Spotlight ON!

A Celebration of SNA 2019-20 National Award Winners
Congratulations!

This spring, school nutrition professionals were in the spotlight, earning national praise for their incredible response to the sudden school closures of COVID-19. It’s been amazing to see this outpouring of appreciation for what we already know: Association members are heroes every school day—before, during and after this pandemic. SNA’s member and state awards programs are our annual opportunity to turn up that spotlight, recognizing the dedicated, innovative, creative leaders who make an impact on the lives of thousands of children, one school meal at a time.

While COVID-19 has taken away our, and our state affiliates’, opportunity to gather together and celebrate the achievements of our honored award-winners in person, it certainly hasn’t taken away our ability to celebrate virtually! This piece is being sent to you on what would have been the Monday of SNA’s 74th Annual National Conference (ANC) in Nashville, Tenn. We are all missing the signature events and the passion for this profession that ANC always inspires.

Though the Red Carpet Awards Ceremony, Opening General Session and Star Club Breakfast aren’t available for us to recognize state, regional and national winners, we’ve been inspired to identify fresh approaches to our annual celebrations. Those of you who follow social media have already been enjoying the fun photos and videos of many winners unboxing their certificates and plaques and taking advantage of the rare opportunity to make an acceptance speech!

Through this publication, we’d like to give you the opportunity to “meet” this year’s national Employee, Manager, Director and Industry Member of the Year through profile articles and pictures. You’ll also learn more about this year’s President’s Award of Excellence honorees and the Recruiter of the Year, and we certainly encourage you to take your time reading the names of the state and regional winners and reaching out to celebrate them on social media. We also urge you to join the celebration and share this digital piece with coworkers, supervisors, Boards of Education, parents, students, teachers, colleagues, family, friends and others in your community who can help us celebrate these awesome honorees. We’re delighted to put the spotlight on our deserving winners in a bigger and brighter way than ever before.

We want to extend our thanks to all those who took the time to write nominations; to the state and national leaders who served as judges; to the Headquarters staff who manage the complex awards program; and the vendor partners whose advertisements helped to make this publication possible. We also thank all of SNA’s members and friends for all you do to make this a truly remarkable profession. Congratulations to the 2019-2020 award winners!

Gay Anderson, SNS  
SNA President, 2019-20

Patricia Montague, FASAE, CAE  
SNA Chief Executive Officer


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Annette Hendrickx Derouin was working remotely from home in late April in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic when her cell phone lit up with a call from Sioux Falls, S.D. She silenced the device—she was busy—but figured it was a foodservice director with whom she had been talking the previous week. “He must have more questions,” Derouin thought, but she’d call him back later.

When Derouin did call the number back, she discovered that it wasn’t that colleague at all—it was SNA President Gay Anderson, telling her that she had been named SNA’s Director of the Year! “I was like, ‘You weren’t the person I was expecting to get a hold of, but this is far better!’” Derouin recalls. “I started crying, of course. There are so many good directors in this profession; you never think you’re that good. I always feel like there’s more I could be doing or striving for.”

Even months later the honor is sinking in, and she struggles to find just the right words to describe how it feels. “One of my first thoughts was that I made the right decision, 24 years ago, to leave healthcare for the school nutrition arena,” Derouin remarks. “It means the work I have been doing to feed children, train school nutrition professionals and find innovative ways to keep our programs new and current are paying off!”

It’s not just one program that Derouin keeps new and current—it’s not even two or three. She’s the Director of Food and Nutrition Services for four Minnesota school foodservice operations: Willmar Public Schools, New London-Spicer Public Schools, Montevideo Public Schools and Community Christian School. That’s right. Derouin reports to four superintendents and four business managers, wrote Pam Harrington, Director of Business and Finance for Willmar Public Schools, in her nomination of Derouin. It’s a challenge, Derouin admits, especially with emergency feeding operations, as each superintendent has approached the crisis in a different way.

Each of these school meal operations has grown substantially since Derouin took the lead, Harrington noted, citing not only a marked increase in fund balances for all four districts, but also improvements in customer service and meal participation. “The nominee is not satisfied with the status quo,” Harrington wrote.

Derouin has launched and expanded several federal child nutrition programs. For example, she boosted school breakfast participation from less than 30% at Willmar to 51% across the district through alternative service models like breakfast in the classroom and breakfast after first period. She regularly tests recipes and products with students, visits Health Education classes to make presentations, volunteers for an annual health fair and serves on a community partnership to promote cultural diversity. Derouin also was an early leader in Minnesota for farm-to-school initiatives.

Derouin says her current success came after an understandable learning curve when she made the transition from healthcare to schools. “I remember the first food orders I had to place. I actually called a head cook and said, ‘Do you really need all this food in one shipment?’ It was more than I had...
been ordering for a whole week in the healthcare system I was working in," she recalls. “She laughed at me and said we had a lot of children to feed. When I look back, it was a small order in comparison to what I order now.”

As Derouin learned the ins and outs of the school nutrition profession, she started passing on that knowledge to others. Early in her career, she was invited to help train school nutrition staff in other districts. “It wasn’t planned, but it has led me down a path I now love, which is the training and development of school nutrition professionals across the state of Minnesota and the nation,” she says. In fact, under her coaching and mentorship, two former staff dietitians rose to director-level positions.

