

SUMMER 2023

generationgf

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magazine

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GLUTEN-FREE 
SUMMER CAMPS



generationgf

magazine

A magazine that helps gluten-free children and teens stay healthy and happy.



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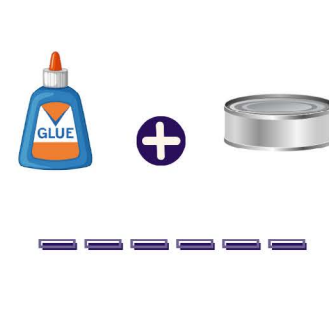
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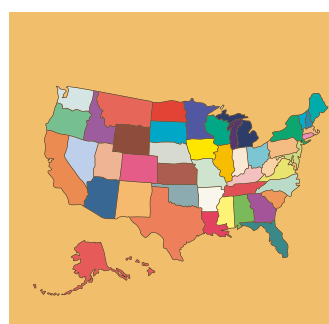
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Letter From The Editor

Welcome to the summer issue of Generation GF magazine! Summer is a great time to spend time with family and friends outdoors!

It's a perfect time to try new things outdoors like:

- Roast marshmallows over a fire and make gluten-free s'mores
- Learn how to help your parents with gardening or weeding, and learn how to identify the plants in your yard
- Make a bird feeder for your backyard tree and spot how many different birds you can find that use it during the summer season
- Spend an afternoon in your own backyard as a junior entomologist (someone who studies bugs) and write down how many bugs you can find and draw a photo of them in a notebook
- Visit a farmer's market and see if you can find any fruit or vegetable that you've never seen before, and learn more about it and how you could use it in a gluten-free recipe
- Learn how to grill a hamburger or veggie burger, or help prepare condiments or side dishes for an outdoor dinner on the grill

Make sure you always involve an adult when it comes to using an open flame, cooking or baking, and using sharp utensils like knives, hammers, or gardening equipment!

This summer, Gluten Intolerance Group and GIG Cares team members will be at a few gluten-free summer camps! They will be in the kitchens helping to create safe meals for the gluten-free campers. We also will be shipping out boxes of safe snacks to some campers this year. We can't wait to see your smiling faces this summer. We hope you all have a safe and memorable camp experience for all attending!

Happy reading,
Erica



WHAT'S NEW



Fun things always happen with Generation GF!



In May of 2023, we hosted a MiniCon (or a mini conference) in the Pacific Northwest! We gathered in Tacoma, WA to share gluten-free knowledge and passion with local gluten-free friends. We even had gluten-free bakeries and companies participate! And you can't have an event without a gluten-free buffet.

We had two amazing doctors that specialize in digestive issues talk about celiac disease. We loved hearing from Dr. Dale Lee from the Celiac Disease Program at Seattle Children's Hospital and Dr. Isabel Hujuel from UW Medicine. Thank you so much for your time and knowledge!

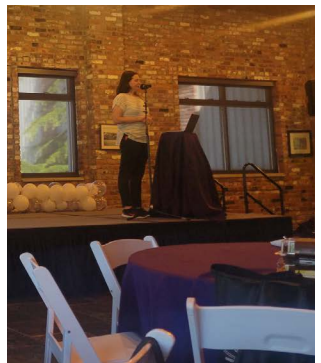


We talked about how hard it is sometimes to dine out with celiac disease or gluten sensitivity. We understand that sometimes we need a little more help when it comes to restaurants! Cynthia Kelly introduced some new restaurant cards that can make dining out a little easier. She also showed off some cards that you can leave as feedback for the restaurant if your meal was good – or bad!



We had several vendors from the Washington area. There were so many cakes and cookies and breads to try at MiniCon! Seattle is really lucky to have such great food there!

Our closing speaker was Em Beals of 5 B's Bakery from Washington. She was so exciting to listen to about the science behind gluten-free baking! She's taught so many people how to bake gluten-free, because we know that sometimes it can be really hard! You can also order from her bakery even if you don't live in Washington!



WE WANT TO THANK EVERYONE WHO WAS ABLE TO MAKE IT FOR OUR IN-PERSON EVENT!



Intentional Foods

How Food Allergies Inspired an Entire Restaurant Empire

by Erica Dermer and Lisa Heath



Can just one girl diagnosed with food allergies and celiac disease make a difference? Can one family's passion for allergy-friendly food make national waves? It sure can! Generation GF magazine sat down with Lisa Heath, or "Mama Lisa," of Intentional Foods in Mesa, Arizona. We can't wait for you to read how one little girl inspired an entire family to create a safe restaurant on the outskirts of Phoenix, Arizona. - Erica

When our middle daughter Sarah was 6 months old, she had her first allergic reaction and was diagnosed with a peanut allergy. There was no real education for parents, and what that meant at the time of her diagnosis. All we knew was that we should avoid peanuts. When she was 4 years old, she was accidentally given one bite of a peanut butter granola bar at preschool. She had a very severe reaction. At the time, we were not educated on how to handle it. We did everything wrong! We had another severe reaction 6 months later at a once-trusted chain restaurant, but thankfully by then we knew how to use an Epi-pen! It was all very scary – for her and for us.

