

## Readers' Theatre Activity

Ask 3 people to volunteer to read the words of Cory, Nellie, and Rose aloud. Listener participants can choose to follow along with their script or just listen to the story being read aloud.



### The Blueberry Story

#### Characters:

**Nellie:** An energetic woman who just celebrated her 50<sup>th</sup> birthday.

**Rose:** A young woman who has just finished learning about wellness.

**Cory:** A curious young boy.

**The Setting:** A berry patch.

**The Props:** 3 empty berry buckets.

**Nellie:** WOW! These blueberries are huge.

**Rose:** (laughing through her blue stained lips as she pops another berry in her mouth) I'll have my belly and bucket full in no time.

**Cory:** What happens to this blueberry once I eat it? (popping the blueberry into his mouth)

**Rose:** Oh Yes, let me tell you! (with excitement in her voice) I just learned about the importance of the digestive system.

**Cory:** What's the digestive system?

**Rose:** The digestive system processes food for energy and rids the body of solid waste.

**Cory:** Oh you mean poop.

**Rose:** Yep, that's right. Digestion is the process of breaking down food and drink into smaller parts so that our body can use them to build and nourish cells and to provide energy. After chewing and swallowing that blueberry it enters your esophagus.

**Cory:** Esophagus...that sure is a mouthful...it is like a big tunnel from your mouth.

**Rose:** Your esophagus connects your mouth to your stomach. Your stomach has three important jobs.

**Cory:** OK let's hear number 1 job....drum roll please....

**Rose:** to store the food you've eaten...

**Cory:** And purpose number 2....

**Rose:** to break down the food into a liquidy mixture and

**Cory:** Wait let's hear it for stomach job number 3...

**Rose:** to slowly empty that liquidy mixture into the small intestine.

**Cory:** I get it. Your stomach is like a mixer, mashing everything until it is all mashed up.

**Rose:** Yes, then that blueberry mush goes into your small intestine where it spends about 4 hours. (Laughing) Well they call it small, but the small intestine is actually the longest part of the digestive system. If you stretched all the loops of your small intestine out, it would be 20 feet long. The word small really is for how big around the intestine is because that part is smaller than the large intestine.

**Cory:** Wow, 20 feet- The small intestine is really that long?

**Rose:** You got it! In the small intestine that little blueberry gets mixed with other digestive juices and goes through many changes. Food traveling through the small intestine becomes more like thin soup. That thin liquid makes it possible for all of the blueberry's nutrients those things our body needs for energy and to grow, to get into the bloodstream and feed our cells all over the body. The next stop for your blueberry soup is the large intestine, also called your colon.

**Nellie:** (who had been quietly listening all along while picking and eating berries) Oh, I heard about the colon. The Community Health Aide at the clinic sent me a birthday card.

**Cory:** Did you know Auntie just turned 50.

**Nellie:** Yes, it's true. I used to think that 50 was old, but I don't feel old. The thing is, the CHA said now that I am 50 I need to have a colorectal screening exam done. But I feel fine and don't think I'll be bothered with that test. What's your colon do anyway?

**Rose:** Well, in the colon, most of the remaining water from the blueberry "soup" is absorbed back into the body as it ascends or curves up...

**Cory:** Ascends (excited) I know what that means. That's going up, like us climbing this blueberry hill. We're ascending.

**Rose:** Yes (huffing and puffing pretending to ascend the hill), there are 4 parts to your colon, the first part is the ascending colon, next it travels a path across your body – that’s why it is called the transverse colon.

**Cory:** This is fun. Transverse is like us going across the field as we pick more and more blueberries.

**Rose:** And then your colon takes a downward turn – that’s called the descending colon.

**Cory:** Yep, that’s like when we descend this hill and hurry to Auntie’s house for her to make something yummy with all these berries.

**Nellie:** Mmm a blueberry pie would taste pretty yummy.

**Rose:** And there’s one more little curve called the sigmoid colon.

**Nellie:** With all those parts no wonder the colon is about 5-6 feet long.

**Cory:** (singing as he runs in the directions of the colon) Going up up up is the ascending colon....going across my body is the transverse colon...and then it takes a down ward dive with the descending turn, traveling through a short little sigmoid s-shape.

**Rose:** After the liquid gets absorbed into your body just solid waste is left. The blueberry, which no longer looks like a blueberry, fills your rectum, a sort of storage pouch in the colon. When your body feels the urge, that solid waste, called stool, passes out of your body through the anus. The rectum is the last 5 to 6 inches of the digestive system before the anus.

**Nellie:** And you know what else, that little blueberry has lots of Vitamin C and antioxidants, which means it helps to prevent cancer.

**Nellie, Cory and Rose:** Yum!



*Nellie said she feels healthy and can't be bothered with colorectal screening. What could you say to support or encourage Nellie to have a colorectal screening exam?*

### **Colorectal Screening Exams:**

To decrease colorectal cancer, Alaska Native people begin screenings at age 40. For others, colorectal screenings begin at age 50. However, if there is a family history of cancer, all people should begin screenings at age 40 or younger.