs of cafeteria scenes from as far back as the late 1940s, student participation in early programs to the present, and a group of child nutrition leaders in 1966, including celebrated nutrition program pioneer Thelma Flanagan. A very special feature on each page is a quote from admired child nutrition leaders including Earnestine Camp (AR), Gene White (CA), Dr. Vivian Pilant (SC), Mary Nix (GA), Shirley Watkins (TN and USDA), Lorita Myles (OH), Paul Schmitz (TX), and others. The calendar included information about the Institute and the Child Nutrition Archives, and on the last page are color photographs of NFSMI Executive Directors Dr. Jeanette Phillips, Dr. Josephine Martin, Dr. Jane Logan, and Dr. Charlotte Oakley. I enjoyed the opportunity to delve into the Institute's Archives to locate these beautiful photographs, many of them a part of the extensive Earnestine Camp Collection. Miss Camp was a much loved and admired child nutrition leader in Arkansas for over 60 years, and I had the pleasure of assisting with the videotaping of her oral history interview in Little Rock in 2004. The calendar project led me to an even deeper appreciation for the child nutrition profession AND the Institute's Child Nutrition Archives, which houses a treasure trove of pictures, documents, and artifacts. This calendar is a tribute to people and events that impacted the growth and success of child nutrition programs. University Publications worked with us on the graphic design, and the calendar received special recognition from the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE). Several thousand copies were printed for distribution at conferences and meetings.

COOKS FOR KIDS CALENDAR

My second calendar project was for 2008, featuring two seasons of *Cooks for Kids*, a video program series that showcased the importance of children having access to healthy food choices at home, at school, and in the community. *Cooks for Kids* was another groundbreaking project for the Institute that tapped into the "edu-tainment" approach to training. School Meals Specialist Amy Casteel was the director/producer of the scripted high-energy 30-minute programs filmed in different regions of the country in school districts with notably successful programs. The nine programs aired via satellite at a specific time on a monthly basis. Once the seasons were complete, we packaged the programs in a DVD set and ordered 50,000 for distribution to state agencies that, in turn, distributed to school districts for use in staff training.

The fast-paced program format consisted of three parts. The first segment featured scenes from the local area and a restaurant or bakery that was using healthful recipes and products in support of community wellness. The second part featured successful school nutrition programs, including interviews with program directors and staff, school administrators, and others. Best practices were highlighted such as innovative and healthful menu offerings, school gardens, and farm-to-school partnerships. The last segment emphasized healthful nutrition practices starting at home and showing families grocery shopping and cooking together, after-school healthy snack prep, gardening, and cooking classes for kids. Previews and program dates for season two, *Healthy Cooking Across America*, were also featured in the calendar.

The Institute has continued to use a variety of calendar projects to share information and special projects.

REBRANDING THE INSTITUTE

Rebranding the Institute was a momentous change for me personally. Because of my long history with the Institute, some wondered if I would have positive feelings about rebranding. I couldn't have been more excited about the potential for having a name that provided better recognition and was easier to say!

Through many years of telling the Institute's story, we often encountered confusion from our various audiences over who exactly we were and what we did. Some people thought we worked with the restaurant industry or that we were a part of the University's food service operation. We spent a lot of time clarifying our identity.

A few years ago a process was begun to consider rebranding. It was such a critically important decision as we looked toward the future of the Institute. Input was gathered from many sources, including the Institute's National Advisory Council, a focus group, the staff, marketing firms, and numerous others. The change went into effect in July 2015. I was so happy with the short and sweet outcome - Institute of Child Nutrition. We have received tremendously positive feedback, the new name is easy to remember and say, and it instantly sends a message about our identity and work.

TRAINING GROWTH

The focused and successful work of the Institute in training child nutrition professionals proved that additional funding was justified. USDA began assigning more and more projects and fulfilling more funding requests. Increased funding allowed us to begin expanding the face-to-face training outreach in a significant way.

CURRENT RESPONSIBILITIES – TRAINING TEAM

JB: Tell me what your current job title is and then kind of describe day to day what you're responsible for.

BC: My position title, for a few more days, is Assistant Director of Education and Training. I started working $\frac{3}{4}$ time in 1990 shortly after the establishment of the Institute providing support for all organizational activities; in 1991 I became Coordinator of Support Materials; in 1994 I was

promoted to Coordinator of Site Training, with Curriculum Developer added a bit later; and in 2010 was offered my current position.

