

D.C.

# FOOD ON THE FRONTLINE

*Alleviating hunger through education, one person at a time.*



**ERIKA PIJAI**

NUTRITION OUTREACH MANAGER

Erika brings experience and enthusiasm to the growing Nutrition Education Department at the Capital Area Food Bank.

SERVING THE D.C. METRO AREA SINCE 1993

## Improvements....

### A New Volunteer Website: Tell us what you think!

OFL volunteer, Kate Abowd, has shared her information management talents with Operation Frontline - DC.

We want to improve the ways that we communicate with our volunteers. Please look at the website and let us know what information you would like to see. What communication tools would make volunteering easier for you?

<https://sites.google.com/site/operationfrontlinedc/>

Email Erika at [pijaie@cfoodbank.org](mailto:pijaie@cfoodbank.org) with comments!

**E**rika Pijai, MS, RD, CDN joined the Capital Area Food Bank and the Nutrition Education Department in May.

She hails from New York City, where she was the Regional Coordinator for Nutrition & Health Programs and the Coordinator of the Farmers' Market Nutrition Education Program at Cornell University Cooperative Extension-NYC. She is a Registered Dietitian committed to improving the health & well-being of individuals and communities. Her other past professional experiences include teaching nutrition courses as an

Adjunct Professor of Nutrition at an NYC college, nutrition consulting, and working as a junior high and high school nutritionist. She graduated with an undergraduate degree in Nutritional Sciences-Dietetics from Cornell University before completing her masters degree in Nutrition Education from Columbia University. Erika is combining her program management expertise, love of healthy eating and passion for hands-on nutrition education to help strengthen the impact, operation and outreach of various nutrition education programs at the Capital Area Food Bank.

Erika says, "I'm excited to join the team here at CAFB. My passion is helping people make healthier food and lifestyle choices the easy choices, and I hope to be able to make a difference in the DC Metro Area communities.

"I enjoy kickboxing, dancing, traveling, exploring cities, and taking photographs. I am addicted to physical activity and I love adventure and thrill-seeking: sky-diving, zip-lining, rappelling down sides of cliffs. Also, I love food and enjoy trying new restaurants, baking, and cooking & experimenting in the kitchen to create tasty and nutritious dishes."

Welcome, Erika!

## EATING WELL ON A BUDGET

Jodi Balis, RD

Jodi Balis is the Director of Nutrition Education at the Capital Area Food Bank. She has been a Registered Dietitian (RD) for 8 years. She enjoys helping people get the most out of their food budget. She was interviewed on Good Morning America about shopping for two on \$60/week and has led Value Tours and cooking classes at Whole Foods.

When I tell friends that my husband and I shop at Whole Foods for \$60 a week (or less!), the typical response after a brief incredulous pause is, “but it is so expensive . . . I only go there to buy *special* ingredients!”

I haven’t always shopped solely at Whole Foods of course. Originally, my \$60 a week food budgeting pledge led me to a variety of grocery stores in the DC metro area. . . Aldi’s, Trader Joes, the little Thai market down the street, and Giant, to name a few.

In the end, the desires to walk to my neighborhood grocery store, to save time shopping, and to have easy access to my favorite tofu and whole grain varieties, all trumped my desire to find the best deal in town.

I decided that, with a little meal planning, and a commitment to learn how to make “basics” such as bread and granola, I would just “make it work.”

For me, food budgeting begins inside the kitchen pantry. Standing with pen and paper in hand, I look to canisters of dry goods, the leftovers in the freezer, and pots of growing herbs, as the basis for meals in the upcoming week. The goal is to use what I have and to maximize what I cook with each purchase. The actual budget breakdown looks like this:

- \$20 Protein
- \$20 Fruits and Veggies
- \$10 Grains and Snacks
- \$10 Staples to stock

Some strategies I use at the store and in the kitchen to stick to the budget:

- Purchase sturdy fruits and veggies (during the off season) combined with 365 brand frozen fruits and veggies
- Utilize dairy, beans, eggs, and tofu as protein essentials
- Choose recipes that require small bits of meat (pizza, quesadillas, stir fry, etc.)
- Focus on the Whole Foods 365 brands. . . there are some really good deals!
- Select snacks carefully with bulk popcorn purchased as a backup
- Prepare versatile fillings in bulk to use in a variety of recipes throughout the week
- Roast, grill, and caramelize to maximize flavor of more expensive ingredients
- Weekly stocking of staples such as oil, sweeteners, flours, grains that are on sale.

