Building Healthy Futures

Stories from ACCESS WIC Families

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WIC WOMEN, INFANTS, & CHILDREN





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Introduction

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) helps families access nutritious foods, nutrition education, breastfeeding support and connections to community resources during some of life's most important stages. Through WIC, parents are empowered with the knowledge and support they need to help their children grow, thrive and build healthy futures.

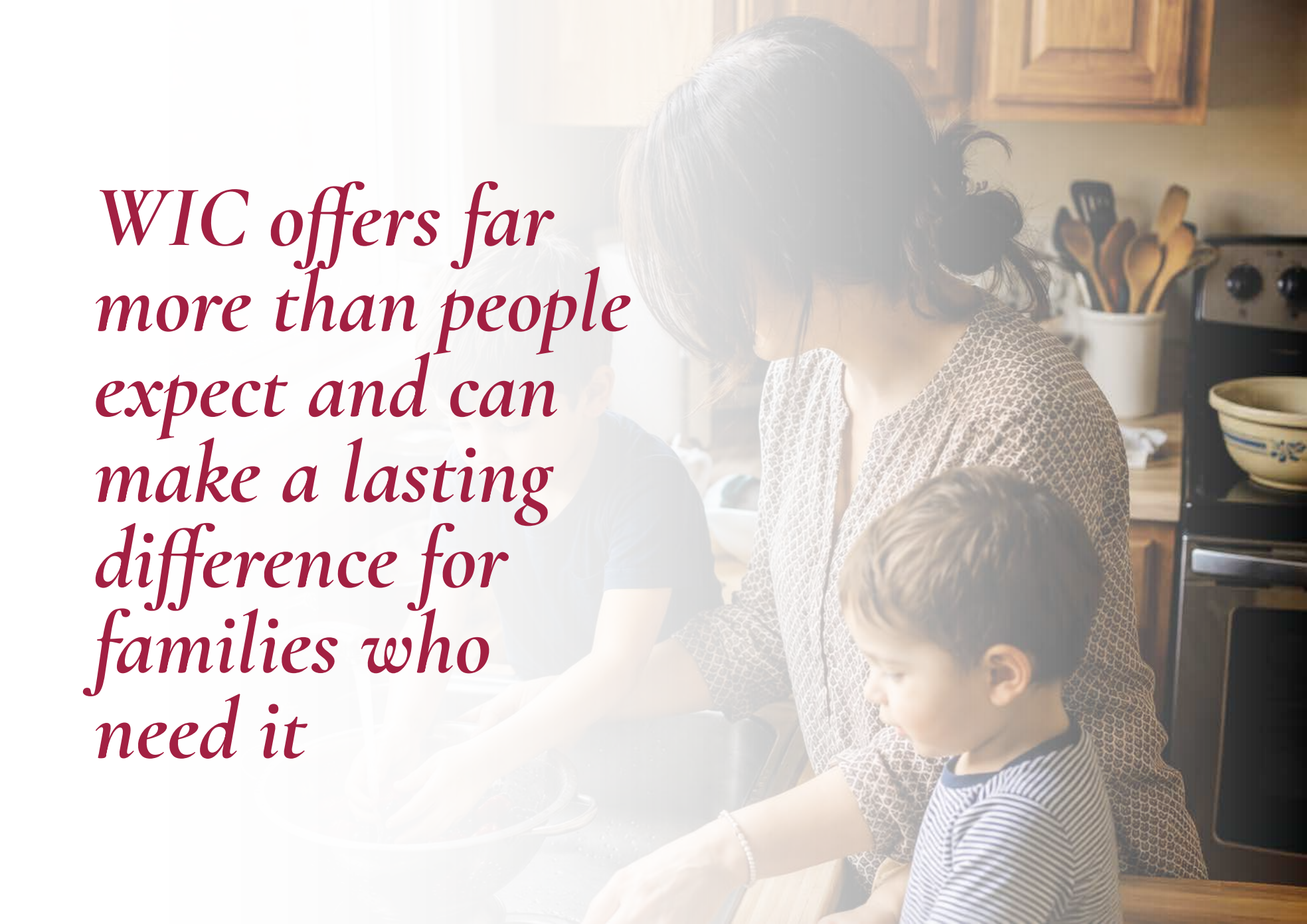
For decades, WIC has played a vital role in improving the health and well-being of families across Michigan. The program serves pregnant and postpartum individuals, infants and children up to age five, providing resources that support healthy development during the earliest years of life. Beyond food assistance, WIC helps families navigate challenges, build confidence and connect with services that strengthen their communities.