Derouin is a popular trainer and has, upon staff request, developed training programs on a wide variety of topics, including scratch cooking, food waste, food presentation and ergonomics. Through her involvement in a Staff Wellness Committee, she has developed classes on nutrition, wellness and cooking.

Ensuring that everyone on her team, including substitutes, is trained properly is incredibly important to Derouin—a frightening incident in which a child experienced an allergic reaction to a food item served by accident has stuck with her—and continuing education is the catalyst that led to her involvement with SNA. “I think being involved with SNA at every level is critical to professional growth and development,” Derouin reflects. “Every time I have gone to a local chapter, state or national event, I bring home a wealth of new ideas and knowledge to share with my staff.”

She jokes that sometimes she wishes her team wouldn’t go to professional growth events because that usually leads to a change in programming or processes. “But I think that is the reason to be involved in SNA—to stay current in what is going on in our industry and to continually grow and develop our programs.”

Now, during the COVID-19 pandemic, SNA’s offerings have been more crucial than ever, says Derouin. The transition to distance learning and a new way of serving children presented several opportunities and challenges, given that she works for four districts, but Derouin is quick to honor her staff, who stepped up to the plate and did what needed to be done to feed the children. And she knows that school nutrition professionals across the country did the same.

“I think all districts across the United States have dealt with numerous challenges and experienced many successes during the pandemic,” Derouin says. “I am appreciative of SNA for putting together webinars, useful documents and training opportunities to support all of us in the field during these unprecedented times.”
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Cafeteria Manager Heather Blades has always enjoyed being a part of “something bigger.” Before starting in school nutrition about seven years ago, Blades had worked in college/university foodservice, but like so many others who join the K-12 profession, she wanted to find a job with hours that allowed her to raise a young child. What she got, though, was so much more than that.

The first reward was professional growth: Since her initial position as an assistant manager at a school in Louisiana, Blades’ career has been on the rise. She now has ambitions of being a supervisor and has already earned an Level 4 SNA Certificate in School Nutrition. And Blades—who moved to Virginia two years ago—notes that she’s grown personally, as well. “I’ve become a more vibrant person,” she reports. “I’ve become more outgoing. It’s opened doors for me.”

In what has become far more than just a job with a good schedule, Blades’ commitment to her profession shows not only in her work with and for students, but also in her encouragement and support of her employees, how she aims to engage school staff in meal programs and her involvement in SNA of Virginia, as well as her local chapter, for which she just finished up a term as president. It’s a vocation.

“She loves her students!” wrote Roni M. LaPelle, Field Supervisor, who nominated Blades for this award. “Every day, she looks for that one child in the cafeteria who may be having a bad day, sits and eats with that student and lets them know that they are special. She does not do this just one day or two, but almost every single day! Wouldn’t you want her to be your child’s cafeteria manager?”

A hallmark of Blades’ winning personality is her affinity for organizing special cafeteria events and activities. One of her favorite school nutrition memories is from last year, when she purchased inexpensive glow sticks and a colorful LED disco ball to decorate the serving line. At mealtime, the lights were turned down, Seventies-era music was turned up and students were welcomed to a Disco Party. “The looks on the students’ faces were priceless,” Blades recalls. “After that, they asked me for disco music, which I had no idea that they even knew about! Knowing they were having fun in the cafeteria made it even better.”

Creative promotions like the disco party are just one way that Blades encourages students to eat school meals, and she’s always on a quest to increase participation even more. One tactic she takes is to engage teachers in the meal program. “I think it is important to include the teachers, because they are a key to getting the student who would not normally try lunch,” Blades explains. “If the students see their teachers eating lunch from the cafeteria, then they are more willing to eat lunch, too.”

Blades spearheaded teacher-student participation in a statewide promotion of the “Crunch Heard ’Round the Commonwealth”—a massive simultaneous bite into Virginia-grown apples. “She was instrumental in getting the teachers on board and excited for the promotion,” wrote LaPelle. “She presented a mini nutrition message, which was streamed live from the school library into all the classrooms.”
Blades’ enthusiasm extends to her involvement in her local and state SNAs, for which she is regularly coming up with new ideas to encourage membership, team-building and fundraising. In fact, that’s exactly why she got involved in the first place, noting that she wanted to be able to help the local chapter plan and organize school events, as well as community service activities. For example, for the 2020 SNA-VA conference—scheduled for March, but cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic—Blades devised a table-decorating competition. For a $5 entry fee, local chapters could create a centerpiece in the theme of the conference, which then would be used to decorate the meeting space.

Additionally, Blades produces a quarterly newsletter for local chapter members, as well as promotes association membership to the district foodservice team at employee meetings. For the past two years, she’s also played a pivotal role in fundraising for the local chapter by heading up an annual craft fair, which recruited more than 40 vendors in 2019. At the event, “The public was educated on what the food and nutrition program is and how we provide quality and nutritious foods for our community every day,” LaPelle reported.

It takes a lot of effort to organize staff and student activities and events, especially in a profession where both time and budget come at a premium. Some managers aren’t willing to dive headfirst into extra commitments. However, Blades has a motto: “If you are having fun, you’re doing it right.”