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Jodi cooks at home!

## Summer Classes

### Carver Center

#### Kids Up Front

In-progress and having fun!

### Second Genesis

#### Eating Right

In-progress and having fun!

### Food & Friends

#### Side by Side

Wednesdays & Thursdays

July 29, 30, Aug 2, 3

All positions are filled.

### Leland Place

#### Eating Right

Tuesdays, Aug 11 to Sept 15

6pm to 8pm

**Nutritionist and Assistant needed**

### Barnaby House

#### Side by Side

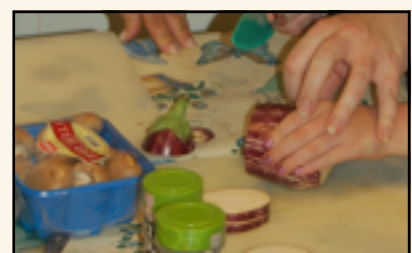
Wednesdays, Aug 19 to Sept 9

6pm to 8pm

**Chef and Nutritionist needed**

More classes will be scheduled before the next newsletter is released.

Keep your eyes open for volunteer emails and check on the new OFL DC website! (See page 1 for details.)



## A busy spring!

Tara and Angela coordinated **13** classes from January through May! Thank you to all of our volunteers who helped us reach over **100** participants! Not only were we operating without a full-time coordinator, but we put the **fun** back in **fund**raising and brushed elbows with the First Lady!



## Share Our Strength's Taste of the Nation!

OFL volunteers Chef Carla Hall and Chef Monica Thomas represented Operation Frontline at Taste of the Nation on March 30. Over 40 local chefs & restaurants participated and raised \$150,000 to fight domestic hunger nationally and in Washington, DC!

## Capital Area Food Bank's Blue Jeans Ball

On April 5th Tara, Jodi, and Angela worked at the Nutrition Education table and "spread" nutritious messages with bean dips! Almost 500 people attended the ball to fight hunger in the DC area.



## First Lady Michelle Obama!

On April 29th Michelle Obama, Jill Biden, and approximately 100 congressional spouses visited the Capital Area Food Bank! They helped pack food for our Food for Kids department & the Weekend Bag Program. It was an exciting day for us!

## Sample Meal Plans from Jodi B

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### Breakfast Choices:

- Homemade granola w/soy milk
- Banana Berry Smoothie
- Homemade Bread and Peanut Butter

### Lunches/Dinners:

- Bread Salad with White Beans, Tomatoes, and Garlic Scape Pesto
- Swiss Chard Black Bean Quesadillas
- Chicken Pad Thai
- Spring Rolls with Chicken, Carrots, Cabbage, and Cilantro
- Pesto Chicken Pizza
- Mediterranean Wraps stuffed w/ summer veggies and Hummus

### Snacks:

- Chips and Salsa (salsa stretched with black beans)
- Carrot Ginger Muffins
- Hummus and Chips

Of course, the food budget and the meal plans must adapt as holidays approach, special occasions come up, and the farmers' markets open!

It has been a rewarding experience cooking and meal planning on this budget.

What I draw from my experiences food budgeting and hope to convey to students in our cooking classes is that, while cooking and meal planning initially require an investment of one's time, it gets easier with practice and the rewards are truly delicious!

- JB

## Volunteer Spotlight - In the Kitchen with Charmion Wood

We asked Charmion to share a little bit about herself, and in each upcoming newsletter we will feature a different volunteer. We hope this will help everyone to get to know the other volunteers out there working with the same goals!

