

Conference Comments from Ana Ortega, 2018 Nutrition First Scholarship Recipient:

The Trip to the NWA 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Washington leadership conference was amazing and I would highly recommend it for anyone working in WIC. The leadership conference prepared me to become a leader and advocate in informing our Congressmen and Senators about why WIC programs are so important for our community and families. I found the speech from Congressman Roger Marshall(R-KS) inspirational. He strongly believes in educating in-utero mothers on nutrition and guiding them to programs like WIC to ensure a healthy pregnancy, infancy and childhood. His speech ended with the quote “we are the glue that keeps those families together” which touches on how WIC empowers parents and caregivers and gives them the tools to raise healthy productive members of society. The conference included testimonials of families on the WIC program and how WIC has helped them get ahead in life financially and reach their nutrition goals. It also included guest speakers that provided information on policies that impact our programs with research and analysis that supports our programs and makes it successful year after year. I enjoyed the updates and changes that are coming to the WIC program to make it a better program for client and employees. The conference prepared me for the visit to the Hill, which was also very educational and I was able to talk with my Congresswoman, Cathy McMorris Rodgers, from my district in Walla Walla. Our Washington state Nutrition First program had folders with information for each district with facts and county level data that included proposal information for the coming year. Over all it inspired me to continue being an advocate for our WIC programs and WIC clients. This conference renewed my sense of purpose for being an employee of WIC.

(Ana works for Yakima Valley Farmer Workers WIC in Walla Walla, and became a Nutrition First Board Member in 2019.)