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Owner and CEO of Pennsylvania Nutrition Services

The road that led to becoming a dietitian was influenced by many different factors, including my experience growing up with body dysmorphia and disordered eating. As a teenager, I played soccer and tennis and participated in distance running. I didn't have a clear idea of the role that nutrition played in facilitating excellence on the court and field and would restrict intake of necessary nutrients in an effort to alter my body composition. This led to an overconsumption of produce and what I self-determined was "healthy." I remember one night after track practice I ate a small baked potato with salsa for dinner and was so proud of my choice!

When it came time to select a college and course of study, I was initially leaning toward creative writing, thanks to a national award I received my senior year of high school. My mom intervened and encouraged me to consider nutrition, thanks to my interest in exercise and food. We lived in Pennsylvania but are Indiana natives - my parents are both Purdue grads! Purdue boasted one of the top nutrition and dietetics programs in the country and it was an easy "yes!" for me once I got accepted. I chose a dual major in dietetics and nutrition/fitness/health and graduated in 2008. I went on to complete my internship at Indiana University, get married, and move to Northern California, all in 2009.

My first job was in clinical research with a focus on diabetic medications and devices, and I absolutely loved it. I was also in charge of the company's social media and community outreach, which provided great learning opportunities and chances to hone my written and verbal communication skills. After a move back to the East Coast I worked in outpatient bariatrics and at a health education center where I wrote nutrition curriculum and provided corporate wellness services and individual nutrition counseling sessions. When I was pregnant with my first child, I transferred to our local hospital and worked in the wellness department, where I had the opportunity to lead grocery tours and counsel clients, continuing my work in the corporate wellness world. Post children, I chose to work as an independent contractor for several companies providing nutrition education at worksite wellness events like biometric screenings and health fairs, in addition to writing continuing education courses at Today's Dietitian. My current roles are as a nutrition educator at my local Community Action Partnership (CAP) and as owner of an insurance-based private practice, Pennsylvania Nutrition Services, including freelance writing and worksite wellness services.

The audiences I feel best suited to help are those who have low access to nutrition education but possess a keen interest in learning and growing. I have chosen to focus my career working in settings like non-profits and worksite wellness, where I am able to target my educational sessions into actionable takeaways. For example, when I am teaching fourth graders about calcium, I am working to impart a very specific set of objectives - what is calcium? Can you name three foods that are good sources of calcium? Why do we need to consume calcium every day? I use a similar approach when working with adults and providing medical nutrition therapy. I often reflect on my time as a teen struggling with disordered eating and am hopeful that I can help my clients and students develop an accurate nutrition worldview and healthy, balanced habits.

Fifteen years into my time as a dietitian, the best words to describe my career are "diverse" and "fulfilling." One of my favorite things about our field is that it allows for so many different experiences and learning opportunities that feed into one another. For example, my time working in clinical research encouraged me to be innovative and gave me early experience running a company's social media platforms and writing in a conversational voice. My time in the non-profit world allowed me to expand my professional writing skillset to include curriculum development and gave me a taste of self-scheduling clients and billing. These experiences, along with the nutrition counseling skills I honed at various sites, prepared me to launch my own private practice. I love that every day brings a new challenge and requires a different skillset - some days I wear my CEO hat, some days my clinician hat, and some days I'm the virtual assistant or the social media director. I am continuing to grow in my entrepreneurial skills, learning how to negotiate, manage the financial aspect of a business, and provide excellent customer service. I pride myself on providing affordable and accessible nutrition education through Pennsylvania Nutrition Services and to my students through CAP, as many reside within vulnerable and socioeconomically disadvantaged communities.

I love connecting with other nutrition professionals to encourage, support, and learn from one another - please reach out if you would like to partner or collaborate.

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