

Dr. Elaine Bowen



Dr. Elaine Bowen was born Aug. 19, 1956, at Leominster, Mass. She joined the WVU Extension Service in 1978 as the Morgan County Extension Agent, and in 1988, moved to a statewide role as an Extension Specialist, where her focus was on children and at-risk families. She led initiatives to prevent school dropouts and to provide educational programs on nutrition to families with limited resources.

She moved to a role in administration in 1997, providing direction for the Program Center for 4-H and Youth, Family and Adult Development to help participants with health, resource management, family life, volunteer leadership and life skills for youth. She led more than 100 faculty and support staff, and reached more than 65,000 participants through those programs.

In 2004, Bowen took the role of Extension Specialist for Health Promotion in the Extension Service's Families and Health Programs. She also served as a member of the West Virginia Welfare Reform Coalition and was instrumental in educating families about the Earned Income Tax Credit, which saved them more than \$3 million.

A hallmark of all Bowen's work has been the partnerships she developed along the way. She worked with the American Heart Association to educate women about heart disease through "Love Your Heart Talks." She also worked with the Center of Excellence in Women's Health to organize "Women on Wellness Retreats," along with other outreach efforts. Her work with the Center for Excellence in Disabilities led to two USDA grants to fund a health and safety program for senior citizens. More than 2,000 learned how to maintain their health and create a safer home environment. She leveraged other funding after that grant expired to expand the program to include fall prevention.

The Community Educational Outreach Service (CEOS) is another group that Bowen worked with extensively. Active in 42 West Virginia counties, the clubs nearly all now include "Health Motivators" who use an Extension-supplied curriculum to encourage healthy lifestyles.

Her work with the state's 4-H membership has helped them learn about the health "H" in the name of their club. She initially focused on oral health, but also became involved in preventing risky behaviors in youth and promoting healthy eating, physical activity and limited screen time for youngsters. She was a contributor to the "Rethink Your Drink" campaign that encouraged West Virginians to reduce their intake of sugary beverages and the "Wild, Wonderful Walking Kit to encourage workers to get away from their desks for physical activity periodically.

Bowen retired from the Extension Service in January 2019 and was granted Faculty Emeritus status.