



# Diverse Issues



Volume 1, No. 2

November/December 1998

## Diversity in People: Wanted: A Size-Friendly Environment

Though we may be taught not to judge a book by its cover, in this culture many of us do. It is estimated that 30 percent of Americans are 20 percent more than their “ideal weight,” or *overweight*. The percentage is increasing. Between one and two million people are at least 100 pounds above the normal weight range and are considered “*morbidly obese*.” It would seem that weight is one of the last bastions of acceptable discrimination. Obese people face daily discrimination in the areas of employment, insurance, medical treatment, education, adoption, access, and social interaction (Hemenway, 1990). In addition, obese persons make less money on average, and are more likely to be poor than those considered attractive by cultural standards (Carr-Ruffino, 1996).

The \$40 million dollar diet industry and the media continue to assume there is only one acceptable body size. Although an increasing number of men are becoming concerned about their weight, women tend to be held to more stringent expectations in this area. The pressure to be slim begins early for little girls; dieting may begin at the age of ten. Although unrealistic, Barbie has been their role model for many years. It is estimated that only one in a million females would naturally have Barbie’s figure. Both girls and women are confronted with “fashion model” -looking characters on our favorite shows. These are difficult standards to meet, especially since the overwhelming majority of women weigh more than the average fashion model, and fashion models weigh 20 percent less than the average women.



Unfortunately, there are many myths about size and weight. Let’s examine some of them.

**Myth:**

*Obese people are overweight because they eat too much and lack willpower.*

**Fact:**

Most studies have shown that, on the average, obese people consume no more calories per day than other people. Some fat people eat a lot, even too much; others eat lightly. There is considerable evidence that some people have a genetic predisposition to be fat. Scientists have isolated an “obesity gene” believed to have mutated in obese people, causing a disorder in energy metabolism (Friedman, 1995).

**In This Issue**

- **Diversity in People:**  
*Wanted: A Size-Friendly Environment*
- **Diversity Resource:**  
*Recipes From Around the World*
- **Calendar of Understanding**
- **Diversity Around the State**  
*How People Are Alike and Different*
- **Diversity in the Workplace:**  
*Multilingualism or English Only?*
- **Diversity Activity:**  
*Chain of Diversity*

Dieting does not always have the desired results. In fact, most diets are only temporary, working for a short time. Most people gain most or all of their weight back within a few months or a few years.

What may be even more hazardous to health than being overweight, is continuously dieting, losing and regaining - the “yo-yo” effect.

**Myth:**  
*Obese people are less productive workers.*

**Fact:**  
Obese people are, on the average, just as productive as other workers. Some jobs, such as those performed in tight quarters (e.g. airline attendant) may be inappropriate for obese people. And some adjustment may be needed to accommodate size.

**Myth:**  
*Size discrimination is not a real problem like sexism, racism, or class bias.*

**Fact:**  
Discrimination based on size is wrong. Obese people are denied jobs and promotions because of internalized belief that fat is unattractive, that fat people are to blame for their size, and that fat people are morally lacking in character. Fat people are often denied access to quality of life. Inadequate seating denies them access to airplane seats, theaters, films, restaurants, and some classrooms. Obsession with diets has caused many people to die from the side effects of eating disorders, weight loss surgeries, and inadequate medical care. Furthermore, negative glances and comments wear away at self-esteem and confidence.

The multi-billion dollar diet industry encourages hope and false myths that only two to five percent of all overweight people can attain. It is time we move beyond the beauty myth to an appreciation of diverse forms of beauty and to valuing people for their inner qualities and

contributions. The following are a few suggestions to help create a size friendly environment:

1. Examine your own attitudes and biases toward obese people.
2. Don't assume that overweight people are dieting all the time. Don't assume they are eating all the time either.
3. Remember that many overweight people eat healthy foods, are active, and lead normal lives. Do not assume their major problem is their weight.
4. Overweight people may receive less positive feedback on their appearance than thin people. Give them a compliment if it is true. For overweight children, a periodic kind word can boost their self-esteem and self-image. “That dress looks great on you,” rather than, “That dress makes you look much slimmer.”
5. Consider the appropriateness of talking about your diet or weight issues to colleagues. Consider how the colleague may feel if you negatively comment about your weight to a colleague who is larger than you.
6. Treat everyone fairly and with respect, regardless their size or body shape.
7. Start noticing the beauty and positive aspects of overweight people.

*Sources:*

Carr-Ruffino, N. (1996). *Managing Diversity: People Skills for a Multicultural Workplace*, Thomson Executive Press, A Division of South Western College Publishing.

Friedman, J. of Howard Hughes Medical Institute, Rockefeller Institute, New York, NY. See reports in *Nature* and *Discovery*, March, 1995.

Hemenway, C. (1990). National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance Fat Feminist Caucus. P.O. Box 5000, Suite 159, Northampton, MA, 01060.