Her enthusiasm is part of the reason Blades is being recognized as Manager of the Year—an honor that she still can’t believe has been bestowed upon her. “It means a lot,” Blades remarks. “I just do my job every day, and I have fun with it.”

**CAFETERIA MANAGER**
Spring Run Elementary School, Chesterfield County Public Schools, Virginia

**SNA MEMBER SINCE:** 2015

**LIVES IN:** Midlothian, Va.

**EDUCATION:** Associate degree, Baking and Pastry, Louisiana Culinary Institute

**FAMILY:** Husband Ben, daughter Caroline
Kellogg’s® congratulates this year’s SNA National Award Winners on their impressive achievements! Your dedication to your students and your community is inspiring.
spotlight on **EMPLOYEE of the year**

**Martha Pellegrino, MEd, RD, LDN**

Through her job as a nutrition educator, Martha Pellegrino is simply trying to accomplish one thing: improve the lives of others. Thus, when she learned she was nominated for—and then won—SNA’s Employee of the Year award at the state, regional and national level, Pellegrino was surprised, honored and grateful. “It was nothing that I ever expected,” she exclaims. “You just go to work every day, and you try to make a difference. I was just doing my job.”

But when you listen to her account of what she does daily at Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School (BVT), the passion she holds for the health and wellness of the teenagers with whom she works is evident. “I can honestly say that I have never met a person more committed to their profession than Martha,” wrote Director of Food Services Eric Carlson, who nominated Pellegrino for the award. “She is a tireless advocate for health and fitness.”

When Pellegrino was hired at BVT some 17 years ago, she didn’t have much to do with the cafeteria. Instead, she coordinated a grant-funded nutrition and fitness program for students—a responsibility she still enjoys. But the school’s administration really allowed her to grow and expand her contributions, Pellegrino reminisces, and within a few years, she was able to take on a more significant role in the foodservice operation. Now she monitors every aspect of meal preparation to ensure compliance with federal nutrition standards and also seeks ongoing input from students.

“The importance of this feedback is critical, given the fact that our students migrate from 13 towns in their freshman year and bring a broad range of cafeteria experiences, good and bad. Our job is to win them over with superior healthy food choices and preparation,” Carlson explained. Pellegrino also co-chairs the Wellness Committee and serves as a liaison between parents, nurses, counselors and foodservice staff to help manage any dietary restrictions, including food allergies, for students.

“One of the greatest services she provides to our students is alternative forms of physical and nutrition education,” Carlson wrote in his nomination. Pellegrino’s own voice brightens as she talks of VITA, the student wellness program that she runs at BVT. As a certified personal trainer, this program allows her to work closely with the students on both physical activity and healthy eating. At the beginning of the school year, the program focuses on SMART goals. “I have them do a whole reflection on where they are in terms of their eating habits, their physical activity, their sleep and time on their phones,” Pellegrino shares. “From that, I ask them to create one nutrition goal and one fitness goal for the year that they want to focus on.”

At the end of the year, she says, the teens reassess what they’ve been able to achieve. “I always get the most fabulous kids in my classes. A lot of times, I’ll get the same students for all four years, and it’s so fun to see them grow.”

Throughout the year, Pellegrino coordinates a number of nutrition education activities that she hopes provides the students with skills that they can weave into their everyday lives, such as meal preparation lessons on nutrients that they might be lacking in their diets, like calcium. “I’m trying
“I always get the most fabulous kids in my classes. A lot of times, I’ll get the same students for all four years, and it’s so fun to see them grow.”

Pellegrino’s passion for wellness extends beyond her students. According to Carlson, she extends her expertise to school staff members in the form of nutrition and fitness counseling, helping them to analyze current eating habits, amounts of daily physical activity and setting goals that are appropriate for the employee’s age and fitness level. Plus, she’s started writing a wellness blog for the school’s website that serves as a free resource for the community. She and Carlson also collaborate on coordination of an annual health fair.

Because Pellegrino typically spends so much time with students, she’s been missing those interactions since the COVID-19 pandemic closed schools in mid-March. “I miss the students, and I miss all of my coworkers,” Pellegrino shares. “The personal interactions aren’t there right now, and it’s tough.” For the time being, she works closely with the foodservice team to ensure student access to healthy to-go meals, as well as with the school’s web designer to identify local food pantries.

Pellegrino is actively involved in SNA of Massachusetts and encourages others to join both the state and national organization. “We all share the same goal,” she says. “Having a network of people to bounce ideas off of is just tremendous.” She previously served on the SNA of Mass Nutrition Committee and endorses this type of volunteer leadership. “It helps you understand what drives a lot of the regulations that we work under,” she notes.

Pellegrino is grateful to work at a school that allows her to do a job that she loves, and she’s thrilled to be honored with an award for it. “I’m very lucky to be at BVT and be able to do these things. It’s a really great job that I have,” she enthuses.

