



Step By Step

Mary Brown was born in Beaufort, South Carolina, but being a “military brat,” she traveled a lot. Her father retired from the Marines as a warrant officer three so she could go to high school in one place.

At an early age she began following her mother’s example by reading the nutritional labels on foods they would buy, which in turn led to a passion for nutritional issues. “I have always been interested in nutrition,” Mary explains. “A lot of people think they don’t have control over their health, but they do. What you put into your body does matter.”

Mary has taken a “step-by-step” approach in pursuing her interests. She spent a short time at UNC-Charlotte, but there was no nutrition program at the time, so she was led to move on. And move on she did; she received a degree in human nutrition from Winthrop University and then went on to graduate school at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. She then took a year-long internship in Peoria, Illinois. While there, she worked in the clinical aspects of nutrition in a hospital where she especially enjoyed working with children in the pediatrics department. Mary also found time to counsel in the community and in corporate wellness programs.

A chance to work with the WIC Program, or Women, Infants and Children, brought Mary back to Charlotte in 2006. She wasn’t satisfied with the strict rules and “red tape,” so she decided to go out on her own. “I loved what I was doing, but I wanted to do it my way,” Mary remembers.

True to her style, Mary took her time getting her business started. She opened Budding Baby, a nutritional counseling service located in the Dilworth area in Charlotte, in August 2006, but delayed seeing clients until February of 2007. Her reason for waiting centered on her desire to be at the top of her game once

clients came into the picture. “I wanted to be as prepared as much as possible,” Mary explained. “I wanted to design a step-by-step process.”

Mary works with families and individuals alike; but she admits that “it’s really good to have the whole family come in so they can get on board.” She says that one of the biggest challenges is working with children who have food allergies. She spends hours in grocery stores reading labels as research for individualized plans so that clients can have as much variety as possible in their diets.

Mary is currently single, but she by no means lives alone. “Right now, between my sister and I, we have a petting zoo,” she said, laughing. The menagerie includes three dogs and three cats, one of which was a stray who at the time of our interview was expecting kittens. Mary says she loves the animals. “They eat very well because I cook for them,” she said.

With her expressive face, Mary’s sincerity shines through when she talks of her love of helping people, especially children. Her office has a small corner with toys and books that she uses as a teaching and learning area. She gets right down on kids’ levels to find out what foods they like or dislike and what foods they are eating in their everyday diet. She then helps them learn what’s healthy to eat.

Of course, as a nutritionist, Mary loves cooking and creating new recipes, but fitness is important to her too. And what better way to be fit than to be active outdoors? She loves kayaking, rafting, camping, and running as well as going to the beach.

One day she would love to add a psychology aspect to her practice—and since her sister is an undergraduate in psychology who works with kids—who knows? For now though, Mary will take it “step by step.”

By: Kim Gibson
Photography by: Chelsea Bren

“Her sincerity shines through when she talks of her love of helping people, especially children.”