**C**harmion Wood has been volunteering with Operation Frontline through the Capital Area Food Bank for years! So long in fact, that she doesn't quite remember when she started and has been around longer than any AmeriCorps member or OFL Coordinator! Charmion is a great example of how the volunteers of OFL are the true community builders that keep this program strong and fighting hunger in the DC community.



**OFL:** How do you spend your days?

**CW:** Managing 12 employees and food production for 800 students (boys), faculty & staff. Placing orders, creating menus, dealing with HR issues, paying bills, creating budgets, meeting with clients.

**OFL:** How did you get interested in food, cooking and nutrition?

**CW:** I was a student manager in college and worked for the food service company.

**OFL:** What's your favorite food and favorite kitchen utensil?

**CW:** My Auntie's lasagna and a whisk!

**OFL:** Do you have a favorite class recipe?

**CW:** Veggie pizza on wheat pita.

**OFL:** What's your favorite class moment?

**CW:** I love it when students try something they have made in class and don't expect to like, but like it!

**OFL:** What do you enjoy most about volunteering?

**CW:** I enjoy the interaction with students and other volunteers, meeting new people who have similar interests, & helping others.

**OFL:** What do you find most challenging?

**CW:** I find it difficult to handle the younger kids when they are unruly.

**OFL:** Do you have any particularly inspiring moments?

**CW:** When a student told me he wanted to become a chef!

**OFL:** What would you tell someone who is considering volunteering for an OFL class?

**CW:** I would tell them how much fun it is and how rewarding.

**OFL:** What else do you want to add about working with OFL?

**CW:** The staff at the food bank that I have worked with over the years have always been fun, friendly, appreciative and sensitive to their volunteers and very knowledgeable about their audience.

**OFL:** Thanks for sharing, Charmion! We look forward to more successful classes!



Charmion and Efil making Turkey Tacos.



## AmeriCorps Member Angela Leone says Good-bye!

Has it really been almost 12 months? I have been so humbled and honored to serve at the Capital Area Food Bank with Operation Frontline this past year. Often when you volunteer, you find that you receive in ways you didn't expect. For me, that is the case. This opportunity gave me more than I ever anticipated, and I came into this position expecting a lot! Not only was able to help spread nutritious messages about cooking, shopping, and eating, but I was able to support people as they discovered (or rediscovered) fruits and vegetables. One of my favorite moments came when an Eating Right participant shared that she wasn't eating fast food as frequently as she had been in the past. She shared that her taste expectations changed, and as a result, fast food just didn't taste as good! In addition, she lost weight without trying; she was just following some recipes in the Eating Right book.

This year challenged me both professionally and personally. Problem solving because I forgot equipment and/or food or changing tactics in the classroom to better reach our participants has helped me grow. I want to say thank you to each and every one of you for being a part of my time with Operation Frontline. While my time with AmeriCorps is done, my commitment to fighting domestic hunger isn't! At the end of August I am starting a dietetic internship through the University of Maryland. Upon completion of the internship I will be eligible to become a Registered Dietitian (RD). I will be living in DC and look forward to volunteering for Operation Frontline classes!



# Save the Date!



Wednesday, October 21

5% Day

at

Whole Foods will Benefit  
Operation Frontline - DC!



Whole Foods is hosting a 5% day on which 5% of all sales will be donated to a local non-profit organization. We are excited to share with you that OFL - DC was selected to be the beneficiary of this day for all three Washington, DC stores! This day will help OFL - DC reach more families and kids at risk of hunger in the DC metro area.

The Nutrition Education Department is working with Whole Foods to plan and schedule activities at all DC stores. We are currently brainstorming ideas for the day (see box below). If you have ideas to add, please share with us!

## Possible Volunteer Opportunities and Ideas for Oct 21

Our ideas are focused on trying to bring the principles of OFL to Whole Foods. Please share your ideas with us, too!

