

W.A.M.D.A.

Western Area Massachusetts Dietetic Association

Spotlight on a Member: Claire Norton, MS, RD, LDN Winter 2009-2010



Claire was born in Ireland - the city of Dublin. She has lived in the US since she was in her twenties. She met an American in Ireland and married him. They have 3 children and two are now in college. She lived in California when she first moved to the US, but prefers New England.

She has a BS in Biochemistry/Nutrition and a MS in Nutrition.

When she was in Ireland she had a good job working in the Department of Nutrition at Trinity College. The government had no nutritionist so she represented Ireland on a few EEC committees when her boss was too busy to go. She found this very interesting. She also was involved in a lot of research projects, including the follow up of the Boston-Irish Heart study where they collaborated with Harvard.

When she moved to California, she worked for WIC. Afterwards, she was at home with her children for a while and then she started working at Wesson Women's Clinic. She also worked at Adolescent Clinic and at Mt. Holyoke College. Two years ago, she opened a small private practice in Amherst.

The Adolescent Clinic began doing some research, a retrospective demographic and outcome study, which she hopes to have finished by the end of this year. So, all in all she's pretty busy.

She just accepted the position of Director of Undergraduate Nutrition and a lecturer at UMASS. She loved being in an academic environment when she was younger so this should be a great fit for Claire. It was a hard decision for her because she loves patient care too. UMASS is letting her continue with some patient care with her eating disorders patients so she hopes she can have the best of both worlds. She will not be continuing with all the clinics and will miss them.

As if Claire wasn't busy enough with all of her clinics and research, she began writing a book called "Feeding Your Anorexic Adolescent" (look it up on Amazon.com!). In her work with adolescent patients with eating disorders, she uses an approach based on what is called "Maudsley Therapy". She was challenged by the fact that dietitians are, specifically, not involved in this type of therapy per the manual on Maudsley Therapy. Her clinic continued to want to have her work with the patients - despite what the manual said. Over time, she, and the physicians she works with, felt that many of the patients' parents really benefited from her intervention so she decided to put pen to paper and describe what she does so other families could use it. It is basically a very simple, direct meal by meal guide to feeding a teenager with anorexia nervosa. It has about 80 pages of text and then recipes, all of which she has cooked and adapted before they were included. The book does not include any food plans - which is a different approach to working with anorexia nervosa. It has been

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endorsed by the Psychiatrist who wrote the Maudsley Manual so she feels that this is a way for dietitians to continue to contribute to the treatment of eating disorders. Because of the endorsements she received from people well established in the field, she decided to publish it. It was a lot of work going through sending it to publishers and, thus, in the end she self published. Claire says it is actually not that hard to self publish and she was helped by members of a DPG list serve.

Claire has less time for creative hobbies than she used to but she has refinished a lot of the furniture in her house. She'd like to have more time to do that now that she has a new condo to furnish! She knits when she watches movies, reads all the time and listens to books on CD. One of her favorite authors is Geraldine Brooks. She hasn't written much - but Claire really likes her books and they are all different. She's also in a book group but admits they mostly talk and eat!

She likes to run on Saturday with a group of women and has been doing so for about 3 years now, through all types of weather. Afterwards, they have breakfast together. Claire really likes to cook and usually ends up changing the recipe. She says this is why her meals taste okay but her baking is not that good, as you really can't mess with cake recipes!!

Claire really enjoys being a dietitian. She loves food - both cooking and eating, and finds her dietetic colleagues to be smart and caring. She feels nutrition information keeps changing and so does the profession, which keeps us involved.

Please join me in giving kudos to Claire on her many accomplishments and endeavors!

~Cheryl Pelland-Lak, WAMDA Public Relations Chair