Across Dearborn and surrounding communities, ACCESS has witnessed firsthand the difference WIC makes in the lives of local families. From first-time parents learning about breastfeeding to families finding support during difficult financial circumstances, WIC provides more than nutrition assistance. It offers education, encouragement and a trusted network of support.



This storybook celebrates the voices of WIC participants whose experiences demonstrate the lasting impact of the program. By sharing their journeys, we hope to raise awareness about the importance of investing in maternal and child health and highlight the ways WIC helps families grow stronger, healthier and more confident in their future.

WIC offers far more than people expect and can make a lasting difference for families who need it



Sumayah, 33

Sumayah is a mother of three living in Westland, Michigan. She came to the United States 15 years ago, first settling in California before moving to Michigan in 2019. Today she is raising a 6-year-old son, a 4-year-old son and a newborn baby girl. When her first child was born, Sumayah was new to the country and had never heard of programs like WIC. By the time her second son arrived, her mother-in-law encouraged her to enroll, but the family hesitated. They worried that government support might affect her path to U.S. citizenship. She also believed WIC offered only formula and baby food, so the fear outweighed the benefits.

Everything changed during her most recent pregnancy. At a community outreach table hosted by ACCESS, Sumayah learned the facts about WIC. She discovered that joining would not harm her immigration status, and that the program offered far more than she expected. Encouraged, she enrolled during her second trimester. Once she joined, Sumayah was surprised by how much WIC provided. She received breastfeeding support before her baby was born, along with nutrition education to help her understand her children's needs. She learned WIC offers healthy food for babies and for mothers during pregnancy and beyond, and that children can stay on WIC until age five. Through referrals, she found other community resources too, including programs that help with essentials like car seats.

WIC has made a real difference in Sumayah's daily life. The nutrition guidance helped her manage her older son's picky eating and feel more confident in the meals she makes. The food support eased financial pressure and brought more healthy options into her home. Just as important, WIC gave her a sense of connection after moving to a new state and a community she can turn to.Looking back, Sumayah emphasizes that families who use WIC are doing their best to care for their children and build a strong future. They aren't looking for shortcuts, just reliable support. She encourages others who feel unsure to learn about the program for themselves. WIC, she believes, offers far more than people expect and can make a lasting difference for families who need it.

Noor, 26

Noor, of Melvindale, is a devoted mother of two who has always stretched every dollar to make sure her children have what they need. But as grocery prices climbed and her kids' appetites grew, she worried more each week about nutrition, rising costs and whether she could keep up. She wanted her children to have fresh foods, healthy snacks and a strong start, but doing it alone was getting harder than she liked to admit.

That's when Noor turned to WIC. She expected the process to be overwhelming, but to her surprise, enrolling was simple and welcoming. She signed up because she wanted reliable support, not just groceries, but guidance on her children's nutrition and how to make every meal count.

Through WIC, she found exactly healthy foods, personalized education and a community that made her feel supported rather than judged. With WIC easing the pressure of grocery costs, Noor could finally breathe and focus on the demands of raising two little ones. For her, WIC wasn't just assistance. It was a step toward giving her children the healthy future they deserve. As she tells friends and family, "Don't hesitate to apply. It might be the support your family needs."