As Sarah got older, she also developed celiac disease and a few more allergies. We said no to

any gatherings where there was food, due to the stress and fear it caused all of us. Life began to feel very lonely and isolated.

We talked about how we wished there was a place we could go, a middle ground where we could meet friends or family, where we could eat together and not worry about our daughter's allergies. We asked ourselves, "What IF? What IF it was a place that was free from the top allergens so other food allergy families like ours could feel safe and included? What IF we could create a place so others like us could feel normal when they ate with friends?" With our combined 25 years of restaurant experience we felt like we were uniquely prepared to be the change in the restaurant business, so we created Intentional Foods.

We began researching ingredients because we wanted to ensure that every single ingredient was free from cross contamination from top allergens. We require every vendor we use to provide information on the ingredients as well as the manufacturing facility. Once we felt like we had some great products that were free from the top 9 allergens, we started testing our recipes to see if there was a demand for allergy-friendly foods. People would order online and pick up dinner weekly, directly from our home. We got pretty busy right away because word got around to our close-knit celiac and allergy community.

After a few months of cooking from home, we got our lease for our cafe in Mesa, and we opened our cafe in December 2018.

But, like starting any restaurant, it's not always easy, and it's not always fun.

One of our policies at Intentional Foods is a strict "no outside food or drink" policy, so that our customers feel safe in our cafe. When new guests come in with a Starbucks drink, baby food, or bakery items from a nearby bakery, it is always a very uncomfortable conversation. Sadly, this happens at least twice a week, even though we have signs out front. The people that get angry are usually not the people with dietary restrictions.

Our list of qualified ingredients and suppliers is already a very small list. Since COVID-19, many of our ingredients have been discontinued, difficult to source, or have become very expensive. Every week it seems one of our ingredients becomes impossible to source, causing us to search until we find another safe source. This is one of the toughest parts of having an allergy-friendly and gluten-free restaurant. But it's always a blessing to find another distributor and grow our ingredient options and keep our customers safe.

Thankfully, we also have had a lot of successes – even through the pandemic! In March 2021, Yelp put us on their list of Top 100 Restaurants, ranking at number nine – nationwide! This award from Yelp really put us on the map for those that don't even have allergies or celiac disease. It was amazing to see people without dietary restrictions giving our food a try simply because of our Yelp ranking. In both 2020 and 2021, my husband and our chef, Ned, won the Signature Chef competition for the March of



Intentional Foods Cafe' & Market



Heath Family



Mr. & Mrs. Heath



She enjoys creating allergy-friendly beauty products, so I have a feeling she will be expanding our market with her inventions eventually. Our youngest daughter, Ruby, is usually stealing bags of chips, fruit leathers, or chocolates from the market, while entertaining her friends in the cafe. Chef Ned is still working all day - every day - while I bake with my sister on Saturdays and busy holidays. I continue to focus on creating new recipes and keeping our inventory and ingredients stocked and running social media.



This whole journey has really inspired our kids. They are always using their voice to create change and inclusion when there are food-related activities in school or church. They look out for others with dietary restrictions in a protective manner, whether they know them or not.

And of course, we've loved connecting with our community. We meet others that have taken our same journey from all over the world. We all share these feelings of loneliness, isolation, stress, and a desire for inclusion and to feel normal again. We cry tears of joy with fellow allergy families when they find this safe place, and we also share tears of understanding. We understand each other in a way no other business owners and customers do. They are so grateful for us, and we are so thankful for their support of our dream that all started with our daughter.

Dimes. In 2022, we were one of 220 businesses chosen to be suppliers of the NFL for Super Bowl 57. It was an incredible experience being a part of the NFL Super Bowl Business Connect program.

For us, it's a family affair in our restaurant. My incredible sister Melissa is our head baker. Our oldest daughter Maddy works at the cafe and runs our "front of the house" (meaning connecting with the guests, making sure they have the right food, etc.). She has a desire to study hotel and restaurant operations when she goes off to college. Our allergy baby, Sarah, now works in the dish room, and busses tables.

