



Minnesota WIC *Everyday Hero* Nomination Form

Instructions:

Information on the ***Everyday Hero*** award can be found among WIC Wednesday Update materials on [MN WIC website](#). To nominate someone for the ***Everyday Hero*** Award:

- Complete this nomination form.
- Obtain at least *two letters of support*: one from the nominee's agency WIC Coordinator, and the other from the nominee's colleague(s) and/or public health partners.
- Submit this form and letters by **July 31st** to your region's **Advisory Group representative** (see accompanying list).

Click and type in the shaded areas to complete the form.

Question? Contact your Advisory Group representative.

Person Being Nominated:

NAME: Naomi Larson
ORGANIZATION : Aitkin County Health and Human Services
WIC POSITION: PHN, CPA
TELEPHONE NUMBER (day): 218-927-7274
E-MAIL: nlarson@co.aitkin.mn.us

Person Making the Nomination:

NAME: Liz Short
ORGANIZATION : Aitkin County Health and Human Services
POSITION: WIC Coordinator
TELEPHONE NUMBER (day): 218-927-7267
E-MAIL: elizabeth.short@co.aitkin.mn.us

Description/Contributions of the Nominee:

1. Describe the nominee's role in WIC.

Naomi is a Certified Professional Authority or CPA with the Aitkin County WIC program. As a CPA in WIC you have to be ready to wear many hats and provide counseling and education across a wide range of topics. With 18 years of professional experience, Naomi brings a rare depth of knowledge to the WIC program in all areas including: Pre-natal and post-natal education, breastfeeding education and teaching, nutritional needs of mothers, infants and children, home safety, environmental concerns and their impact on families, car seat safety, growth and development, immunizations, referrals, and parenting skills. Anything that impacts a family's well being, she can speak to. In addition to the professional nursing knowledge, Naomi must also have the skills and business acumen to navigate a complex software system such as HuBERT. HuBERT is a very robust program with frequent updates and changes. In addition to HuBERT the WIC program itself is ever changing in terms of food package offerings, e-WIC, smart phone applications, and Participant Centered Services or PCS. Naomi possesses the flexibility, patience and skills to adapt to an ever changing program such as WIC.

2. Summarize the nominee's qualities making them an *Everyday Hero*.

I believe if you would ask Naomi's colleges and clients to describe her attributes, some of the descriptions you would hear are stability, helpfulness, detail and work ethic. All these qualities are evident through her ability to be flexible and fluid in clinic. I feel very fortunate to have trained under Naomi's teaching and mentoring in WIC especially regarding HuBERT, documentation, INCP's, food packages and breastfeeding education. In addition to her role as a CPA, Naomi's work ethic is demonstrated in her desire to stay current and relevant in her profession. Naomi has current certifications and continued education in the following areas:

- Certified Lactation Specialist
- Child Passenger Safety Technician (Car Seat Safety)
- Partners in Parenting Education (PIPE)
- Grow & Glow
- Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Program (intensive 9 month graduate level program at the University of Minnesota, 2014-2015)

Her stability and helpfulness are probably best explained by example. Last year, one of our staff members was experiencing a serious health issue with a family member. This staff member needed the flexibility to be with her family at a moment's notice or unexpectedly days at a time. This meant that we had to adapt to very light coverage in the front office. Naomi didn't hesitate to take on this role. For several months, in addition to her duties as the Family Home Visiting Coordinator, and training me as a new CPA, she was the master of multi-tasking and the epitome of a team player. During clinic, she would handle the front end, set up appointments, allocate resources appropriately so we were complying with our separation of duties, all while seamlessly servicing our clients. Naomi took on whatever she needed to do to ensure that our clients were served and that our colleague could be where she needed to be, with her family member at their end of life.

WIC is an ever evolving and changing program. Naomi has embraced all the tremendous change with the WIC program from writing out paper vouchers to becoming extremely proficient with HuBERT. Over 18 years she has gained a wealth of knowledge that she thinks of as "just everyday stuff" but it is far from everyday. I admire how motivated Naomi is in her work and with our clients. She is always open to new ways of approaching her work, including Participant Centered Services or PCS.

I often look to Naomi for consultation on current nutrition education topics or breastfeeding awareness

education. I always receive positive critique and solutions. She is PCS in all things WIC and it shows with her clients and colleagues.

I think one of the most moving examples of PCS was at a clinic with a client who was coming in for benefits after the loss of her unborn child, very late in her pregnancy. I was keeping the mother's toddler entertained while Naomi handled the WIC appointment. As you can imagine, it was a very emotional appointment for that mother. There was no script to follow, no PCS guidebook to cover such an event. I observed the concentration and attention Naomi gave to that mother as she told her story, talked about her grief and anger. Naomi said very little but she didn't need to. That client had a trust with her that was evident. What that client needed was for Naomi to listen and that is what she did, she didn't try to make it better or rush her through a set appointment, but she did make it ok for that mom to be at WIC and talk about her loss. Naomi was there, quietly holding that clients grief for her, with her. It was an honor and privilege to be there.

This is just one example of countless, unspoken and unrecognized events that Naomi does out of the spotlight, that makes her an everyday hero.