**NUTRITION EDUCATOR**
Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School, Upton, Mass.

**SNA MEMBER SINCE:** 2006

**LIVES IN:** Holliston, Mass.

**EDUCATION:** Bachelor’s degree in Food and Nutrition and Master’s degree in Nutrition Education from Framingham State University

**FAMILY:** Sons Nick and Anthony

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In everything he does, Jose Quiñones injects passion. Whether it’s talking about his wife of 35 years, whom he met at a university discotheque two weeks after moving to the U.S. mainland from Puerto Rico in 1977, or chatting about his 25+ year career in K-12 foodservice sales, the National School Business Development Manager for J.T.M. Food Group radiates enthusiasm. In fact, Quiñones’ own words in his nomination packet sum it up quite nicely: “At the end of the day, I am an extremely passionate advocate of wanting to make sure that every child in this country does not go to sleep hungry.”

This passion and zest for school nutrition likely isn’t a surprise to anyone who has encountered Quiñones at an SNA local, state or national conference, where he decorates the company’s booth and dresses up in crazy costumes to attract attention and generate fun. It’s a practice he started when he was with Culinary Standards, a company that was later purchased by J.T.M. “I was in a very small company, and you’re competing with big companies” at the national food shows, he explains. “It was funny because people didn’t know who we were. So suddenly it was like, ‘Who is that crazy guy there? He’s all dressed up in costumes, and look at the decorations! He looks like a pinata exploded.’ That’s what they all said.”

But this enthusiasm and passion for the K-12 foodservice segment does not revolve around simply generating sales. The zeal he shows for his work stems from a genuine affection for the people who are involved in school nutrition. “I’m not just talking about the directors; I’m talking about the kitchen managers, the staff, the students,” he shares. He likens a school meal operation to a making a movie or play (“I always go back to that [metaphor] because I’m not into sports.”) You have the director, of course, but you also have actors, lighting techs, makeup artists; so many people are vital components of a successful movie. School nutrition is much the same, he explains.

Because of his love of interacting with others, he says that the COVID-19 pandemic has been particularly difficult. Usually, his work calls for him to visit a different city every week to meet with school nutrition professionals. “I have had to learn how to keep growing these relationships via the phone or Zoom,” he notes. Quiñones also recognizes that the people he needs to reach have been hard at work doing emergency curbside feeding or summer meals all day long. It wasn’t the right time to be focusing on a sales pitch. Interactions “have become a lot more personal,” he reflects. “It’s more about, ‘How are you doing?’ and ‘What else can I do for you?’ I know deep inside that it isn’t the time for me to be selling.”

Quiñones has long understood the power of a solid relationship with his clients, and he recommends that new
industry members work to understand the complexities of the K-12 foodservice segment and the needs of a school nutrition operation. “Ask; ‘How can I help you?’ It might not be your product [they buy] that day, but six months later, because of your relationship,” they will reach out to you inquiring about something they need, he suggests. “Industry must be very engaged in understanding this business.”

In fact, Quiñones aims to be engaged in all facets of the industry. That’s why when the School Nutrition Foundation (SNF), invited him to join its Board of Directors in 2018, he knew it was important to say “yes.” SNA helped shape him, Quiñones says, so it was important to say “yes.” SNF helped shape him, Quiñones says, so it was time for him to give back through the Foundation. “I will ask people, ‘Do you know about [SNF]?’ And many people didn’t really even know that it existed, and that bothered me,” Quiñones explains. “We need to bring it into the spotlight.”

Quiñones is grateful for his career and the role SNA has played in it—and he admits he was quite emotional when SNA President Gay Anderson called to tell him that he was being honored as Industry Member of the Year. “It wasn’t just, ‘You won this award,’” he recalls. “She made it so clear that ‘We love you and respect you for who you are,’ and that’s one of my messages. We need to embrace people and personalities.”

And he’s intending to celebrate, although it won’t be at SNA’s Annual National Conference, as originally planned. Quiñones is known for bringing newly minted SNA presidents a boa and crown “like Miss Universe,” so he went ahead and ordered a crown and cape for himself. “And I’m going to have my own parade,” Quiñones muses. His work in school nutrition won’t end here. It’s great to be recognized, Quiñones says, and it’s very important to his career. However, “It’s not just about receiving the award and being done,” he states. “I want to use this opportunity to take the message out there: All of us in industry need to be more engaged, and we need to understand this business to support our wonderful customers in feeding kids.”

Quiñones injects passion in everything he does. “At the end of the day, I am an extremely passionate advocate of wanting to make sure that every child in this country does not go to sleep hungry.”
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# State & Regional Winners