Maria, 36

Maria has lived in Dearborn her whole life and is raising her three daughters in the same community she grew up in. Like many parents, her biggest goal has always been making sure her children are healthy and cared for. She first enrolled in WIC four years ago after her youngest daughter was born. At the time, she was mainly looking for help paying for baby formula. Her pediatrician had mentioned the program during a visit, and it felt like the support she needed. Maria assumed the process might be complicated, but enrolling turned out to be simple, especially since she already had Medicaid. What she didn't expect was everything else WIC would offer. Along with formula, Maria received breastfeeding support and nutrition education. With guidance from a breastfeeding peer counselor, she gained confidence and learned techniques that helped her breastfeed longer than she thought possible. Over time, she also began learning how nutrition affects her whole family's health.

WIC foods became part of her daily routine. Her kitchen stayed stocked with milk, cheese, yogurt and other healthy staples. She started using these foods in new ways, making snacks like peanut butter treats and home made labneh. Her children grew used to having healthy options at home and began choosing them naturally. Before WIC, Maria often felt overwhelmed trying to manage everything while making sure her children were fed. The program helped her shift from simply getting by to building strong, healthy habits for her family. Those habits are now part of their everyday life and something she believes her daughters will carry with them as they grow.

Maria hopes more families understand that WIC is not just about financial assistance. It supports parents in raising healthy children and creating lasting routines around nutrition and well-being. For anyone unsure about signing up, her message is simple: WIC is worth trying. Many families qualify, even if they are working, and the support goes far beyond food.

“WIC helped take away the stress of affording formula



Neda, 26

Neda, a Dearborn native, is a proud mother of two. A lively three-year-old daughter and a curious seven-month-old baby boy. Life has brought her joy, but like many families, it has also come with unexpected challenges.When Neda first thought about enrolling in WIC nearly three years ago, she didn't hesitate. Grow ing up, she saw her mom and aunts benefit from the program. "They always spoke positively about it," she recalled. "So I knew it was something I could trust."

After her daughter was born, Neda faced a challenge she hadn't planned for, she wasn't able to breastfeed. For mula quickly became an essential but expensive necessity. That's when WIC became more than just a program; it became a source of relief. "WIC helped take away the stress of affording formula," she said. But it didn't stop there. Through WIC, Neda began adding more fruits and vegetables into her meals, not just for her children but for herself too. She learned about nutrition, healthy growth, and what her children needed at each stage. She quickly realized WIC wasn't just about food, but also a program that helps educate and support families."I was surprised by how much more WIC offers," she explained. "They check on your baby's growth, monitor things like iron levels, and give you guidance along the way. It feels like someone is looking out for your family." Recently, Neda has been going through a difficult divorce that has shifted her life in many ways. Through this transition, WIC has remained a steady source of support. "It's helped cover some of the costs for my kids and made sure I can still provide healthy meals," she shared. "That peace of mind means everything, especially right now."

Thanks to WIC, even in tougher times, Neda knows her children have access to nutritious food. It's allowed her to focus less on financial stress and more on what matters most like being present for her kids. She also understands that some families feel hesitant or even ashamed to seek help. But Neda wants them to see things differently."There's nothing to be ashamed of," she said. "Everyone goes through hard times. These programs are here to help you get through them and get back on your feet." When asked what she would say to someone unsure about enrolling, her answer is simple: "There's no harm in trying. The worst that could happen is you don't qualify, but if you do, it can make a huge difference. Not just financially, but in helping you and your kids live healthier lives." For Neda, WIC has been more than assistance. It's been a lifeline, a teacher and a trusted partner through life's ups and downs.

Tasneem, 37

Tasneem, a lifelong Detroit resident, is a mother of two boys, ages 7 and 1. Her journey with WIC began when her first child was still young, after she became concerned about his feeding habits. A recommendation led her to the program, though at the time she was unsure if it would truly help. Her hesitation didn't last long. Once enrolled, she found the process simple and welcoming.

What stood out most was how supportive and caring the staff were throughout. That early positive experience stayed with her. When she became pregnant with her second child, Tasneem enrolled in WIC right away. She already understood the value of the program and wanted to make sure she and her baby had the same support from the start. She plans to continue as long as she is eligible.

