



Photo courtesy of Dr. Eric Colgrove

Above: Dr. Colgrove demonstrates the power of connecting children, parents, and books through the art of reading. Thanks to the national Reach Out and Read program, a book is given to a child at every well-child visit from 2 months until 5 years of age.

Planting the Seed Early: Raising Children on Whole-Food Plant-Based Diets

Article by Eric Colgrove, M.D.

Pediatrician with Community Health Centers of Lane County

After 28 years in pediatrics, I've come to believe that the most powerful thing we can do for a child's long-term health happens not in my exam room, but at the family table. The Whole-Food Plant-Based (WFPB) lifestyle isn't a trend or a dietary experiment — it's a return to what our bodies were built for, and the earlier we start, the better.

Continued on page 3

Building Healthy Communities: July Update

Article by Debby Coulthard

This month our Building Healthy Communities (BHC) focus is on Janet Pearson, a dynamic co-leader of the BHC group **Eat the Rainbow WFPB** in Tinley, IL, and the fabulous book she co-authored with Mary Anne Kiel, MD, **“The Family and Scout Guide to Plant Foods: Real Food. Real Adventure. Real Health.”**

During a monthly BHC co-leaders meeting that I am part of, Janet shared the evolution of her long-held dream of writing a book about plant-based nutrition for kids, to making it a reality after being inspired by meeting plant-based authors and leaders on a Health Optimization cruise she joined in January 2025. She came home and wrote out a step-by-step plan, and decided a collaborative book would have the greatest impact. She reached out to experts with the same passion, and she assembled quite a team.

Her first goal was to find a plant-based pediatrician. That turned out to be Dr. Mary Anne Kiel, who is Lifestyle Medicine certified. They immediately clicked, and Dr. Kiel joined her as co-author. Brenda Davis, renowned dietician, soon came on board, as did Meryl Fury, M.S., R.N., President and CEO of the nonprofit Plant-Based Nutrition Movement. They decided to offer the book as a donation fund-raiser for PBNM.

The vision expanded: Contributors included physicians, authors, advocates, and Eagle Scouts. These included Dr. Neal Barnard and Dr. James Loomis. Will Tuttle contributed his passion for animal welfare. Additional contributors included chefs, trainers, authors, and wellness advocates. Many connections came through networking and shared missions. Common values of healthy communities, child nutrition, compassion

now available...

The Family & Scout Guide to PLANT FOODS

Real Food. Real Adventure. Real Health.

This plant-based guide combines Scouting values with engaging activities, inspiring stories, and tasty recipes—helping youth, scouts and leaders eat wisely, live sustainably, and explore with integrity.

What's Inside:

- 390+ Pages
- 18 Youth activity worksheets
- 150+ Delicious recipes
- Plant-based nutrition education
- Weekend camping meal plans
- Product recommendations & resources

Janet M. Pearson & Mary Anne Kiel, MD

Foreword by
Neal Barnard, MD, FACC & Meryl Fury, MS, RN

Afterword by
James F. Loomis, MD, MBA, ScD, FRCPC, FACSM

• e-Book download: \$25 minimum donation
• USB-A/C with bonus content: \$40 minimum donation (in-person pickup only)

All donations benefit the Plant Based Nutrition Movement 501c3 Non-profit

<https://pbnm.org/scouts>

info@pbnm.org

Above: A flier for “The Family and Scout Guide to Plant Foods: Real Food. Real Adventure. Real Health.” Check out these links for more info: <https://www.pcrm.org/buildinghealthycommunities/community/eating-rainbow-wfpb> and <https://pbnm.org/scouts/>

Continued on page 4

PLANTING THE SEED EARLY

Continued from page 1

Adult Disease Begins in Childhood

We used to think of heart disease, stroke, and Type 2 diabetes as problems of old age. The research tells a different story. Studies dating back to autopsies performed during the Korean War found fatty cholesterol deposits in the arteries of 18-year-olds. Later research found the same markers in children as young as 10. We've even seen high cholesterol passed from mother to fetus during pregnancy. Dementia, cancer, and cardiovascular disease don't simply "arrive" at age 60 – they are the result of decades of dietary choices that begin at the high chair. Prevention, therefore, must also begin there.

