In a healthier relationship with food. Using the hashtag Twitter recipes, videos and educational tools from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics to make informed food choices based on your individual health needs. It’s also essential to get out of your busy schedule to take time to enjoy your food, eat slowly one bite at a time to focus on the different flavors, textures and overtones of your meals: Do you eat mindlessly? Instead, savor the flavors of eating right. There’s a chemical brain base for this—dietary habits can become entrenched, evidenced by the fact that when care for those with eating disorders, that have grown through this, and want to do for a long time,” said McElfish recalled. “But I think that speaks to the dearth of clinicians that we have in this state,” she added. “Before D-DECC opened, you could count on one hand the number that were proficient in treating people with eating disorders.” McElfish later received her masters degree at WVU, went back to MU for her doctorate and back to WVU for her internship. “It has been something I've wanted to do for a long time,” she said. “When you become an advocate for something, people think you're out of the woodwork (looking for information).” “I've seen people's lives that have grown through this, and worked so hard to get the treatment that they need. It's had a profound impact on me, to see that. What's that we offer at this. These disorders kill people, she said. ‘We don’t need to mess around with treatments that don’t have evidence behind them.’”

"When I was an undergrad, before D-DECC began, I remember clinicians and M.D. researchers telling me and saying, 'I have this patient that has an eating disorder. What do I do?' I remember thinking. 'Dude, I'm 19 (years old). Why are you asking me?’” McElfish recalled. “But I think that speaks to the dearth of clinicians that we have in this state,” she added. “Before D-DECC opened, you could count on one hand the number that were proficient in treating people with eating disorders.” McElfish later received her masters degree at WVU, went back to MU for her doctorate and back to WVU for her internship. “It has been something I’ve wanted to do for a long time,” she said. “When you become an advocate for something, people think you’re out of the woodwork (looking for information).” “I’ve seen people’s lives that have grown through this, and worked so hard to get the treatment that they need. It’s had a profound impact on me, to see that.”

Dr. Krista Gradney, a registered dietitian nutritionist with the WVU Disordered Eating Center, discuss treatment options during a Feb. 22 tour of the WVU Disordered Eating Center at CAMC Memorial Hospital. The WVU-DECC is described as a supervised psychologist under Dr. Jessica Luzier. “This center is a place for those people who came through this, and worked so hard to get the treatment that they need. It’s had a profound impact on me, to see that.”

Dr. Krista Gradney, a registered dietitian nutritionist with the WVU Disordered Eating Center, discuss treatment options during a Feb. 22 tour of the WVU Disordered Eating Center at CAMC Memorial Hospital. The WVU-DECC is described as a supervised psychologist under Dr. Jessica Luzier. “This center is a place for those people who came through this, and worked so hard to get the treatment that they need. It’s had a profound impact on me, to see that.”

U.S. Sen. Shelley Moore Capito, R-W.Va.; Briana McElfish, an intern with West Virginia University at CAMC; Daniel Cho, M.D., CAMC; and Dr. Stephen Sondik, WVU Disordered Eating Center director, participate in a Feb. 22 tour of the WVU Disordered Eating Center at CAMC Memorial Hospital. The WVU-DECC is described as a supervised psychologist under Dr. Jessica Luzier. “This center is a place for those people who came through this, and worked so hard to get the treatment that they need. It’s had a profound impact on me, to see that.”

The WVU-DECC is located at the Robert C. Byrd Clinical Teaching Center at Charleston Area Medical Center Memorial Hospital. Most patients at WVU-DECC are treated as outpatients. As an intern, McElfish works as a supervised psychologist under Dr. Jessica Luzier. “This center is a place for those people who came through this, and worked so hard to get the treatment that they need. It’s had a profound impact on me, to see that.”

The WVU-DECC is described as an interdisciplinary, outpatient treatment center that provides evidence-based interventions to children and adults who struggle with eating disorders. It conducts research and provides outreach to hundreds of providers across the state in an effort to improve prevention, access, and treatments offered to families. The need for more awareness for disordered eating has reached Washington, D.C. Sen. Shelley Moore Capito, D-W.Va., led the introduction of bipartisan, bicameral eating disorders-specific legislation — the Anna West Act of 2015. Capito introduced the bill along with Sen Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn.; Sen. Kelly Ayotte, R-N.H.; and Sen. Tammy Baldwin, D-Wis. If passed and signed into law, the Anna West Act would provide for training health professionals and school personnel on how to identify the early warning signs of an eating disorder and to intervene. It also would clarify existing law to ensure families and individuals are able to receive full health insurance coverage for their eating disorder treatments, including intermediate level residential treatment.

Capito visited WVU-DECC Feb. 22, during the National Eating Disorders Awareness Week. “It was perfect timing for her to come and visit,” said McElfish. “The Anna West Act bill has been a long time in the making.” Capito toured the facility and spoke with doctors and students at WVU-DECC. The affiliation between CAMC and WVU is broad and deep, Capito said, adding that she maintained a connection with a diverse team that is dealing with all areas of treatment.

“DECC is doing great things with nutrition, psychology and with medical professionals to treat what is a pervasive problem in West Virginia,” said Capito.

Covering Treatment

Families need insurance coverage for treatment, Capito added. That’s part of the reason she is leading the bill. “It will help with the insurance,” she said. “It will also help to make sure we have the proper education for our nutritionists, dietitians, psychologists, school counselors — to make sure people understand that disordered eating can impact your physical health, your mental health and ultimately your quality of life. “Most of the people we treat are either uninsured or under-insured,” McElfish said of the care at WVU-DECC. The training happening in Charleston is a “gem” not only in West Virginia, but also nationwide, McElfish said. “There are not a lot of clinicians here,” she said. Hopefully with the bill passage it will allow for more grant block funding that will allow for more providers in the state. The bill is important for people across the nation that suffer with eating disorders, that have the highest rates of death of all mental illnesses,” McElfish added. “We’ve seen evidence of the shame, pain and death related to these disorders. Families experience this too.”

“With the bill, we hope that more people will have access to treatment. It’s important for us to address this in West Virginia,” said McElfish.