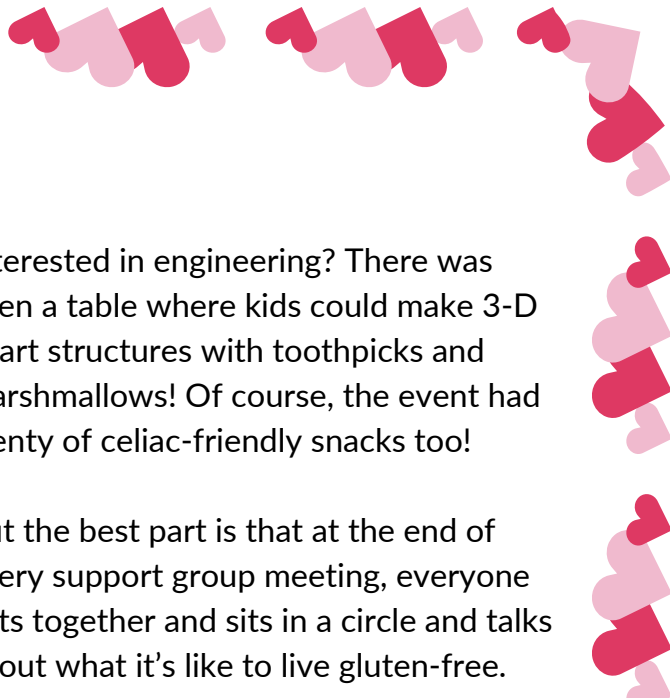
Creating this restaurant, living this life where we are serving an underserved community and trying to be a solution has impacted our lives in many beautiful ways.



MEET


Generation GF Group of Dallas, TX!





Meet the Generation GF Group of Dallas, TX! We had an opportunity to meet with the support group leader, Bianca Cords, about some of their recent Generation GF group events. Generation GF is lucky to have fantastic support group leaders like Bianca!

Thankfully, Bianca has a support system with Children's Health and Dr. Michele Alkalay. Dr. Alkalay is a gastroenterologist and director of the Pediatric Celiac Disease Program at Children's Health, and an associate clinical professor at UT Southwestern. Dr. Alkalay shared that "Generation GF of Dallas is an integral part of our celiac program support group, helping sponsor and organize fun family activities at Children's Health and UT Southwestern, where the only medical pediatric celiac program exists in north Texas."




This teamwork makes the dream work to make these events a success. Let's take a look at Generation GF Dallas' Valentine's Day event.

During the event, there were different activity stations for kids and their parents. They could create love notes, play a word search game, paint hearts, make sticker animals, play Valentine's bingo and play a guessing game.

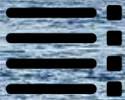
Interested in engineering? There was even a table where kids could make 3-D heart structures with toothpicks and marshmallows! Of course, the event had plenty of celiac-friendly snacks too!

But the best part is that at the end of every support group meeting, everyone gets together and sits in a circle and talks about what it's like to live gluten-free. Kids give advice to other kids, and parents get to share experiences.

What a great event! Thank you to Bianca and Dr. Alkalay and all of the family members of the Generation GF Dallas support group!



**Want to learn more about
Generation GF Dallas?
Email them directly at
GenerationGF.Dallas@gluten.org!**



THE GLUTEN-FREE CAMP EXPERIENCE

by Erica Dermer and Amanda McCord

Planning on going to a sleepaway camp for the summer can come with a mix of emotions. It's really exciting to get away and try something new. Imagine all the fun camp activities like dancing, making skits with new friends for a talent show, or singing along by the campfire. But sometimes you might feel a little nervous, and that's okay too! It's perfectly normal to feel a little butterfly in your stomach when you think of meeting new people or leaving mom and dad. It's especially hard when you are gluten-free, and you have to wonder "will I have enough safe food to eat?" Thankfully, at summer camps that are GFFS-validated by the Gluten Intolerance Group, you don't need to worry.

Camps like Camp Gilmont in Texas, Camp Kanata in North Carolina, and Camp Sealth in Washington offer gluten-free food for campers that need it! One of our team members, Amanda, even attends some camps and cooks for campers! Being a gluten-free mom, she definitely knows how to cook safe food for gluten-free kids. But what about a whole camp full of gluten-free kids? Let's talk with Amanda about her time at summer camp to learn more!


We're so thankful to all of the parents and kids that have attended gluten-free summer camp! And we're also thankful for those that have donated to GIG and GIG Cares to make scholarships to camp possible! You can donate year-round to support future campers.





"It was an amazing experience! We were so blessed to attend and plan to go every year from now on that we can! This camp allowed my child to see they are not alone in their disease, that they can have fun & stay safe and that gluten-free food can taste great outside of our home! Thank you for the blessing that gluten-free camp is!"


- Camp survey respondent 2022





 **Erica:** I'm so excited to talk to you about camp! So many kids think that they can't attend summer camp because of the food! That's just not fair! But I love that we have validated some camps to keep gluten-free campers safe during these special sessions. What was your favorite part about volunteering at one of our gluten-free summer camp partners last year?