WIC has played an important role in her family's well-being. It has helped ensure a consistent supply of healthy food in the home and provided support for essential needs like baby formula during critical times. This also eased financial pressure, allowing her to stretch her budget when money was tight. Tasneem also gained valuable knowl edge through WIC's nutrition education. She learned more about how to support her children's growth and make informed, healthy choices for her family. This gave her confidence and let her focus more on her children's health and development.Tasneem hopes others understand that programs like WIC are there to support families, not to judge them. She believes every parent shares the same goal of raising healthy, happy children and sometimes support is needed along the way.

Latifa, 39

Latfiah has always called Michigan home, but after spending time living abroad in France, she returned to Dear born with her husband and children to start again. Like many families adjusting to a big transition, the move came with new challenges such as financial pressure, settling into a routine and making sure her children had everything they needed.

As a mother of three boys, Latfiah's focus has always been their well-being. When her second child was young, she enrolled in WIC after seeing how it helped someone close to her. Although she had heard mixed opinions from others, she chose to take the first step and apply. That decision made a meaningful difference. WIC helped ease the financial burden her family faced during a time of adjustment. It provided access to nutritious foods that supported her children's growth and health, filling important gaps while guiding the family toward healthier choices.

What stood out most was how supportive and welcoming the process felt. The WIC staff made it clear that the program exists not to judge families but to help them succeed. She also discovered that WIC helps connect families to additional resources, creating a stronger support system than she expected. Over time, the impact went beyond groceries. With less stress about food and expenses, Latfiah could focus more on her children, especially her youngest son, who has autism and benefits from her presence and care at home.

The support allowed her family to stay balanced during a critical time.Today, Latfiah feels reassured knowing that resources like WIC are available when needed. For her, the program represents stability, health and peace of mind. She hopes more families understand that programs like WIC are there for a reason—to support chil dren, strengthen families and make healthy living more accessible.

Imad, 35

Imad had always believed that taking care of his family meant standing strong, working hard and never asking for help. Born and raised in Dearborn, he carried that responsibility with pride. With two energetic little boys, ages five and four, and a baby on the way, life was full, busy and meaningful. But lately, something had changed. Each trip to the grocery store felt heavier than the last.

Imad would run the numbers in his head, quietly worrying whether he could keep up. Still, asking for help didn't come easy. When someone first mentioned WIC, Imad hesitated. What if we don't qualify? he thought. And deeper than that was a quieter fear: Does this mean I'm not doing enough as a father? He carried that doubt until one eve ning, sitting with his wife, who was expecting their third child. They talked about their hopes, not just for getting by, but for doing better.Two months ago, they decided to enroll. It didn't take long for Imad to realize how wrong his fears had been. Instead of judgment and barries, they found support and guidance.

The peer specialist welcomed his wife warmly, answering questions and offering encouragement, especially about breastfeeding which is something they had struggled with in the past. With their first son, things hadn't gone as planned. But this time felt different and they felt prepared. Imad was surprised by how much they learned, not just about feeding a baby, but about nourishing their whole family. They began trying new recipes, turning WIC foods into healthy snacks their boys actually loved. Their grocery trips felt lighter, not just because of the financial support, but because the choices were clearer. What stayed with him most wasn't the food or the benefits, it was the feeling that he wasn't alone.

One night, watching his kids laugh over a bowl of freshly cut fruit, Imad thought about the hesitation he'd once felt. He wished more people understood what he now knew: that families who use programs like WIC aren't failing, they're doing everything they can to succeed. If he could speak to another father standing where he once stood, unsure and quietly worried, Imad would say: "You're not falling short, you're stepping up. Doing what your family needs isn't weakness. It's love."



With WIC, bringing home healthy food gets a little easier

Makia, 34

Michigan has been home to Makia since she was four years old. For the past 30 years, she has built her life here with her family and community. When she became pregnant with her first child, she faced the same worries many parents share such as how to provide a healthy start while managing expenses. At the time, her husband was overseas, and because she couldn't work during her pregnancy, the uncertainty felt overwhelming.

