

Barbara Mayfield, MS, RDN, LD, FAND

The Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior (SNEB) proudly announces Barbara Mayfield, MS, RDN, LD, FAND, as the inaugural recipient of the Emeritus membership, an esteemed honor reserved for those who have faithfully served as SNEB members for a remarkable 50 years.

Barbara Mayfield, MS, RDN, LD, FAND, is a registered dietitian-nutritionist who established Nutrition Communicator, LLC. In her role as Founder and President, she guides nutrition professionals in enhancing their communication skills. Additionally, she also served as editor-in-chief for *Communicating Nutrition: The Authoritative Guide*, published by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics August 2020. Her journey started as a nutrition professional with nutrition communication as the connecting thread and an early focus on nutrition education for children before moving into academia where she focused on helping the next generation of nutrition professionals become effective nutrition communicators. An area of professional interest that has remained is the importance of shared meals, which extends beyond families to friends, colleagues, communities, and even strangers who become friends.

Barbara shares that even though her SNEB membership is likely only 45 years, she recollects joining SNEB when she completed undergraduate and started graduate school at Cornell under the leadership of Ardyth Gillespie, who has been a longstanding leader in SNEB. She mentions that during her time as a student at Purdue, she was a member of ADA, which is now known as the Academy. Her passion for nutrition education as a career path began during her undergraduate studies, prompting her decision to pursue a master's degree at Cornell, renowned for its emphasis on this field.

As an active member of SNEB since 1995, she expresses that she has been utilizing JNEB and participating in SNEB conferences and the Nutrition Education for Children group continuously. She recollects how SNEB was known as SNE when she joined and mentioned that it was the SNE annual conference in 1981 where her master's research was presented. She also shares that JNE was the journal where she published her first peer-reviewed article in 1984. A later paper was published in JNEB in 2014. She shares her journey attending the SNEB conference throughout many decades and shares that "During my years of presenting about nutrition education for children I presented at SNE conferences in 1995, 1996, and 1997. I took my family to the 1997 conference in Montreal and my 3 children have very fond memories of that trip. During my years of presenting about family meals I spoke at SNEB conferences in 2003, 2004 and 2011. The presentation in 2003 was the first one I gave on this topic. SNEB has been a wonderful supporter of my work."

When asked about what she thinks has evolved within SNEB over the years she has been a member, she mentions that adding the word "Behavior" to the Society for Nutrition Education indicates the broadening of focus to how people behave related to food and nutrition. Yet, while broader than education, SNEB is staying centered on topics related to understanding and

influencing how people learn and change behaviors. She emphasized, “For anyone in community nutrition, extension, and research related to nutrition behaviors, SNEB is the place to be.”

Barbara suggests all students and young professionals join SNEB because it is a great place for young professionals to gain leadership experience, get involved, attend conferences, present posters and network. She shares that each new experience she experienced in her career came from putting herself in situations where she got to know others as well as be known. She suggests students observe the needs around them and notice where they align with their interests and abilities. “Everything you do along your career journey can be a steppingstone to your next adventure.” She continues, “One opportunity opens the door to the next one. Keep learning and being open to growth. Our field is ever evolving, and you can’t remain stagnant.”

When asked to share one experience from her career she thinks encapsulates the essence of her professional journey, she shares the opportunity she was offered to write a book about nutrition communication by the Academy in 2016, which occurred shortly after completing a nutrition textbook for nonmajors called “Nutrition for Everyone.” On the review panel was Roberta Duyff, a fellow nutrition professional, author, and active member of the Academy and SNEB. She was part of the committee at the Academy determining what books are needed and a frequently requested topic was nutrition communication. She was aware of Barbara’s academic position at Purdue teaching this topic as well as familiar with her writing and suggested Barbara’s name. The offer came just months after retiring from teaching, opening her available time to accept the offer, which she turned from being a sole author to serving as the editor and leading a team of 57 coauthors.

She would like to inspire young professionals and students by sharing that there are so many opportunities in the field of nutrition, “You need to be open to trying out several areas rather than think you must identify your “niche” while a student. It is likely that your professional journey will take you to more than one of those areas.” She adds, “Allow each one to prepare you for the next. Even if you stay in one lane, keep growing. And of course, keep building and practicing your communication skills!”

Sharing her vision for the future of nutrition education and behavior, she mentioned that the future of nutrition education and behavior is assured. “There is no need to worry about job security as long as people populate this planet, there will be the need to help them nourish themselves, their families, and their communities while sustaining a healthy planet.” She emphasized that food goes beyond physical nourishment and is central to our cultures, and the ways in which we connect with one another. Barbara shares, “There is still much to learn about how food feeds us physically, emotionally, socially, responsibly, and more. The more we learn, the more we can help people experience food and nutrition in all its facets healthfully, economically, and joyfully.”

Author

Nila Pradhananga, PhD Candidate, Louisiana State University, SNEB Student Division
Secretary- Treasurer Elect and SNEB Student Member