 **Amanda:** Definitely seeing how excited the gluten-free kids were to see all the gluten-free foods that we had for them at camp!


 **Erica:** I can imagine! I know that the team works really hard to prepare the camp menu for both gluten-free and non-GF campers every year. They do a great job at finding substitutes for the regular camp menu items that contain gluten like pizza and pasta! Even finding gluten-free hot dog buns and hamburger buns for the cookouts! Why do you think it's so important that gluten-free food provided at camp be somewhat similar to what's already planned for the menu for other campers?


 **Amanda:** Providing gluten-free food that is similar to the food that is provided by camp is so important! This allows everyone who needs to eat gluten-free to feel like we're not so different than anyone else at camp! Normally, kids get to eat a lot of fun foods during summer camp. But gluten-free kids can feel left out, because they aren't given the same options as campers who don't have food restrictions. We really want to provide gluten-free campers the same experience as every other camper – just without the gluten!


 **Erica:** What was the best thing you've ever eaten at camp?

 **Amanda:** I made homemade grasshopper brownies for Camp Sealth 2022 and everyone loved them!

 **Erica:** Wow! Those campers were so lucky! That sounds really delicious. I hope you get a chance to share that recipe! I know that all the parents want to know the recipe, but they also want to know, what advice would you offer for kids attending summer camp?

 **Amanda:** I would say the importance of communicating with camp staff and camp volunteers. Every staff member and volunteer wants every camper to have a positive camp experience. And they especially want to create a happy, safe place for the campers who have food restrictions. If there are questions or worries about food served at the camp, reach out to a camp leader or volunteer. They will do everything they can to make sure every camper is taken care of.

 **Erica:** That's great advice! What advice would you offer parents of gluten-free kids - just like you - for sending their kid to camp for the first time?

 **Amanda:** I would encourage parents to talk to their child and listen to their concerns. As adults, we may think that we know and understand what our child is worried about with camp, or even leaving home for the first time. But the best thing we can do is ask them. Find out what, if anything, your child is worried about and then talk to the camp staff to make sure that you have solutions for your child, and make sure your child knows that staff members are there to help them.

Thank you, Amanda, for all your hard work at summer camp and for your hard work on the GIG Cares team!

Red, White, and Blue Cookie

by Brianna Hesch

It is fun to decorate cookies for different holidays, but it can be a lot of work to make them from scratch. This is a fun activity decorating some store-bought cookies and snacks with melted chocolate, frosting, and sprinkles.

We made patriotic chocolate covered sandwich cookies and graham-style crackers that looked like flags! We also made chocolate-dipped gluten-free pretzels with red and white stripes. It was fun to be creative and make different designs that celebrate our nation's independence.

This is also an activity that lots of kids of different ages can do together. Even teens and grownups can have fun decorating and designing their own treats!

We used melting chocolate that is gluten-free but contains dairy. Finding a dairy-free melting chocolate, if you need it, is tricky. You can try melting dairy-free vegan white chocolate and adding it to food coloring, but it's much easier to just use dairy-free icing or frosting. You can easily dye some of your frosting red and blue!

Make sure you double check that all of your ingredients are gluten-free. Most are, but sometimes there are sneaky ones that are not gluten-free. As an example, a brand of sprinkles that I use makes a line of gluten-free sprinkles and a line of gluten-containing sprinkles. I have to read every bottle of sprinkles that I buy, even if it's my favorite brand.



What you'll need:

- Gluten-free graham-style crackers
- Gluten-free sandwich cookies
- Gluten-free pretzels
- Red melting chocolate
- Blue melting chocolate
- White melting chocolate
- Vanilla icing/frosting
- Red and blue food coloring
- Red, white and blue sprinkles
- Star sprinkles
- Parchment paper or silicone baking mat
- Microwave-safe bowls (for melting the chocolate)
- Forks (for dipping your cookies and decorating them)
- Piping bags (or sandwich bags with the corner cut off)

Directions:

First, melt your red, white, and blue melting chocolate in microwave safe bowls. Follow the directions on the package and don't forget to have an adult help. It will be hot when it comes out of the microwave, and you don't want to burn yourself!

Next, if you are using frosting, divide into three bowls and dye one bowl red, dye the second bowl blue, and leave the third bowl white.



Cover your table with a piece of parchment paper or a silicone baking mat, or something else that the chocolate and frosting will not stick to.

Dip your gluten-free graham-style crackers, gluten-free sandwich cookies, and gluten-free pretzels into the melted colored chocolate. You can also spread the chocolate on top of your crackers and cookies using the back of a fork or using a butter knife. Drizzle it with another color, if you would like. You can use the end of a fork to drizzle it, or you can use a piping bag or a sandwich bag with the corner cut off.