My work focuses primarily on leading an outstanding team of four Training Coordinators, a Project Administrator, and a Materials Management and Shipping Coordinator. The goal of the Institute's Training Team is to provide excellent face-to-face training for groups of school nutrition professionals assembled at sites throughout the country and at the Institute of Child Nutrition. There are currently over twenty standardized training topics from which to choose in areas such as procurement, food safety, financial management, meal patterns, human resources, nutrition, customer service, special needs, culinary, and much more.

The Institute also provides training and resources for the child care audience. The training needs for child care providers and sponsors are enormous, there is almost unlimited potential for growth - and the Institute is rapidly growing along with the need. Development of training on *Meal Pattern Requirements for Child Care* has been a recent major collaboration between the Institute and USDA. In just over six months after the initial launch of the curriculum, ICN provided 70-plus trainings on this topic in all of the seven USDA regions.

Day-to-day, my priority is to be available to the training team – to listen, plan, encourage, react, evaluate, and occasionally put out fires. We meet often as a group to strategize, monitor the training calendar, and discuss successes and challenges. Other responsibilities include regular meetings with the Institute's leadership team, maintaining and sharing detailed training records and statistics, reviewing and editing participant evaluation summaries, verifying and approving compensation records, making presentations as requested, strategic planning, representing the Institute at meetings and conferences, and generally working to foster a positive and respectful work environment.

TRAINING REQUESTS

The Institute has an online system for receiving training requests. The group or organization making the request has to initially decide on the following: the training topic (and we often provide help with that); a training date; and the city and state location and setting such as a meeting, training event, or conference. The Training Team monitors the online request system and provides an immediate response to the person requesting. Often clarification and further discussion are needed.

We accept training requests from representatives of regional offices, state agencies, School Nutrition Association state and regional affiliates, child care sponsors and providers, school districts - depending on the size, and other approved professional organizations.

CONSULTANT TRAINERS

We currently have a cadre of about 135 consultant trainers located in all seven USDA regions of the country. They are trained by the Institute on a variety of topics and work under a contract for each training assignment, are paid according to an established fee payment schedule, and are reimbursed for approved travel expenses.

Individuals who are interested in working as a trainer for the Institute are selected through an application process that begins with submitting a Request for Proposal (RFP) to the University of

Mississippi. Many of our trainers are retired school nutrition directors who have operated successful programs and have experience with training employees. They bring an invaluable depth of knowledge for relating to participants and responding to questions. However, it is not a requirement for a trainer to be a former director, and we have gifted trainers with expertise from a variety of backgrounds.

Trainers are selected to fill training requests based on several guidelines including topic expertise, geographic location, and frequency of assignment. We make an effort to assign trainers who live in the same region as the training request, and if that's not possible, we branch out to nearby states. Fiscal responsibility is a priority, and minimizing travel expenses is one way to make better use of our funding. Currently, we are VERY blessed to be able to provide training for groups throughout the country free of charge to the group.

CONSULTANT TRAINER ORIENTATION

Consultant Trainer Orientation sessions are conducted at the Institute to give the Training Team an opportunity to meet, observe, and interact with potential trainers. A trainer orientation includes subject matter and model training by an expert trainer, policies and procedures for working under contract with the Institute, explanation of the trainer evaluation process, and guidance for representing the Institute. Professionalism is a high priority because a trainer essentially is an ambassador for the Institute.

In addition to training on a specific topic, new trainers must participate in *Foundations for Training Excellence*, a train-the-trainer curriculum covering adult learner characteristics, classroom management, leading group activities, dealing with challenging situations during training, learning styles, and professional conduct.

Recently we incorporated into the process an opportunity for a potential trainer to prepare and deliver a short presentation to the group of assembled peers and Institute staff. This gives us insight into their presentation delivery and ability to interact with an audience.

Once a trainer begins working for the Institute the process for evaluating trainers' performance is thorough and systematic. Every single training is evaluated by participants either using a paper evaluation or an online evaluation. Both statistical data and written comments are summarized and reviewed. The summaries are shared with the trainer, the Training Team, our directors, and the appropriate USDA representatives. It's a robust system that is consistently monitored and analyzed. Periodically, site visits are made by members of the Training Team to observe and evaluate.