Seligman, M. (1994). *What You Can Change And What You Can't*. New York: Knopf.

## *Diversity Resource: Recipes From Around the World*

The stomach is the shortest way to the heart. Therefore, one way to increase our appreciation of diverse cultures is to enjoy foods from other cultures. A number of children's cookbooks provide opportunities for children to have a fun time while learning about the cultures of other people. Several recipes and cookbooks are shared below.

***A Good Soup Attracts Chairs: A First African Cookbook for American Kids*** contains more than 35 easy-to-follow recipes from the kitchens of West Africa. The author is Fran Osseo-Asare. The publisher is Pelican Publishing Company (1993). It includes recipes for drinks, main courses, starchy accompaniments, snacks and party foods, and desserts and sweets. Recipes are rated according to the amount of help which may be needed from an adult. This book may be purchased by ordering through a local bookstore, or through the internet at <http://www/Amazon.com>. Fran does presentations and classes on West African cooking and culture. She may be reached at (814) 863-8296 or [fsol@cde.psu.edu](mailto:fsol@cde.psu.edu). A favorite recipe from West African cuisine is peanut soup.

### **Peanut Butter Stew or Soup with Chicken (West Africa)**

Peanut Butter Stew is called "groundnut stew" in Ghana, where peanuts are known as groundnuts. It is creamy and yummy and fun to serve at dinner parties. Peanut Butter Soup is called Nkate Nkwan in the Twi language (nkate means "groundnut" or "peanut," and nkwan means "soup.") The only difference between the soup and the stew is the amount of water you add. For stew, you add only three cups of water, and for soup you add six cups of water.



#### **Ingredients:**

- 3 to 4 lbs. chicken pieces
- 2 medium onions
- 3 or 6 cups water
- 1 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 to 1 cup creamy peanut butter (natural-style with no sugar added)
- 1 8-ounce can tomato sauce
- 1/8 teaspoon ground red pepper (more or less to taste)

#### **Utensils:**

- large soup pot (5-quart or larger)
- cutting knife
- cutting board
- 1-cup measuring cup
- measuring spoons (1/8, 1/2, and 1 teaspoon)
- can opener
- wooden spoon
- small 1-quart saucepan
- soup ladle

#### **Directions:**

1. Pull or cut off most of the skin from the chicken pieces, rinse the chicken with water, then put the pieces into a soup pot. (The chicken skins may be left on, but a better flavor and less oil is obtained by removing them first.)
2. Peel and chop the onions on the cutting board, then add them along with 3 cups (for stew) or 6 cups (for soup) of water and the salt to the pot with the chicken.
3. Put the pot on the stove and turn the burner to high. When the water boils, turn the heat to low and cover the pot.
4. Open the can of tomato sauce with the can opener and add the sauce to the soup. Stir with a wooden spoon to mix.
5. Put the peanut butter in a medium saucepan. Carefully ladle about 2 cups of the soup broth into the saucepan. Slowly stir the broth and peanut butter mixture until it is creamy.
6. Now, slowly stir the peanut butter mixture into the soup, being careful not to splatter.
7. Add the red pepper, stir again, and cover the pot. Let it cook gently on low for about half an hour. Add a little more water if necessary.

#### **To Serve:**

Peanut Butter Stew is tasty simply spooned on top of plain boiled rice. However, for a party, it is great to serve the stew with rice and condiments, like curry. Just chop several toppings, like chopped peanuts (unsalted), bananas, oranges, tomatoes, green peppers, coconut, hard-boiled egg, onions, or whatever you like; and put them in small bowls. Put a spoonful of boiled white rice on a plate, cover it with some of the stew, and add your choice of toppings. This recipe will easily serve four to six people.

## Kifli (Hungarian Walnut Crescents)

### Dough:

4 3/4 cups unsifted all-purpose flour	4 egg yolks, slightly beaten
2 cups butter or margarine	1 cup sour cream

### Filling:

1 1/4 lb. shelled walnuts, ground (about 5 cups)	1 tablespoon almond extract
1 cup granulated sugar	1 egg, beaten
1/2 cup milk	confectioners sugar



**Make Dough:** Place flour in large bowl. Add butter or margarine and cut into four, until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Add egg yolks and sour cream. Stir until combined with fork. Turn dough out onto lightly floured board. Knead dough with hands until it is smooth and can be shaped into a ball. If dough is too sticky, knead in more flour. (If desired, wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate).

**Make Filling:** Put walnuts, granulated sugar, milk and almond extract in medium-sized bowl. Using wooden spoon, stir walnut mixture until ingredients are thoroughly combined. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Grease cookie sheet with solid vegetable shortening.