The Picky Eater Trap

One of the most common challenges I hear from parents is picky eating – and it's one I take seriously. When children cry for nuggets and macaroni, most parents understandably give in. But processed foods are designed to hijack the brain's dopamine system, creating intense cravings that make whole, real foods taste bland by comparison. Every time we give in to the tantrum, we reinforce a preference for hyper-palatable junk and make the next battle harder. I've treated school-aged children who won't eat fruit – nature's original candy. That cycle must be interrupted before it becomes a lifelong Standard American Diet (SAD) habit.

A Blueprint for the Family Table

The good news is that transitioning to a WFPB family table is completely achievable. Here's the framework I recommend:

- **Six months:** Begin Baby-Led Weaning. Let your infant explore simple fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains at their own pace. This builds autonomy and curiosity rather than anxiety around food.
- **By twelve months:** Aim for three WFPB meals and two snacks daily.
- **One consistent menu:** Kids should eat what the family eats. Separate "kids' meals" train children to expect processed defaults..

Continued on page 4



Photo by Auriana Koutnik

Planting The Seed Early

Continued from page 3

- **Rethink dairy:** Despite a century of marketing, cow's milk is not a nutritional requirement for children. Research links it to weaker bone density and increased cancer risk. Water and a varied WFPB diet meet all their needs. Calcium is important but can be gained by legumes (including tofu), dark leafy greens and fortified plant milk.

Key Nutrients to Watch

A well-planned plant-based diet is completely safe and healthy for children at every stage of development. The three nutrients that deserve the most attention are Calcium, Vitamin B12, and Vitamin D. I point families to VegPlate Junior (vegplatejunior.com) as an excellent, evidence-based resource for portioning across the five core food groups: whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds, fruits, and vegetables.

Practical Tips That Actually Work

- **Involve them:** Bring kids to the grocery store and the kitchen. Curiosity leads to tasting
- **No forcing, no sneaking:** We want children to trust food, not fear or resent it.
- **Stay the course:** Research shows it can take ten or more exposures before a child accepts a new food. Don't give up after two.
- **The WWBE Rule:** When they beg for fries, ask: "What Would Batman Eat?" — or whoever their current hero is. It works more often than you'd think.

The investment we make in a child's relationship with food pays dividends for a lifetime. One meal, one exposure, one curious little bite at a time.

BHC July Update

Continued from page 2

for animals and the planet, and education and service united all in a desire to help future generations thrive.

Forty-plus contributors and 394 pages later, this impressive book was born. It's quite a feat and feast!

What's inside the book?

- Forewords by Neal Barnard, MD and Meryl Fury, MS RN
- Afterwords by Jim Loomis, MD
- Chapters and personal stories on:
 - Plant-based nutrition
 - Physical and mental health
 - Student athlete nutrition
 - Caring for animals and the planet
 - 150 kid-friendly recipes for home and camp
- Meal plans, activity pages, and nature photography
- Resources for Scouts, parents, teachers, and youth leaders

Janet's dream became something much bigger than she had imagined. Her final message is dreams become reality through action. Follow the dream in your heart. Set a goal, create a plan, ask for help when needed. One decision can change your future, and you are capable of more than you think. Thank you, Janet!



Janet M. Pearson & Mary Anne Kiel, MD

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Neal Barnard, MD, FACC & Meryl Fury, MS, RN

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James F. Loomis, MD, MBA, DipABLM, FACLM

Come Walk with a Doc!

Come take a step toward better health!

The Walk with a Doc walking program is a fun and safe place to go for a walk, learn health tips from local healthcare professionals, and meet new people. The program is free and all are welcome!

The new Eugene chapter of the International Walk with a Doc program, Chapter #45806, meets every Saturday at 9:00 a.m. behind Valley River Center at the Greenway Bridge. In the event of inclement weather, the group meets by the movie theater at Valley River Center.

Learn more and register:



WALKwithaDOC.org

“The program is free and all are welcome!”

- Walk with a Doc



Photo by Trish Kingsbauer

Above: Eugene's first Walk with a Doc, featuring Dr. Tim Welch (left), members of the Eugene Plant-Based Providers group, and community participants.

Bringing lifestyle medicine to the community, to improve lives, one plant-based kitchen at a time...

www.livelifestylemedicine.com