- ★ Chef-led cooking demos
- ★ Chef- or Nutritionist-led tours of the store (Similar to our trip to the grocery store with an OFL class.)
- ★ Eating well on a budget (Possibly handouts and/or seminar at the stores.)
- ★ Raffle for one customer to win a home-cooked meal or cooking lesson from an OFL Chef. (Whole foods would supply the food, if a chef would volunteer their time for a meal or cooking lesson for up to 5 people.)

## Get Involved!

We are looking for volunteers to represent OFL and share with Whole Foods customers how OFL reaches those in need in the DC community. This could be a great opportunity for you to partner with Whole Foods and expand your customer base. We are still in the brainstorming stage and nothing for this day is finalized yet (except that OFL will be the recipient of 5% of store sales). Please share your thoughts with us. What is feasible for you as a volunteer? How do you see this day being successful?

**If you have ideas to share or would like to volunteer on October 21, please email Erika Pijai at [pjiaie@cfoodbank.org](mailto:pjiaie@cfoodbank.org)**

### Can't Volunteer?

**Shop at your closest DC Whole Foods on Oct. 21:**

- ★ 1440 P Street NW
- ★ 2323 Wisconsin Ave NW
- ★ 4530 40th St NW, Tenley

*Please help us spread  
the word!*

## ~ Reflections ~

Tara Barth reflects on her time with Operation Frontline! Tara will be with the Capital Area Food Bank through September.

**M**y time at the Capital Area Food Bank has proven to be busy, yet also very exciting and interesting. I came here from the sunny shores of Palm Beach County, Florida, where I served for a year in AmeriCorps as an ESL teacher for a group of women in a rural farming community. I read about Operation Frontline before and it seemed like such a great program. After I was given the opportunity to work with OFL, I found out it is indeed an amazing and incredibly important program.

I soon discovered the immense need in the DC area for not only food, but for nutrition education. I recently overheard the saying, "Give a man a fish, you have fed him for today. Teach a man to fish, and you have fed him for a lifetime." That is what OFL is all about. You can give food to a family in need, but they also need the knowledge to prepare it in a cost-effective, healthy way. Our classes empower participants to do just that.

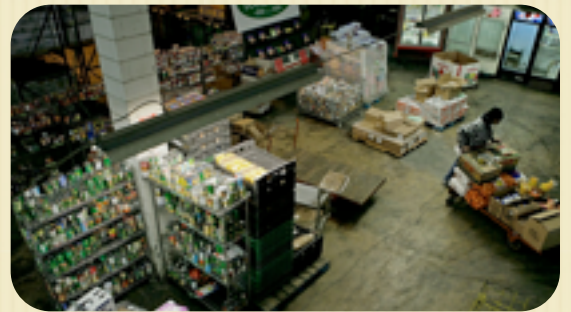
On a recent trip to the grocery store for an Eating Right class, one of the participants grabbed a box of Hamburger Helper during our "\$10 Challenge" in which the participants have to fill their baskets with a variety of healthy items that add up to under \$10. Our chef volunteer suggested to him that he try some whole wheat pasta, canned tomatoes and ground turkey. The chef explained that it would most definitely be healthier, about the same price, and provide more meals than just one box of Hamburger Helper. Instead of being bummed out, he just said, "That's a good idea, I never would have thought of that!" It's watching those light bulbs go off which makes this job so fun and rewarding... and I can't wait for the next time I see it happen!



## The Capital Area Food Bank is growing!

Visit [www.growthefoodbank.org](http://www.growthefoodbank.org) to help build awareness and raise funds for the food bank's 'Til No One Is Hungry capital campaign.

You can learn how to get involved and support our efforts to build a new food distribution center. With more room and new technologies, we will double the amount of nutritious food we distribute into our communities, as well as expand the programs, services, and resources we provide to member agencies and individuals in our communities



### Creamsicle Smoothies

A recipe by OFL Chef Volunteer Leah Kocsis

- 1 c. fat-free vanilla frozen yogurt
- 3/4 c. fat-free milk
- 1/4 c. frozen orange juice concentrate

- Combine all ingredients in the blender.
- Blend until smooth.
- Serve immediately.

(serves 2)



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