**To shape Kifli:** Divide dough into 4 quarters; wrap three separate quarters in plastic wrap and set aside. On slightly floured surface, roll out 1 quarter of dough to measure a 15x 12-inch rectangle that is 1/8 inch thick. Using pastry wheel, cut dough rectangle into 3 inch squares. Place heaping teaspoon of walnut mixture in center of each square. Bring 2 opposite corners of dough over filling, overlapping them slightly. Pinch edges together to seal. Place Kifli on cookie sheets; brush with beaten egg. Bake 10 to 12 minutes or until cookies are golden brown. Remove from cookie sheet and roll in confectioners sugar. Repeat until all dough has been rolled, shaped and baked. Makes 6 1/2 dozen cookies.

## Navaho Fry Bread (Native American)

4 cups flour	2 tablespoon powdered milk
1 tablespoon baking powder	1 1/2 cups warm water
1 teaspoon salt	1 cup lard or shortening



Mix all ingredients together with hands until the mixture is soft. Take a ball of dough and pull and pat it, forming a flat cake. Melt 1 cup of lard or other shortening in a frying pan. Brown cake on both sides.

Serve with stew, fried mutton, jam, honey, or syrup.

Source: "Yah-a-tay" Scholastic FIVE FAMILIES filmstrip.

## Pierogi (A favorite Polish dish)

### Filling:

1 lb lean raw ground beef	1/8 teaspoon pepper
1 egg	1/2 teaspoon onion juice
1 teaspoon salt	

### Noodle Dough:

1 egg, beaten	1/4 teaspoon salt
2/3 cup flour	

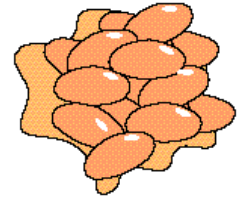


Mix filling ingredients together. To make dough, add egg to flour and salt to make a stiff dough. Amount of flour may vary slightly. Knead well. Let stand for 1/2 hour. Roll very thin. Let stand for 1 hour or more. Cut into 1 1/2" squares. Put 1 teaspoon filling in center of square. Fold in half to make a 3-corner pocket. Press edges together well. Cook in boiling soup or saltwater 15 minutes.

Source: Family recipe - Margaret Jacoby

## Red Beans and Rice (A Mexican favorite)

2 cups water	1/2 medium onion, minced
1 teaspoon salt	1 16 oz can red beans (or 1/2 cup cooked red beans)
1 teaspoon vegetable oil	1/4 teaspoon salt
1 cup rice	1/8 teaspoon pepper



Boil water. Add salt, oil and rice. Let it boil again and turn the temperature down. Cover the pot and let the rice cook (about 25 - 30 minutes). In a frying pan, cook the onion in the margarine until soft. Add the beans and pepper and cook until hot. Mix the beans and the rice well. Warm at a low temperature for 5 minutes so that the flavors are well mixed.

### Other recommended books include:

Cook, Diana S. (Ed.) (1995). *The Kid's Multicultural Cookbook: Food and Fun Around the World*. Charlotte, VT: Williamson Publishing Company.

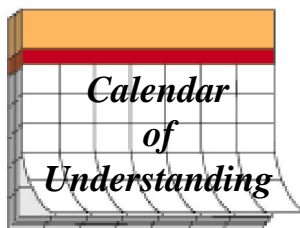
Osseo-Asare, Fran, (1993). *A Good Soup Attracts Chairs: A First African Cookbook for American Kids*. LA.: Pelican Publishing Company.

Weber, Judith Eichler (1994). *Melting Pots: Family Stories & Recipes*. NY: Silver Moon Press.

Zalben, Jane Breskin. (1996). *Beni's Family Cookbook For the Jewish Holidays*. NY: Henry Holt & Company.

Dooley, Norah. (1996). *Everybody Bakes Bread*. Indianapolis, MN: The Lerner Group.

Celebre la cocina hispana. (January 1995). The National Cancer Institute. NIH Publication, Number 95-3906(s).



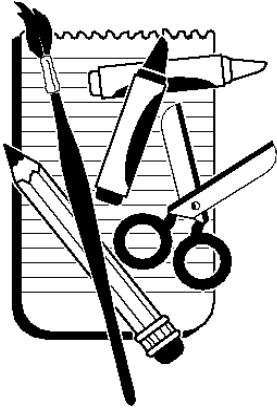
## Religious and cultural observances around the world

### December 1998

- 8th Feast of the Immaculate Conception - Observance commemorating the doctrine that Mary, from the moment of her conception, was free from the stain of Original Sin.
- 12th Day of Our Lady of Guadeloupe - Fiestas commemorate the day in December 1531, when the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared before the Indian Juan Diego. Celebrated in Latin America and the Southwest.
- 14th - 21st Hanukkah (Jewish) recalls the restoration of temple worship in 168 B.C.E.
- 20th Ramadan (Islam) - The ninth month in the Islamic calendar; 30 days of strictfasting from sunup to sundown in honor of the first revelations to the Prophet Muhammed.
- 25th Christmas - Commemorates the birth of Jesus.
- 26th - Jan. 1st Kwanzaa - Seven day celebration of African-American values and traditions and their continued vitality. "Kwanzaa," in Kiswahili, means "first fruits of the harvest."