**Congratulations to All State and Regional Employee, Manager and Director Winners!**

**Employee of the Year**

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<td>ALABAMA:</td>
<td>Christine Wheeler, CNP Cook, Geneva County High, Geneva County Schools</td>
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<td>DELAWARE:</td>
<td>Sue Holden, Cook, Wilmington Manor Elementary, Colonial School District</td>
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<td>Emelita Bugarin, Administrative Assistant/Procurement Specialist, Santa Rosa County District Schools</td>
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<td>Shirley Smith, Food Service Assistant, Lithia Springs Elementary, Douglas County School System</td>
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<td>Martha Pellegrino, Nutritionist, Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School</td>
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<td>Jean Precour, Cafeteria Helper, Oxford High School, Oxford Community Schools</td>
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<td>MIDEAST</td>
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<td>SOUTHEAST</td>
<td>Brittany Jones, Kentucky</td>
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<td>SOUTHWEST</td>
<td>Tammy Belaire, Louisiana</td>
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<td>WEST</td>
<td>Karmen Ivory, Utah</td>
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- **MARYLAND:** Marcia Rosa, Kitchen Assistant, Elkton High School, Cecil County Public Schools
- **MASSACHUSETTS:** Martha Pellegrino, Nutritionist, Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School
- **MICHIGAN:** Jean Precour, Cafeteria Helper, Oxford High School, Oxford Community Schools
- **MIDEAST:** Amanda Wimer, West Virginia
- **MIDWEST:** Rachel Gueningsman, Minnesota
- **NORTHEAST:** Martha Pellegrino, Massachusetts
- **NORTHWEST:** -
- **SOUTHEAST:** Brittany Jones, Kentucky
- **SOUTHWEST:** Tammy Belaire, Louisiana
- **WEST:** Karmen Ivory, Utah

**State and Regional Employee of the Year**

- **MIDEAST:** Amanda Wimer, West Virginia
- **MIDWEST:** Rachel Gueningsman, Minnesota
- **NORTHEAST:** Martha Pellegrino, Massachusetts
- **NORTHWEST:** -
- **SOUTHEAST:** Brittany Jones, Kentucky
- **SOUTHWEST:** Tammy Belaire, Louisiana
- **WEST:** Karmen Ivory, Utah
Manager of the Year in honor of Louise Sublette

### STATE WINNERS

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<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>School/Program</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td><strong>Christy Sessions</strong></td>
<td>CNP Manager, Operations</td>
<td>Ogletree Elementary, Auburn City Schools</td>
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<td>Alaska</td>
<td><strong>Michele Powers</strong></td>
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<td>Colorado</td>
<td><strong>Christi Brown, SNS</strong></td>
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<td>Connecticut</td>
<td><strong>Patricia Kearney</strong></td>
<td>Cafeteria Manager,</td>
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<td>Delaware</td>
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<td>Cafeteria Manager,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td><strong>Beverly Mack</strong></td>
<td>Food Service Manager,</td>
<td>Central High School, Santa Rosa County District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td><strong>Tory Grace</strong></td>
<td>School Nutrition Manager,</td>
<td>Hoboken Elementary, Brantley County Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaho</td>
<td><strong>Linda Harrelson</strong></td>
<td>Manager, Orofino Elementary</td>
<td>Joint School District 171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td><strong>Margo Gusman</strong></td>
<td>Central Kitchen Manager,</td>
<td>Marquardt Middle School, Marquardt School District 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td><strong>Sherri Costello</strong></td>
<td>Food Service Manager,</td>
<td>Heritage K-12, East Allen County Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td><strong>Patty Kuhn</strong></td>
<td>Kitchen Manager,</td>
<td>Roosevelt Elementary, Hays USD 489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td><strong>Angie Riddle</strong></td>
<td>Central Kitchen Manager,</td>
<td>Barren County High School, Barren County Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td><strong>Kim Crutchfield</strong></td>
<td>Cafeteria Manager,</td>
<td>Warren Easton High School, NOLA Public Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td><strong>Holly Haggerty</strong></td>
<td>Kitchen Manager,</td>
<td>Bohemia Manor Middle/High School, Cecil County Public Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td><strong>Jane Rice</strong></td>
<td>Cook Manager,</td>
<td>Elementary School, Foxborough Public Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td><strong>Michelle Durenberger</strong></td>
<td>Food Service Manager,</td>
<td>Shannon Park Elementary, Independent School District 196, Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td><strong>Shannon Scarborough</strong></td>
<td>Cafeteria Manager,</td>
<td>Lizana Elementary School, Harrison County School District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td><strong>Missy Hanner</strong></td>
<td>Nutrition Manager,</td>
<td>Lee’s Summit North, Lee’s Summit R-7 School District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td><strong>Sheila Scholting</strong></td>
<td>Manager,</td>
<td>Gretna Middle School, Gretna Public Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td><strong>Jeanne Reagan</strong></td>
<td>Kitchen Manager,</td>
<td>Merrimack High School, Merrimack School District SAU 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td><strong>Marcy Beblor, SNS</strong></td>
<td>District Food Services</td>
<td>West Windsor-Plainsboro Regional School District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td><strong>Angelica Ledezma</strong></td>
<td>Lead Food Service Worker/Manager, Columbus Elementary School, Deming Public Schools</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td><strong>Tina McCaffery</strong></td>
<td>Cook Manager, C.R.</td>
<td>Weeks Elementary School, Windsor Central School District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td><strong>Cheryl Hinson</strong></td>
<td>Child Nutrition Cafeteria</td>
<td>Manager, Moss Hill Elementary, Lenoir County Public Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td><strong>Wanda Miller</strong></td>
<td>Cook Manager,</td>
<td>Liberty Middle School, West Fargo Public Schools</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
OHIO: Georgia St. John, Child Nutrition Supervisor, EH Greene Intermediate School, Sycamore Community Schools

PENNSYLVANIA: Amber Underdown, Cafeteria Manager, Upper Bucks County Technical School

SOUTH CAROLINA: Faye Golding, Student Nutrition Training Manager, Irmo High, District Five of Lexington & Richland Counties