Institute trainers must be detail-oriented, flexible and unflappable, reliable and responsive, and able to react appropriately to challenging situations. We depend on them to make good decisions at training sites that reflect positively for the Institute. We have high expectations for our trainers, but we also feel that the Institute is providing them with some great professional opportunities.

REFLECTION

JB: What would you say has been your biggest contribution to child nutrition in your career?

BC: I would like to think that my work for the Institute has paved the way for people to receive a high-quality training experience they might not otherwise have had a chance to get. Whether a training has been provided at the Institute, for a conference, or at requested off-site locations, a tremendous amount of detailed background work has to occur. I work with highly skilled, dedicated professionals on our Training Team. We set very high standards for ourselves, and each person is committed to excellence. We often say we cannot afford to fail, because if we fail to adequately prepare for a training away from the Institute, to get the materials printed correctly and shipped to the right location on time, to communicate effectively with our trainers - if we fail on any of those details, then it can compromise a training. There is so much preparation that has to happen here at the Institute in order for people all over the country to have a great training, and we take those responsibilities very seriously. I am proud to have played a role in building a strong, cohesive team that functions with cooperation and respect for each other while performing individual tasks with excellence. And we place a high value on a sense of humor – we laugh a lot!

The Training Team reached an exciting milestone in this calendar year by surpassing the 400 mark in individual training sessions provided in the calendar year 2017. The outstanding work by every person on the Training Team was celebrated while acknowledging the contributions from each division of the Institute including Administrative, Information Services, Education and Training, and the Applied Research Division. This is a good time to express appreciation for the support and guidance from our Executive Director, Dr. Aleshia Hall-Campbell, who models the highest level of professional integrity and works diligently to create an environment where staff members are encouraged to grow and excel.

To have been a part of professional development for the people who provide safe, nutritious, appealing meals to school children throughout the country is satisfying as I close this chapter of service. When people visited the Institute or came here for a training, I always told them, “This is your Institute, and we as staff members, are working on your behalf.” Our priority has been and continues to be support of the Institute’s vision of being the leader in providing research, education, and resources to promote excellence in child nutrition programs.

JB: Do any memorable stories come to mind about people you’ve worked with over the years, whether they be at the Institute or out in the field?

BC: There are many stories - some funny, some frustrating, and some touching. In preparing for this discussion, I’ve mostly thought about projects and training, but reflection has most certainly brought back a flood of memories. For most of them, you just had to be there.

JB: Anything else you’d like to add today?

BC: Thank you for encouraging me to talk about my experiences. It truly is a source of pride to have been “on the ground floor” for something magnificent that started with just a dream; to have watched as Dr. Phillips, Jim Reeves, Dr. Martin, and many others rolled up their sleeves and said, “We are going to make this happen.” I’m proud to have been a part of the dream and to have stuck with it, and I am thankful for the benefits it provided, both personally and professionally. I truly believe that the Institute IS what those visionaries dreamed about. In fact, I think we’ve far

surpassed their dreams, and the future is bright (and busy!) with new goals and dreams to meet our changing world.

The friendships and the sense of family in a great working environment cannot be minimized. For over 25 years, "life" has been shared with co-workers. There have been highs and lows. We have celebrated the happy occasions of weddings, newborns, graduations of our children, higher education degrees earned by staff members, and becoming grandparents! In particular, I remember sharing the joy of a co-worker traveling to China to meet the precious baby girl he and his wife adopted. On building dedication day in 2001, our co-worker, Meredith Edwards, gave birth to a beautiful baby girl, who we called our NFSMI baby. Both of those baby girls will be seniors in high school next year!

We have shared heartaches and consoled each other in the loss of co-workers and family members, sometimes an expected goodbye and sometimes sudden and tragic. I cannot think of a group of people with more caring hearts and generosity. We always tried to be careful not to impose on staff members with too many requests for help, even for very good causes. But I have watched this group of people respond over and over with meals for a sick co-worker or grieving families, with food contributions for annual Thanksgiving baskets, with clothing donations for families in need and toys and books for the University's annual Books and Bears event. I was overwhelmed with the generosity of my co-workers just this past month when I made them aware of a need for gifts for nursing home residents. What better way to say goodbye.

It has been a phenomenal journey!

JB: Thank you so much.

BC: Thank you.