## ***Diversity Activity: Chain of Diversity***



### **Goal:**

Participants will discover and recognize the many ways in which they are similar to others in the group, as well as, the ways in which each person is unique to the group.

### **Time:**

15 - 30 minutes (depending on number of participants)

### **Materials:**

Enough strips of colored construction paper so that each participant will have 6 strips. Strips should be about 1 -1/4 to 1-1/2 inches wide.

### **Procedure:**

(This activity is good after an initial discussion about differences and similarities among people from different groups.) Introduce this activity by inviting participants to look at some of their own similarities and differences. Pass bundles of colored strips around the room. Ask each participant to take six strips. Ask participants to think of ways in which they are similar to and ways they are different from the other people in the room. On each strip, participants should write down one similarity **and** one difference. When completed, each person should have written **six** ways in which they are similar and six ways in which they are different from the other people in the room.

Tell participants to be prepared to share what they have written on two of their strips with the whole group. If group members are having difficulty, give some examples of ways that people may be different or similar, such as: appearance, birth order, type of community in which one lives, hobbies/interests, age, parental status, marital status, etc. Call on each person to share two ways he/she is the same and two ways he/she is different from the other people in the room.

Start a chain by overlapping and gluing together the ends of one strip. Pass a glue stick to each person and ask him/her to add all six of their strips to the chain. Continue around the room until each person has added their strips to the chain.

### **Discussion:**

Ask participants to reflect on the many things they have in common, as well as the ways that each person in the group is unique. Conclude by pointing out that even though members of the group come from different backgrounds, in many ways they are the same. Display the Chain of Diversity on a bulletin board, or around the doorway of your meeting room. The Chain of Diversity will symbolize the commonalties and the uniqueness that each person contributes to the group.

---

*Diverse Issues* submitted by Patreese D. Ingram, Assistant Professor in Diversity Education, Department of Agricultural and Extension Education, 323 Agricultural Administration Building, University Park, PA 16802, (814) 863-7875—email: pdi1@psu.edu

This publication is available in alternative media on request.

The Pennsylvania State University is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to programs, facilities, admissions, and employment without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. The Pennsylvania State University does not discriminate against any person because of age, race, religious creed, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status. Direct all inquiries regarding nondiscrimination policy to the Affirmative Action Director, The Pennsylvania State University, 201 Willard Building, University Park, PA 16802-2801; tel. (814) 863-0471; TTD (814) 865-3175.

## ***Diversity in the Workplace: Multilingualism or English Only?***

Q. My Spanish speaking coworkers know English but they speak Spanish on the job. It makes people feel left out and talked about. Why do they do this when it creates such hard feelings?

A. This question hits a raw nerve for a lot of people, and not just with Spanish, though that is the most frequently spoken language in the United States other than English.

There are a number of issues to sort out. A key one centers around the matter of comfort and familiarity. A managing nurse in a hospital for example, has been instructed not to let Filipino nurses speak Tagalog when they are on the job. It is the hospital policy and she believes it is appropriate. She is Filipino and makes it very clear to her staff that they can't speak their native language around others because both patients and coworkers feel left out. But she also says that it is difficult and exhausting to use a second language all day long. She sometimes just wants to let her guard down, relax, and not have to work so hard at communicating. At times like these, it is easy and comfortable to lapse into one's native language. By putting the proverbial shoe on the other foot, you can gain empathy and understanding.

The larger issue is about how language differences should be handled in the workplace. The short answer is "very carefully," because in a subtle way, language deals with two potent

issues: power and respect. How language should be handled in a work group depends on many things. However, the key is for people to be honest and sensitive in discussing how they feel about using or hearing another language. It is an emotional issue that needs to be handled with great care. The most important outcome for a work group is the process of solving problems, not the answer of how language should be handled. If all parties in the dilemma feel they are treated with dignity and respect, they will almost always respond in kind and any answer you come up with will be a good one.

There are two questions that you may need to address if the reality of different languages in the workplace is relevant:

1. If your coworkers know English, but aren't using it, what's going on in this environment that makes them reluctant to use these skills?
2. How much tolerance exists for people who either struggle with the vocabulary and syntax of English or have a thick accent? In the answer to this question, you may discover why people continue to speak their first language.

Knowledge has always been power, but today that is more true than ever before. Finding ways to work with and benefit from those who are bi- or multilingual can ultimately work to everyone's benefit.

### ***Diverse Issues is available on the Web***

**Web Address:**

**<http://www.cas.psu.edu/docs/casdept/familyliving/pi/pimenu.html>**