

in this special issue

Announcement from Project Viva
Principal Investigators Dr. Matthew
Gillman and Dr. Emily Oken



Viva Views Summer 2016

Project Viva



Dear Project Viva families,

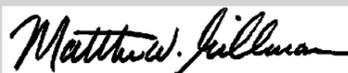
After almost two decades of leading Project Viva, this July I'll be leaving Boston to take an exciting new position at the National Institutes of Health in the Washington, DC, area. Project Viva itself will continue and won't skip a beat, thanks to Dr. Emily Oken's leadership, our wonderful team, and you.

My job will be to lead a national program called Environmental Influence on Child Health (ECHO): <https://www.nih.gov/about-nih/who-we-are/nih-director/statements/selection-dr-matthew-gillman-echo-program-director>. In this position, I will direct a new office that is responsible for combining experience and information from 20-30 follow-up studies of mothers and their children to look at early origins of child health outcomes like obesity, asthma, and behavior. If that sounds familiar, it's because that's what we've been doing in Project Viva all these years! I believe that Project Viva is a model for the new national program.

I am very excited to take on this new role, as I'll have an opportunity to work with many talented people across the country to tackle these important questions on a broad scale. At the same time, I'm terribly sad to leave Project Viva, which together you and our team have made into a national treasure. In fact, a large part of what has prepared me for this new position is all I've learned from leading Project Viva—thank you!

Fortunately, Project Viva is in great shape moving forward. Dr. Emily Oken, who has co-directed Viva with me for the past 8 years and has been part of the team far longer, is an incredible leader. She knows Viva inside and out, and the transition to her leadership will be seamless. Then there are our wonderful scientists and staff, who keep us fresh with new ideas and are constantly improving how we do our visits. In addition, enough funding to keep Viva going is assured for the next 5+ years. One of the special pleasures of starting a project and leading it for a long time is the ability to hand it off, like a proud parent, to others who will keep it going and put their particular stamp on it.

The most important ingredient to Project Viva's success, however, is your long-term commitment to this groundbreaking project. I can't tell you how grateful I am to all of you for continuing to spend parts of your lives with us to figure out which factors, from before birth through childhood and now into the teen years, keep kids healthy. I will miss you! From my new perch, however, I will still be able to appreciate the innovative scientific discoveries that Project Viva will surely continue to produce in the coming years.



Drs. Gillman and Oken celebrating Dr. Oken's recent promotion to full professor at Harvard Medical School and Dr. Gillman's new position.



Dear all,

I am tremendously honored to take over leadership of Project Viva. I have actually been working here since 2000, before most 'Viva kids' were born. Viva has been important in shaping not only my professional career but also my personal life – my experiences being pregnant and then raising my son and daughter (born 2003 and 2005) continue to be informed by what we learn in Project Viva. I have also had the opportunity to turn some of my own questions as a parent for which no answers were available – How much fish should I eat during pregnancy? Will early exposure to nuts prevent my kids from developing food allergies? – into new research ideas.

Dr. Gillman's new position is an affirmation of the amazing scientific work he has led, as well as a big opportunity. He will have a major leadership role in the National Institutes of Health, allowing him to share our experiences and results with scientists and policy makers across the country, and to let us know what initiatives they are planning. I couldn't be happier for, or prouder of, him.

Although we will miss Matt greatly, I am confident that Viva will continue to thrive even after his departure. We have a terrific team including the research assistants who have seen over 1000 of you at Early Teen visits here in Boston as well as in travel visits from Maine to Florida, California to Washington. We continue to publish scientific papers and influence health policies. For example, the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (the group that brought us the Food Pyramid) will for the first time in its history soon include dietary advice for pregnant women and children under the age of two, thanks to findings from Project Viva and related studies.

I really look forward to working with all of you in the coming years.



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