She had heard about WIC before. In fact, she had seen friends and neighbors benefit from the program and had even helped others complete their applications. Still, when it came time to apply for herself, she hesitated. "I was worried I would be denied," she said. "I thought the enrollment process would be difficult."

Makia enrolled in WIC four years ago and has stayed in the program while raising her two children. What stood out most was that WIC offered more than food. "It's not just about nutrition," she said. "It's guidance, resources, and real support."

Through WIC, she received breastfeeding support, a breast pump, education on safe infant sleep and connections to community programs she hadn't known about. The program also helped her better understand her children's nutritional needs and prepare healthier meals at home. Because of this support, her grocery budget stretches further, letting her afford healthier foods and meet other essential needs. "Meals are healthier now," she said. "It helped us focus on what matters most."

Makia hopes others understand that families who use WIC are simply trying to give their children the best possible start. She reminds everyone that WIC families are resourceful, always searching for ways to provide their children with the best. Her message is simple: don't let misconceptions hold you back. Seeking support isn't a weakness but a step toward stability, health and opportunity for your family.

Reem, 42

In Dearborn Heights, Reem, has spent nearly two decades building a life centered on family, care and community. Reem is a mother of three boys, ages 17, 14, and 20 months, and now expecting again, she knows firsthand the joys and challenges of raising children at different stages. When she first enrolled in WIC in 2008 during her first pregnancy, she wasn't just looking for help with groceries, she was looking for guidance, connection and reassurance. "At first, I thought it was mainly about food," Reem shares. "And yes, the food package helps, but WIC is really about learning and connecting."

Over the years, Reem returned to WIC with each pregnancy, confident in the support it provided. Whether it was understanding her children's changing nutritional needs, managing picky eating, or preparing healthy meals, WIC gave her practical tools she uses every day. Just as valuable were the connections, introductions to community programs, safe sleep and car seat resources, and events that brought her together with other mothers navigating similar journeys. Today, WIC continues to be part of her growing family's story, not just as a support system, but as a trusted resource she can rely on. Her message to others is simple but powerful: "These programs are your right. Don't be ashamed to take care of your family. Be open, ask questions, and learn everything you can." Reem's journey is a reminder that WIC is a partnership, one that helps families feel confident, connected and supported every step of the way.

"Yes, the food packages help, but WIC is really about learning and connecting with others



Hanan, 44

Hanan, an Allen Park resident of 36 years, is a mother of four. An 18-year-old daughter, two sons ages 10 and 7 and a 3-year-old daughter. Though WIC has made a lasting impact on her family's health and well-being, her journey with the program didn't begin with her first child. When her first child was born, Hanan chose not to enroll in WIC. She had heard about the program from friends but felt unsure, worried it might affect her chances of becoming a U.S. citizen or lead to unexpected costs later. Because of those concerns, she missed out on support she now knows could have helped. During her later pregnancies, she decided to enroll and what she discovered quickly changed her perspective. WIC provided not just food, but meaningful guidance on nutrition and healthy habits. She was surprised by how much support was available and how much it eased the strain on her grocery budget.

Through WIC, Hanan learned how to make healthier choices for her children, including adding more whole grains to their meals and understanding the importance of preventing issues like iron deficiency. The program also connected her with support that helped her breastfeed longer than she had expected, building confidence along the way. Today, Hanan sees WIC as more than assistance but as a tool that helps families grow stronger and healthier. Her message to others is simple: WIC is there to support families, not hold them back. It offers both financial relief and valuable knowledge that can make a lasting difference.

Thank you

Every family's journey is different, but one thing remains the same: parents will do everything they can to give their children the best possible start in life. With gratitude to all con tributors: thank you for entrusting us with your stories. Your voices are the heart of this booklet.

Programs like WIC are about more than food. They are about confidence, education, connection and ensuring that no family has to navigate these challenges alone.



WIC is there to support families. It offers both financial relief and valuable knowledge that can make a lasting difference.

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