Try a fun design or squiggles. You can make a flag, pipe white and red stripes, or do blue with stars. Use your creativity and have fun – but don't forget to add your sprinkles before the chocolate starts to harden.



You can use frosting the same way to decorate your cookies. Just spread it instead of dipping it.

Once you are happy with your designs, let the chocolate cool and harden. You can speed it up by putting your treats in the fridge or freezer.



Once they are finished, show off your yummy creations and enjoy your tasty, crafty treat!



Gluten-Free Patriotic

POKE CAKE

by Brianna Hesch



Poke Cakes are a fun and retro dessert perfect for the 4th of July! What is a poke cake? It's a dessert and an art project! Just like the name says, it's a cake that you poke holes in, and then fill with colored liquid! They usually turn out bright and colorful, and they are a lot of fun to make.

For this recipe, we are going to use gluten-free gelatin! You can use any color or flavor of gelatin. We used blue raspberry and strawberry Jell-O brand gelatin to make this red, white, and blue poke cake. Because of the colors, it's perfect for a 4th of July barbecue, cookout, or party.

After you make your cake, you poke holes all over it with a chopstick or the handle of a spoon. Then you pour gelatin powder mixed with hot water into the holes and chill your cake. The gelatin flavors your cake, and makes it very soft, moist, and delicious – and full of color!

Remember to have an adult help you with using any equipment like an oven, electric mixer, or hot kettle.

If you need to eat dairy free too, you can use dairy-free milk in your cake batter and frost your poke cake with whipped coconut cream. You can also use a dairy-free whipped topping!

You can bake your cake ahead of time for this recipe, so you can make it a day or two ahead of time if you'd like. We baked the cake, and then added the gelatin and chilled it. If you're going to make this cake in advance, just use the whipped cream on top the same day that you eat it, as it can separate and become gross in the fridge overnight.

If you want, you can make a festive flag on top using fresh cut fruit, or you can use bright red, white, and blue sprinkles. We found some fun red, white and blue stars that were perfect and just sprinkled them on top.



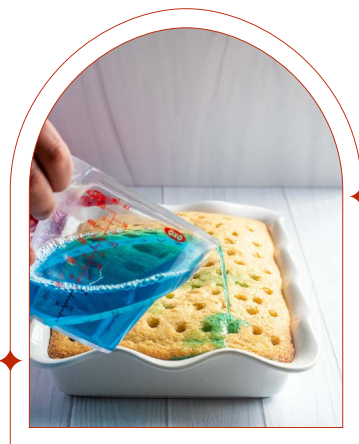
Gluten-Free Patriotic Poke Cake Recipe

For the cake:

- 2 ½ cup gluten-free flour
- 1 ¾ cup white sugar
- 1 ½ teaspoons xanthan gum (omit if you are using a flour that already has xanthan gum)
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup milk
- ¾ cup oil
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 3 eggs

For the poke fillings and decorations:

- 1, 3 oz box of red gelatin (I used strawberry flavored Jell-O)
- 1, 3 oz box of blue gelatin (I used blue raspberry flavored Jell-O)
- 2 cups boiling water
- 1, 15 oz can coconut cream (or 1 ½ cups of heavy whipping cream), chilled
- ½ cup powdered sugar



Directions:

- Pre-heat the oven to 350°F and lightly grease a 9x13 inch or other rectangular baking pan.
- Measure the gluten-free flour, white sugar, xanthan gum, baking powder, and salt and place all into a large bowl and whisk to combine.
- In a second bowl, add the milk, oil, vanilla extract and eggs and whisk until smooth.
- Add the liquid ingredients to the dry ingredients and mix until just combined and smooth. *Don't overmix it.*
- Bake the cake in the pre-heated oven until a toothpick comes out clean. If you used a 9x13 inch rectangle pan, it will take about 40-45 minutes to bake. If your pan is slightly smaller, it will take about 50-55 minutes. Remember to have an adult put the pan in the oven, test the cake for doneness, and remove it from the oven using oven mitts for safety.
- Let your cake cool and then poke holes all over with the handle of a spoon or chopstick.
- Pour the blue gelatin mix into a small bowl and the red gelatin mix into another small bowl. Have an adult help you pour 1 cup of boiling water into each of the bowls and whisk it until smooth. Pour the still-hot gelatin into the holes you poked in the cake. We poured the gelatin alternating colors in rows, so that each slice would get some red and some blue, but it would not all turn purple by overlapping colors.
- Cover your cake and chill for at least 4 hours.
- In a large bowl with an electric mixer, have an adult help you whip some chilled coconut cream until soft and fluffy and add in your powdered sugar. You can also whip some heavy cream into soft peaks if you can do dairy. If you prefer, you can also use a container of frozen whipped topping.
- Gently frost your cake with whipped cream, and garnish with festive sprinkles.

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GLUTEN-FREE AT COLLEGE?

