



Anushka Nadarajah

Anushka Nadarajah's Sri Lankan background gave her a personal connection to the tsunami relief effort she undertook in high school; Anushka spearheaded a group of students raising over \$160,000 for the cause. Her initial fundraising supported the rebuilding of three villages, and her continued efforts supported education for girls there. Her accomplishments resulted in recognition as Northern New Jersey Girl of the Year in 2005 by Girls Inc., and she received the St. Lawrence University community service award. In her freshman and sophomore years at Penn, Anushka was regularly involved with tutoring elementary school students with Community Schools Student Partnerships. As a sophomore, she was elected as secretary of the Civic House Associates Coalition Executive Board and then elected co-chair of the executive board as a junior. Anushka's capstone project was inspired by her leadership work with the Netter Center for Community Partnerships' Urban Nutrition Initiative. Anushka graduates as an Economics major in the College.

CAPSTONE PROJECT

Assessing the Impact of a High School Nutrition Education Program on Home Food Environments in West Philadelphia

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Fran Barg, School of Medicine, Family Medicine and Community Health

With the increase in obesity, heart disease, and diabetes in America over the past few decades, dietary health and nutrition have been identified as critical issues that need to be examined and improved. Changing Americans' eating patterns is a difficult task given the food environment that has developed in this country. The food environment is defined as the combination of all of the factors that influence food choice; these factors include taste preferences, price, and accessibility of food. The home food environment is influenced by all of these factors and contributes to the types of eating patterns that youth develop. This paper seeks to examine the impact of a high school nutrition education program on home food environments in West Philadelphia. Through comparing the types of food available in homes of students in the program to the types of food available in homes of students not in the program, the study found there were more nutritious foods available in the former group. Additionally, there was no significant difference in the healthiness of foods available in homes that valued nutrition highly, where there was knowledge about nutrition, and in homes in which students spoke with their parents often about the importance of eating healthy.