

Editor's Note

ASFSA President Gaye Lynn MacDonald, SFNS, selected *Enriching Lives Through Association* as the Association's Plan of Action theme for 2002-03. She indicated in her message to association leaders that this theme "celebrates a multitude of diverse, creative connections." Certainly, the association between research and practice is an important one for improving the quality of meals and education for America's children. In *The Journal of Child Nutrition & Management*, we try to share research that can help school foodservice professionals enrich the lives of children.

In this issue, you will find a number of articles that can make a difference for children by improving their nutritional health and well being. For example, Connors and Bednar encourage school foodservice practitioners to adopt a calcium initiative because research shows that children's diets are consistently low in calcium. They stress that child nutrition programs are in a unique position to make a positive impact on calcium consumption by having a "milk-friendly" cafeteria.

Lambert et al. provide an important perspective on parental beliefs toward the National School Lunch Program, and how those beliefs relate to the participation of elementary students. These researchers stress that parents should be considered as important customers because their beliefs impact their children's participation. Along the same theme, Bordi et al. examine the impact of the environment on food choices and eating habits of school-age children. These researchers present suggestions for ways that research can be enhanced by efforts of the government and universities. They stress the importance of publishing current research.

Nutrition education for children is part of the vision statement of the American School Food Service Association. Morris et al. present a garden-enhanced nutrition education curriculum they developed for elementary schoolchildren. Incorporation of garden activities improved the effectiveness of the nutrition education program, while providing opportunities for students and teachers to work with staff in the school cafeteria.

Rainville and Cater examined challenges related to the implementation of the After-School Snack Program. Understanding these challenges will help program administrators better plan and implement this program to improve both the accessibility of food for children and their nutritional intake. And Youn and Sneed examined barriers to implementing food safety practices in school foodservice, finding training to be the biggest challenge. Assigning an employee with primary responsibility for food safety reduced perceived barriers, and this action may need to be considered in school districts.

Additionally, this research journal provides two important resources for readers. First, abstracts from the Child Nutrition Showcase at the 2002 Annual National Conference are included. I encourage you to contact those individuals who are doing research that may be beneficial to your school district. Make an association with someone who can be a good resource! Finally, Denise Brown, the National Food Service Management Institution's new director of Applied Research,

provides an overview of the current research being done by the Institute, including resources that are available for practitioners. Be sure to check out some of the many useful tools she describes.

It's important to remember that making associations with research can improve your practice in the child nutrition field. As always, I encourage you to read the *Journal* and submit results of research projects that you are doing in your district. (Even if a project seems small to you, keep in mind that if you had a need for the information in the first place, many others do, too!). Also, help us to continue to bring you quality research by participating in the review process of this journal. We have included a list of reviewers who have contributed to the *Journal* during the past year--we would like to see your name there next year!

I hope that 2002 has been a great year for you. Continue making associations so that you can enrich the lives of others.

Jeannie Sneed, PhD, RD, SFNS

Editor