YES, IT'S POSSIBLE!

by Erica Dermer and Sheryl Harpel



Going off to college is a big step into adulthood. Often teens choose to live on their own for school. As a teen, this means being in charge of when, where and what you eat. But do you know if your college or university offers safe dining for students who are gluten-free? If you just shrugged your shoulders, listen up!

Did you know that there are ways that you can work with your university or college to assure you have the safest food possible?

Celiac disease is covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act, and with that, universities should make reasonable accommodations for those with food-related medical issues like celiac disease or food allergies. But the term “reasonable” can mean a lot of different things, and some colleges are better at accommodations than others. Besides spending all day on Google, how can you find feedback from real students about the college dining experience with celiac

disease? GIG Cares connected with advocate Sheryl Harpel of *Gluten Free Friends*, a website for advocating for inclusive, safe dining for college students with food restrictions.

While Sheryl originally started a support group, she quickly found an unmet need for families with children entering college. “When families in our group began sending their gluten-free teens to college, eating safely became a real issue. After always helping each other carefully consider where to eat, our group’s college freshmen were now on mandatory meal plans in often unreliable dining halls. Some struggled to find safe food and were suffering physically, emotionally and financially. This was when I expanded the mission of *Gluten Free Friends* to include advocacy for college students with food restrictions.” Their mission is to improve dining options for college students with celiac disease and food allergies by increasing awareness among college leadership and empowering college students and prospective families.



CHOOSING A COLLEGE

Academics, sports, residential life experience, family tradition, location, financial aid – these are all reasons why some teens would look at choosing a certain college. But have you ever thought about looking at a university based on what dining halls are on campus? For some teens with food allergies or celiac disease, safe dining halls and dining options are just as important as what degrees the university offers.

Sheryl says that every student has different ideas about how heavily to weigh dining into their college decision. “Some want to go to their top choice school, even if it means eating microwave meals in their dorm until they can get access to a kitchen. Others only consider colleges with strong gluten-free dining programs.”

Since celiac disease is a disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act, having accessible gluten-free food is important to us, like having access to wheelchair ramps or ASL (American Sign Language) interpreters in public spaces. I asked Sheryl if gluten-free meals had to be accessible to any student who needs one on campus. “Multiple [recent] lawsuits have confirmed that celiac and food allergies are covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act,” she added. “But dining capabilities vary tremendously by school...some colleges embrace their responsibilities and do a fabulous job providing inclusive, safe dining. Top programs avoid cross-contamination by eliminating top allergens and gluten from dining lines or even entire dining halls. The worst have mandatory meal plans with no safe options. Most schools fall somewhere in between. Families should consider whether they would have the financial resources to supplement mandatory meal plans. If not, a lack of safe options could lead to food insecurity, and families should confirm if and how to opt out and be refunded if it’s not working.”

Talking to universities and inquiring about their dining plans (including mandatory plans for residents living on campus) and their gluten-free options should be a part of your search process. But it may not be as easy to find as just looking on their website or making assumptions based on the size or type of school. “Families shouldn’t make any assumptions based on unrelated factors like acceptance rates, size or prestige,” Sheryl adds. “Before committing to a college, families need to dive deep into the school’s dining program and confirm they can piece together a solution that works for their student. This research will also help define what accommodations to request. College students should register with their school’s disability office. Many register their learning challenges but fail to include celiac or food allergies.” The disability office will be able to help you better understand the school’s accommodations.

While dining plans and meal options may be important to your college experience, it should only be one part of the entire decision-making process.



ADVICE FOR GLUTEN-FREE LIFE IN COLLEGE

When you start your degree program, the real work begins. Sheryl recommends to “resist the temptation to keep a low profile and manage alone. Connect early with your school’s support structure so you know who to contact if problems surface. Start with the 3 Ds: Disability Services, Dining Management and Dietician. These allies for inclusive and safe dining may not be in the same place at every school.” You need to ask for help from these allies and try to find the right fit accommodation for your needs. But, Sheryl adds, “if anxiety from the constant search for safe food, or the financial burden of supplementing becomes too much, it may be



preferable to cook for yourself. If you need to, you should be able to opt out of the meal plan. Worrying about safe food should not be the focus of your college experience.”

PAYING IT FORWARD

Once you have navigated how to eat safely at your school, it’s time to pay it forward to the next set of people entering into college. Gluten Free Friends hosts a survey of college students with celiac and/or food allergies on their website (gfreefriends.com). These survey responses can also be found on the website, in an easy search by university. These results can help inform high school students about prospective schools. It can also pressure colleges to do better, based on current students’ feedback from the survey. Candid, personal feedback has real power. A single student survey can transform dining! For example, Gluten Free Friends highlighted a disappointing survey from a freshman who had celiac disease at Western Carolina University on their Instagram page, and then tagged their student

newspaper. The student newspaper wrote an article about it. Now there’s a new dietician at the university that will be working to improve their program. Feedback, good or bad, can inspire change and growth.