Aitkin County Health & Human Services

204 First Street NW

AITKIN, MINNESOTA 56431

PHONE 1-800-328-3744 or 1-218-927-7200 - FAX # 218-927-7210

Dear WIC Community:

I am pleased to support the nomination of Naomi Larson for the "Minnesota WIC Everyday Heroes" award. I have known and worked with Naomi for fourteen years. For thirteen of those years, she and I worked side-by-side in WIC clinic and other family health programs. For the past 1.5 years I have had the privilege of being her supervisor.

I have always found Naomi to be dependable, efficient, dedicated and unfailingly passionate about the children and families she works with and the extraordinary care and service she provides to them. Naomi has a desire to see the positive attributes in each of her clients and to help turn challenges into successes. This is evidenced by the countless written "thank yous", pictures, notes and drawings she has received from parents and children over the years, all of which she proudly displays in her office area.

Naomi projects a warm, cheerful attitude to her coworkers and clients. I have seen her resolve conflicts and handle other difficult situations with remarkable patience and admirable tact. Naomi goes out of her way to help people in need; client, friend, family or neighbor. To offer a few examples: Naomi was helping a WIC family with a significant housing issue find a stable, long-term home. The search was successful, but that unfortunately meant the family needed to give up their multiple pet dogs. Naomi sought out ways in which she could assist in finding good, caring homes for these animals-- homes with caretakers who were willing to keep in touch with the family, giving updates on the beloved pets. Naomi had success and the animals were adopted into new homes. A few Thanksgivings ago, Naomi had signed one of our WIC families up to receive one of the several Thanksgiving gift/meal baskets that our agency gets donated each year. The family thanked her and recognized that it would be their sole source of comfort food for the Holiday meal. The family had made arrangements to pick up the basket on the day they were available, but did not show up. Upon learning about the missed appointment, Naomi contacted the family to learn about some devastating events in the previous few days and that there was no transportation option. Not to let this family go without their basket, Naomi contacted local law enforcement to ask if the Deputy on duty would deliver the basket. These are just a few of the countless examples of the everyday work Naomi performs. To her it is not out of the ordinary, it's just what needs to get done. Naomi loves people, works hard, displays empathy and lifts the spirits of those around her.

Over the last eighteen years, Naomi has embraced multiple changes with certainty and optimism. I have fond memories of her reminiscing about the days of TACOs, used as client charts, the switch to CHIP, 24-hour food recalls, exchanging food units, etc. She has transitioned to HuBERT, new food packages, growth charts and risk codes with grace and tact. Through all transition, Naomi has been instrumental in assisting, training, coaching and encouraging the other WIC team members. Naomi thinks "outside of the box" and is consistently thinking about ways in which clinics, appointments or service can be streamlined and improved. In the true spirit of teamwork, Naomi is the first to offer a rearranged calendar to work for another staff that is having a conflict.

Naomi is a notable Public Health Nurse who is respected by those she works with, within her own agency and outside. She has built a strong rapport with the medical community, community resource agencies, and the entire region. Naomi is certainly deserving of the Minnesota WIC Everyday Hero Award, and I am thankful for the opportunity to write a letter in her support.

Be Well,



Erin J. Melz, RN, PHN

Public Health Supervisor

Aitkin County Health & Human Services

Aitkin County Health & Human Services

204 First St. NW
AITKIN, MINNESOTA 56431
PHONE 1-800-328-3744 or 1-218-927-7200 - FAX # 927-7210

July 28, 2015

As the WIC Coordinator for Aitkin County I would like to offer a letter of support and recommendation for Naomi Larson as an Everyday Hero.

I can speak to Naomi's role and leadership in WIC from a different lens as I came into the program in May of 2014 as a new graduate. While I had 25 years of professional experience in a totally unrelated field, I was coming into the WIC Coordinator role as a new nurse. I cannot think of anyone better to provide the training, support and encouragement to embrace this role. The learning curve in this program is steep and in addition to having to train a new graduate, Naomi was also juggling her work as the Family Home Visiting Coordinator and taking on extra work as another colleague was needing to take time off due to a family illness.

Looking back I now realize the patience it must have taken to explain to me why HuBERT isn't giving vouchers to breastfed infants and most importantly, not making me feel completely incompetent at this new role. There were constant interruptions, questions and training that she quietly took on and always made time for.

One of the qualities I admire most about Naomi is her ability to deliver a message to a colleague or a client in a way that is firm, understanding and supportive. She doesn't compromise what is right just to avoid a difficult conversation. Because of this, she is well respected both by clients and colleagues. When I read about the Everyday Hero Award, Naomi was the first to come to mind. Mainly because she is so very humble about all that she does. If you would ask her how she has come by all of the invaluable knowledge she is so willing to share she would likely tell you it's "just what she does."

We all know that any job can have its challenges. It is also a difficult task sometimes to stay motivated and fresh after working in a field for a long time. Working in a smaller county, Naomi wears many hats and embraces the variety that her jobs brings rather than viewing it as a distraction. Naomi also has fun at work and brings some levity when it is most needed while always being the consummate professional. As the WIC Coordinator, I appreciate her willingness to step up when needed. I can always count on Naomi to deliver, without question.

I appreciate the opportunity to write this letter of support for Naomi. She is well deserving and embodies all the qualities that the WIC program strives to achieve each and every day for our participants.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Liz Short RN, PHN". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Liz Short, BSN, RN, PHN