SOUTH DAKOTA: Laurie Lorius, Site Manager/Assistant Director, Sturgis Elementary, Meade School District 46-1

TENNESSEE: Lori Wilkerson, School Nutrition Manager, Huntland School, Franklin County School District

UTAH: Jeannette Turpin, Manager, Spring City Elementary, North Sanpete School District

VIRGINIA: Heather Blades, Cafeteria Manager, Spring Run Elementary, Chesterfield County Public Schools

WEST VIRGINIA: Susan Parsons, Cafeteria Manager, Shady Spring Middle School, Raleigh County School District

WISCONSIN: Kristen Slade, Nutrition Team Leader, Holmen Middle School, School District of Holmen

REGIONAL WINNERS

MIDEAST
Susan Parsons
West Virginia

MIDWEST
Michelle Durenberger
Minnesota

NORTHEAST
Jane Rice
Massachusetts

NORTHWEST
Linda Harrelson
Idaho

SOUTHEAST
Heather Blades
Virginia

SOUTHWEST
Christi Brown
Colorado

WEST
Jeannette Turpin
Utah

Director of the Year

STATE WINNERS

ALABAMA: Sonja Anthony, SNS, CNP Director, Jefferson County School District

ALASKA: Amy Rouse, SNS, Director of Nutrition Services, Fairbanks North Star Borough School District

COLORADO: Tony Jorstad, RD, SNS, Nutrition Services Director, 27J Schools

CONNECTICUT: Sandra Sullivan, Food & Nutrition Services Director, New Milford Public Schools

GEORGIA: Emily Hanlin, SNS, Executive Director, Food and Nutrition Services, Cobb County School District

ILLINOIS: Anna Wolk, Foodservice Coordinator, Johnsburg School District 12

INDIANA: Lindsey Hill, SNS, Director of Nutrition Services, South Madison Community School Corporation

KANSAS: Terri Jo Markham, Director of Child Nutrition and Wellness, Chanute Public Schools

KENTUCKY: Josey Crew, RD, Director of Child Nutrition, Hardin County Schools

MAINE: Wendy Collins, School Nutrition Director, Kittery School District

Continued on next page

SNA National Winners 2019-20
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>WINNER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MARYLAND</td>
<td>Karen Sarno, SNS, Supervisor of Food Services, Carroll County Public Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MASSACHUSETTS</td>
<td>Susan Murray, SNS, Director of Food &amp; Nutrition Services, Nauset Public Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MICHIGAN</td>
<td>Kristen Hennessey, Director of Food &amp; Nutrition Services, Plymouth-Canton Community Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MINNESOTA</td>
<td>Annette Hendrickx Derouin, MPH, RDN, SNS, Director of Food and Nutrition Services, Willmar Public Schools, New London-Spicer Public Schools, Montevideo Public Schools, Community Christian School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MISSISSIPPI</td>
<td>Christell Hicks, Child Nutrition Director, Clinton Public School District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MISSOURI</td>
<td>Vickie Cantrell, Food Services Director, Logan-Rogersville R-VIII</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEW MEXICO</td>
<td>Ginger Jones, Director of Student Nutrition, Deming Public Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEW YORK</td>
<td>Artie Frego, Director of Food Service, St. Lawrence-Lewis BOCES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORTH CAROLINA</td>
<td>Deborah Davis Carpenter, Child Nutrition Executive Director, Hoke County Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OHIO</td>
<td>Jessica Shelly, MBA, SNS, Student Dining Services Director, Cincinnati Public Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PENNSYLVANIA</td>
<td>Curtistine Walker, MEd, Director of Food Services, Pittsburgh Public Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUTH DAKOTA</td>
<td>Scott Wahl, Director of Nutrition Services, Watertown School District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TENNESSEE</td>
<td>Melody Turner, School Nutrition Director, Wilson County Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIRGINIA</td>
<td>Rhonda Huffman, Supervisor, Nutrition Services, Roanoke County Public Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEST VIRGINIA</td>
<td>Amanda McPherson, SNS, Child Nutrition Director, Wetzel County Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WISCONSIN</td>
<td>Michelle Kloser, SNS, School Nutrition Director, School District of the Menomonie Area</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**REGIONAL WINNERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REGION</th>
<th>WINNER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MIDEAST</td>
<td>Jessica Shelly, MBA, SNS, Ohio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIDWEST</td>
<td>Annette Hendrickx Derouin, SNS, Minnesota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORTHEAST</td>
<td>Susan Murray, SNS, Massachusetts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORTHWEST</td>
<td>Amy Rouse, SNS, Alaska, Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUTHEAST</td>
<td>Rhonda Huffman, SNS, Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUTHWEST</td>
<td>Terri Jo Markham, Kansas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEST</td>
<td>Ginger Jones, SNS, New Mexico</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
he volunteer leaders of SNA’s state affiliates take up a variety of challenges, ranging from legislative advocacy to membership recruitment to fundraising to dynamic networking and training events and more. Their efforts are recognized with the President’s Award of Service in honor of Thelma Flanagan (page 21). Each year, a few state presidents stand out for their extraordinary leadership in successfully implementing strategies that help advance both the profession and SNA. This year, there are two recipients of the President’s Award of Excellence: Shelly Mohr, SNS, SNA of Iowa and Marci Lexa, SNS, SNA of Virginia. SNA applauds the hard work, innovation and commitment to excellence of these deserving individuals. Let their reflections here serve as inspiration to future Association leaders.