Sheryl suggests to “join with other students at your school with food restrictions to support each other and give feedback to dining. Student engagement is key to bringing about change. Organize and push for improvements. Familiarize yourselves with successful programs to know what’s possible. If dining administration is not responsive, consider reaching out to those at the school who manage the dining contracts or legal compliance. It can be very rewarding to bring changes that will benefit students for years to come.”

We can’t thank Sheryl of Gluten Free Friends enough for her knowledge about navigating the college search. Please visit gfreefriends.com to complete a survey, read survey results and blog posts, and learn about volunteer internship opportunities at the website.



GUESS *the* WORD

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8.





FEELING LONELY? YOU'RE NOT ALONE



by Shayna Coburn, PhD Psychosocial Health Director, Celiac Disease Program, Children's National

Feeling lonely these days? You're not the only one. Teens (and people in general) are lonelier than ever for many reasons. But when you follow a gluten-free diet, it can feel especially lonely.

Have you ever felt like no one understands you? Maybe you lay in bed at night thinking about all the lonely moments you've had in the day. These might be times when you didn't have someone to talk to, or times when you were with other people but felt somehow disconnected from them. Maybe you weren't being seen or heard as much as you wanted, or maybe you felt embarrassed or judged by other people. These are feelings of loneliness. Some experts call it "social isolation." Social isolation can take the form of physical separation from others – something that we all experienced during the first years of the pandemic. But even more common is the feeling of isolation, even if you're physically around people all the time.

Social isolation has been increasing over the years, and it might be because of our constant use of screens and social media. We are replacing in-person physical contact with TikTok, Instagram, and text messages. In-person activities are often replaced with virtual meetings. If you're living a gluten-free lifestyle, there are even more situations you might face that can add to your feelings of loneliness or isolation.

Most people following a gluten-free diet are reminded of their lifestyle differences from others whenever there is food involved in a social situation. You might not be able to share snacks or go out to eat without carefully checking ingredients or menus. You might feel different when people are happily eating regular cupcakes, pizza, and other treats at celebrations. It's hard to be part of a spontaneous outing to a fast-food restaurant.



Food is a way to connect with others, so the gluten-free diet might feel like a brick wall separating you from other people.

To avoid these uncomfortable situations, some people might simply stay home. It feels like an easy answer to avoid tough situations where you might feel left out or different. In the moment, it feels better to stay in your comfort zone knowing you won't risk feeling embarrassed or sad about not getting to eat the foods others are enjoying. But this comes with a guarantee of being more isolated. You lose the chance to see people, to be seen, and enjoy the other things that come with in-person activities.

Another way people might try to avoid feeling isolated is to just give into gluten to feel part of things. Some "cheat" or take risks so that no one questions them, or because there aren't other options. It might feel like you're drawing attention to yourself at a restaurant by asking questions at or pulling out food from home. Even if you don't "cheat," you might take risks by avoiding asking questions that feel uncomfortable. "I'll have the salad and a side of fries," you might say, hoping they don't add croutons to the salad and that the fries aren't fried into the same oil as the chicken fingers. But this comes at a cost to your well-being. For those with gluten intolerance or celiac disease, you're sacrificing your health. *Is it really worth it just to try to fit in?*

Fortunately, there are plenty of strategies to help tear down a wall of isolation, brick by brick, so you can be part of the fun.

First, find new options for gluten-free food to help you enjoy some treats and have an easier time participating in activities:



Find new snacks and treats to replace old foods you like that contain gluten. Try to find tasty gluten-free replacements for pizza, bagels, cupcakes, cookies, or candy. Everyone has their

own favorite, so the more open you are to trying new brands, the better chances you have of finding your new favorites.



Keep a stash of treats you can eat if others are eating things. It can be helpful to have some filling foods that you can stock up on and bring with you when

needed. People sometimes keep candy or other treats with their teacher or nurse for class celebrations.



Find new restaurants with gluten-free menus or knowledgeable staff. Using apps and reviews is a good starting place but try asking

questions at your family's favorite restaurants too. You might be surprised and some of the options, even at places that serve a lot of gluten-containing foods. Practice the questions you need to ask to ensure the food can be prepared safely.



To bridge the gap between you and others, try to re-think what matters. When hanging out with friends, going out, or enjoying a party. Do you

really need to eat what others are eating? Brainstorm other, non-food-related things that make you feel good about connecting with people. It's nice to just be in the same place as your friends. There are usually at least a couple of activities to

focus on. At some events, there might be a certain game to play, music, or other things to do like swimming. You could wear a new outfit or accessory and check out what others are wearing. Don't forget that you could host your own parties and get-togethers too! By planning the activity, you can ensure there are good options for you at your own house or at a gluten-free friendly destination.



