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Dr. Isobel Contento Receives the 2021 SNEB President’s Award

The Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior (SNEB) presents the President’s Award to a member of the Society in recognition of their outstanding service to both the field of nutrition education and to SNEB. This year, the Society is pleased to award Isobel Contento, PhD, CDN with the honor for her outstanding contributions to nutrition education. The award will be presented during the 2021 SNEB Annual Conference, held virtually August 8-10.

Dr. Contento recently retired as the Mary Swartz Rose Professor of Nutrition and Education, and Director of the Program in Nutrition at Teachers College Columbia University, a position she held for 21 years. Dr. Contento joined the Teachers College faculty as an Associate Professor in 1977 and coordinated the Nutrition Program from 1985-2019.

Dr. Contento actually defined nutrition education. She is the lead author of a monograph on the elements of effectiveness of nutrition education, which was published as the December 1995 issues of the *Journal of Nutrition Education*, the peer-reviewed journal of the Society. This monograph was used for a decade as a textbook for nutrition education, prior to the publishing of Dr. Contento’s textbook *Nutrition Education: Linking research theory and practice* in 2007. Now in its fourth edition, and co-authored by Pam Koch, EdD, RDN, the text is considered the standard for the instruction nutrition in the context of multi-disciplinary understandings of the field.

Both SNEB and Association of Nutrition Networks have adopted Contento’s definition of nutrition education. With colleagues, she has developed curricula for school-aged children and youth, used nationwide, that focus on the between link food choice, childhood obesity prevention, and food system sustainability issues. A letter of recommendation submitted when Contento was awarded the Helen Denning Ullrich Annual Award of Excellence in Nutrition Education noted that “her work has contributed immeasurably to the betterment of American populations through its influence on USDA programs and policies, as well as on practitioners. I cannot think of any single person who’s done more to shape practice and the scientific discipline of nutrition education over the last two decades.”

Additionally, Dr. Contento has been instrumental in shaping the SNEB Nutrition Educator Competencies which articulate the foundational knowledge and performance skills nutrition educators need for the development, implementation and evaluation of effective nutrition education. The ten theme areas, and the more specific competencies under each of these, provide a practice guide for a well-rounded nutrition educator. The competencies may be used for individual professional development, curriculum and program planning for educational institutions, training within extension or other programs, or preparation for capacity development at the country level. The competencies were first issued in 1987 and most recently updated in 2016.

While shaping the profession of nutrition education, she has also been instrumental in the lives of individual nutrition educators. Dr. Contento has mentored decades of master and doctoral students in the Program in Nutrition at Teachers College (TC). One of her mentees summed up what Isobel has meant to her in this quote, “As I work outside TC now, I realize how lucky and privileged I was to be your student, mentee, and coworker. Thank you for your contributions to nutrition education.” Another mentee, who was a student of Isobel’s early in her career said, “I was fortunate to be a student [of Dr. Contento’s] in 1977-1978. She taught us, inspired us and equipped us with the necessary tools for the changing world and launched us in nutrition, education and food roles so we could pass along what we learned from her.”

Dr. Contento has been an active member of SNEB since the 1970s. She was the president of the Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior Foundation from 2017 to 2019 after serving six years as a Foundation trustee. Contento served on the SNEB Board of Directors from 2017 to 2019. She currently serves on the nominating committee and has been an active member of numerous other committees over the decades. Dr. Contento received the Society’s Helen Denning Ulrich Award for Lifetime Excellence in Nutrition Education in 2012. She also received the Best Article Award for *the Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior* in 2018 and is a Gold Author having written more than eight articles for the Journal in the past 10 years.

ABOUT THE SOCIETY FOR NUTRITION EDUCATION AND BEHAVIOR

The Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior is an international organization of nutrition education professionals who are dedicated to promoting effective nutrition education and healthy behavior through research, policy and practice with a vision of healthy communities, food systems and behaviors. To learn more, visit www.sneb.org.