Shelly Mohr, SNS

**TIPTON COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT • SNA of Iowa • 601-1,200 Membership Division**

**Q** Tell us which of your achievements of the last year makes you most proud and why.

**A** Increasing our SNS credential holders by 12% would be the top. Those people can show their districts their depth of knowledge. We talk about the SNS credential a lot—at networking and membership events. The leadership before me needs to be credited, as well. People don’t see these opportunities one time and say, “This is for me.” They need to hear it over and over again.

**Q** Putting aside your disappointment at the cancellation of your state conference this year, how are you and your leadership team innovating in these changed circumstances? Where and how are you thinking out of the box?

**A** Our state is divided into four regions, and our Executive Committee had this idea to put together a digital meeting for each region. We’ve been using one platform for our digital meetings just for our Board, but we purchased a membership to another platform for up to 100 people to join. Our Region Chair and Region Co-Chair did a digital webinar and people could chime in and ask questions about getting through the pandemic. We’re gearing up for another one of our regions to do the same meeting with their members. And we hope the two other regions will have volunteers to take charge, as well.

**Q** How has the experience of being a state president helped you to grow?

**A** I like to be in control of the things that I am in charge of. The pandemic said, “I don’t think so, Shelly,” and told me to just roll with it. I learned a little bit about myself in terms of where I like to have control and where I need to let go.

**Q** What was the biggest pleasant surprise of the experience of being a state president?

**A** The biggest pleasant surprise, I think, is how the members of the Board trusted me to lead. I didn’t know if that would happen because I’m from a small school district and most of the people on our Board are from relatively large districts. I’m more thankful than surprised. When I stepped into the role, I felt a responsibility to keep the meetings rolling and respect people’s time. They trusted me to do that. I’m really thankful that they trusted me.

**Q** What words of advice or encouragement do you have for those state leaders who are following in your footsteps?

**A** Watch and talk with the leaders around you. Do not hesitate to just reach out to someone you respect. Talk about the good or the frustrating and ask for advice for learning or for change. Reach out for that network because that is what SNA is about.
Tell us which of your achievements of the last year makes you most proud and why.

I think membership retention in a year like this one is incredibly important, as is recruiting diverse leadership. Both are important to our Board, and I couldn’t have done it without them. We’ve got a good Membership Chair, and she stayed on the phones, calling people to renew their memberships. We talk up district membership, and we will keep stressing that to keep memberships up. We’ve also been working on a mentoring program with the Board in the last few years. Those who show an interest can step forward to take a more active leadership role and run for Board positions.

Our leadership team did not reflect the diversity of our membership and it needed to. We needed fresh faces. I didn’t think that some people who expressed interest were given enough attention.

COVID-19 meant you had to cancel your state’s annual conference. What did you miss most about your plans?

We had two really exciting keynote speakers. They have agreed to come back next year if we have our conference next spring. I hope we can! And it’s always great being with our state members. I love the fellowship and I think we were all looking forward to that.

Why is national and state membership in SNA more important now than ever?

It has really helped us having the national Association out there. They are making sure that things with USDA are able to happen quickly. And we really need that voice right now. I’m really glad to hear the Association is making sure those waivers stay in place for the next school year.

How has the experience of being a state president helped you to grow?

Our state presidency is a three year commitment—vice president, president-elect and the president. One of the first things I said when I was sworn in was, “Do not expect perfection. Your leaders are going to make mistakes. If you expect perfection from me, you’re looking in the wrong direction. I will make mistakes, but I’ll apologize and ask for forgiveness. That is what makes me human, just like you.”

How has leading the state association during a pandemic changed your view of leadership?

It has changed my perception of meetings. They don’t have to be done in person. People don’t need to travel. Things can happen virtually and you can get just as much, if not more, done. I live out in the middle of nowhere and it could be a five-hour drive to a Board meeting. Virtual meetings have saved a lot of time, although meetings are easier to do in person. Still, I found that we can be pretty efficient in virtual meetings if everyone knows what their expectations are.

2019-20 State Association Membership & Professional Development Growth Awards

MEMBERSHIP DIVISION CHAMPIONS

1-600 Division: West Virginia (numerical increase)

601-1,200 Division: Delaware (numerical increase), New York (percent increase)

1,200+ Division: Virginia (numerical increase)

INCREASING MEMBERSHIP AWARD

Iowa

CREDENTIALING DIVISION CHAMPIONS

1-600 Division: Maine

601-1,200 Division: Colorado

1,200+ Division: Louisiana

CERTIFICATE PROGRAM GOAL AWARD (3%)

Connecticut New York

Iowa Virginia
President’s Award of Service  in honor of Thelma Flanagan
This award recognizes the dedication and commitment that state presidents provide throughout the year as they strive to accomplish SNA’s mission, vision and strategic goals.