Finally, many people find it to be helpful to meet other people living a gluten-free lifestyle. Find a support group, either in person or through social media. Even

knowing just one other person with a special diet can make a big difference in combating loneliness. But always remember to fact-check advice you get from other people. Myths and misinformation are common! Ask a doctor or dietician with knowledge about the gluten-free diet and celiac disease!

**JUST
KEEP
MOVING
FORWARD**

If you're feeling lonely and separated from other people because of how you eat, remember that you're not alone. But, there are things you can do about it. With a little practice, you can live a more connected and fulfilling life – regardless of how you eat!





Find a Generation GF Support Group Near You

Email the Generation GF group leader in your area for more information!

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Portland

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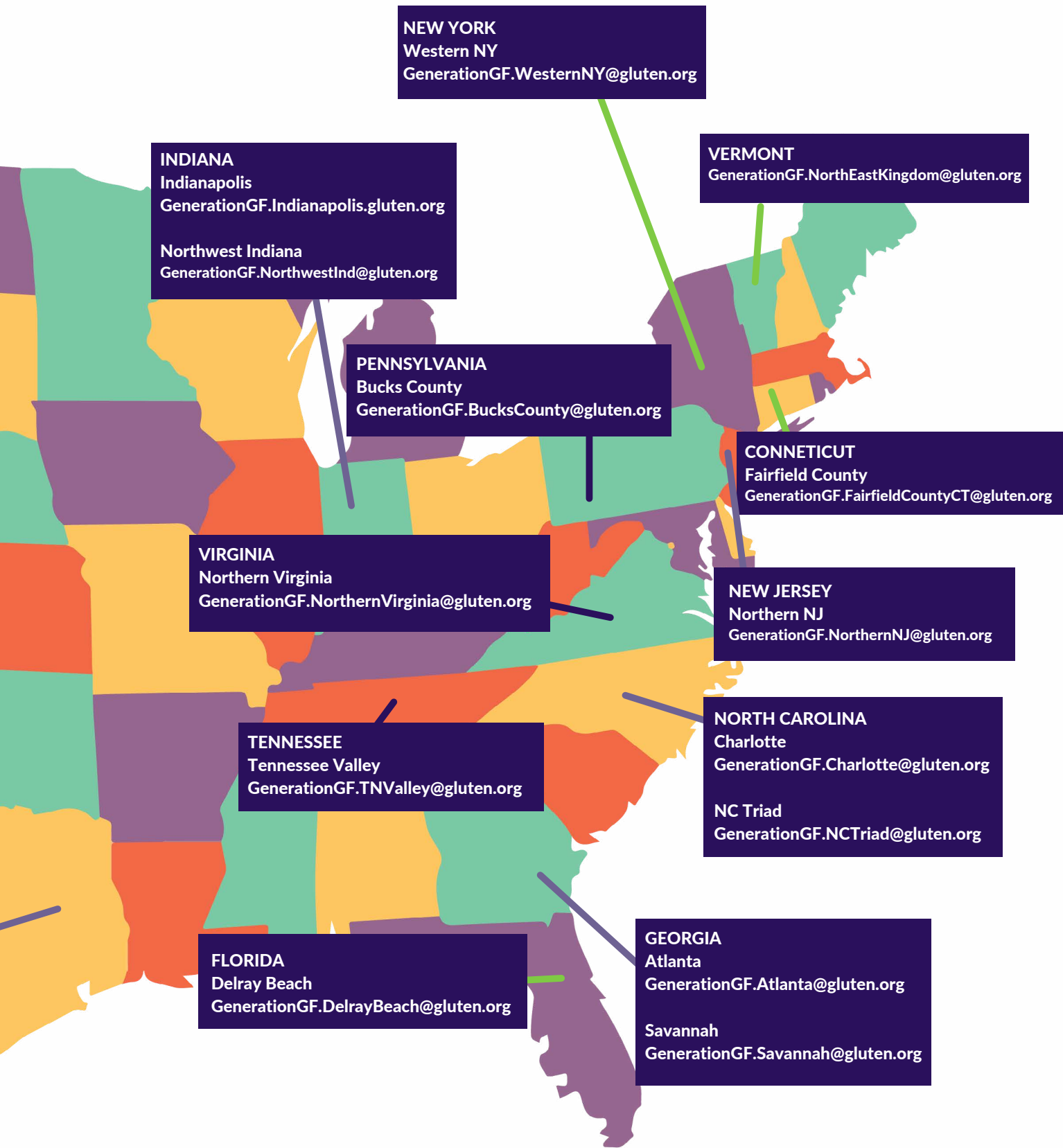
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