Jennifer Gilbert, Alabama
Sue Lampert, Alaska
Rick Hall, Arizona
Jo Anna Spradlin, Arkansas
Polly Houston, California
Shannon C. Solomon, MS, SNS, Colorado
Ernie J. Koschmieder, Connecticut
Julie A. Kirby, Delaware
Lori Dornbusch, SNS, Florida
Cheryl Jones, SNS, Georgia
Anita Brower, Idaho
Kristin Voigts, SNS, Illinois
Dee Anne Orick, Indiana
Shelly Mohr, SNS, Iowa
Josh Mathiasmeier, RD, Kansas
Catherine E. Hettmansperger, Kentucky
Lucretia Hertzock, MS, RD, SNS, Louisiana
David J. Roberts, Maine
Kristen Sudzina, SNS, Maryland
Thomas Houle, Massachusetts
Carolyn E. Thomas MBA, CND, SNS, Michigan
Vickie J. Speltz, Minnesota
Laura E. Bounds, Mississippi
Sarah Chellberg, RD, SNS, Missouri
Louise Chandler, Montana
Lora Harders, Nebraska
Cory Smith, Nevada
Donna Reynolds, SNS, New Hampshire
Margaret M. DeBlasi, RD, SNS, New Jersey
Rachel Martinez, New Mexico
Mark Bordeau, SNS, New York
Frederick Robert Gilbert, SNS, North Carolina
Michelle Wagner, RD, SNS, North Dakota
Krystia M. Hess, SNS, Ohio
Krista Neal, MS, RD, LD, SNS, Oklahoma
Becki Wicks, SNS, Oregon
E. Nichole Taylor, Pennsylvania
Sharon Hunt, South Carolina
Liz Marso, RDN, LN, South Dakota
Vonda Bradford, Tennessee
Melissa Bryan, Texas
Kenneth B. Crawford, Utah
Marcy Lexa, SNS, Virginia
Tiffany Curran, MS, MPH, RD, LD, West Virginia
Jesse Bender, Wisconsin
Denise Kinney, Wyoming

Recruiter of the Year
Lora Gilbert, SNS (Florida)
During the 2019-20 membership year, Lora recruited 91 new SNA members! (See page 22.)

Annual Membership Campaign Winners 2019-20
Sean Cartney (California)
Marsha Jacobs (Virginia)
Janet Long (Maryland)
Esther Motyka, SNS (Minnesota)
Vanessa Richardson, SNS (Maine)
Each winner receives 1 free registration for the 2021 Annual National Conference in Chicago!

Top Star Club Members
Marcia Smith, SNS (Florida)
Denise Hooper (Tennessee)
Jonathan Dickl, SNS (Ohio)
Sonja Anthony, SNS (Alabama)
Jessica Shelly, SNS (Ohio)
Denise Lamar, SNS (North Carolina)
Deborah Wuest, SNS (Florida)
Meredith Potter, SNS (Georgia)
Gretchen Wilson, SNS (North Carolina)
Rosie Jackson (Louisiana)

Top Star Club States
1. Georgia
2. Tennessee
3. Florida
4. North Carolina
5. Minnesota
6. South Carolina
7. Louisiana
8. Alabama
9. Virginia
10. Washington
NA’s Star Club recognizes and thanks members who recruit and retain fellow members in the Association. For her efforts in ensuring her employees are connected to critical professional development resources and linking them to a nationwide network of peers, Lora Gilbert, MS, RD, FADA, SNS, is recognized as Recruiter of the Year. (Other top recruiters are recognized on page 21.) Here, Gilbert shares her reflections on sharing the incredible benefits of SNA membership.

Lora Gilbert, MS, RD, FADA, SNS
SENIOR DIRECTOR OF FOOD & NUTRITION SERVICES PROGRAM • Orange County (Fla.) Public Schools

Q You have been a longtime committed member of the Association. Why is SNA membership important to you?
A It’s where I found my mentors and where I definitely found my passion. The conversations leverage every thought I’ve ever had, so it just makes me a better director, person and nutritionist.

Q You are a well-respected leader of a very large and sophisticated operation. What do you find most valuable about your SNA membership?
A I think that SNA is the bar for growth in our industry. I’m really passionate about making sure our managers are members, and for ensuring they look at the SNA Certificate and the SNS Credential. Training is one of the things I think we do really well here in Orange County.

Q Why do encourage your staff to become members of SNA? How do you expect membership to help them grow?
A I’ve thought about that a lot because people have questioned my decision on spending the resources to pay for these memberships. I find that there is a connectivity between the managers and the stories they read about in other districts in School Nutrition—they don’t always get that support in their schools. If they can get that support through SN, the SNA website and the newsletters, in addition to the camaraderie of their local peers, I think it helps them think about the future.

I also think that the professional training standards, and how SNA has stepped forward and supported those—that is great for career growth. I think I get the most positive comments from staff when they get to attend a national meeting.

Q Why is SNA membership more important now than ever before?
A It’s the leadership that employees can develop by gaining their Certificate and/or the SNS Credential. I love the fact that I can make the decision that everyone on my team is going to be a member of SNA and gain the benefits of membership. It’s nice that our school board recognizes that we’re part of a bigger foundation. Whenever I have a new initiative for our program, they are always asking, “Do other districts do this?” I tell them that I get my ideas from everybody else!
MAKING MEALS POSSIBLE DURING IMPOSSIBLE TIMES

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