

## Editor's Note

This fall, children across the country registered their choices in SNA's "Vote for School Lunch" National School Lunch Week campaign, while adults voted for candidates in local, state, and federal elections. Public policy concerns impact school nutrition operations on a daily basis and play a major role in school meal programs. This year has been especially busy, as school nutrition directors have worked hard to develop and implement local wellness policies and school food-safety plans as required by law. This past year also brought challenges from Mother Nature, most notably the slow recovery after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. Weather catastrophes remind us that school foodservice professionals often play important roles when an emergency impacts a community.

This issue of *The Journal of Child Nutrition & Management* addresses many of the hurdles that foodservice directors face in operating their programs. The Current Issues article supplies a resource guide on many emergency preparedness steps for school foodservice directors. Guidance materials, research findings, and websites are provided that relate to emergency readiness, food recalls, and food defense. The problem of childhood obesity has received much media attention over the past year. Giampaoli et al outline the perceptions of North Carolina foodservice directors toward childhood obesity and identify challenges to increasing participation in the National School Lunch Program. Researchers found although school nutrition directors believe that healthful choices are offered in their programs, children often do not make good diet choices. Challenges to increasing program participation include offering competitive foods, poor food choices of students, and lack of administrative support.

In a related area, Penn State researchers Probart et al examined the roles of various stakeholders in determining decisions regarding a la carte service. Four key groups were identified: district administrators, principals, students, and parents, each with different priorities. School nutrition directors believed that they have limited power to make decisions about good a la carte choices. New legislation requiring the development and implementation of local wellness policies may impact the nutritional quality of a la carte choices in schools and provide an opportunity for school foodservice directors to influence those choices.

Two studies examined different aspects of improving the nutrient intake of children. In Stroebele, a public school district worked with food manufacturers to reduce the fat in pizza, French fries, and chicken fingers and evaluated students' acceptability of those items. Researchers found that small changes in fat resulted in products that were rated as palatable and attractive. Rainville examined barriers to the placement of recess prior to lunch, which has been shown to increase food consumption and decrease food waste. Focus groups of school administrators, school nutrition personnel, teachers, and parents were used to identify and examine existing and potential barriers. Strategies for eliminating barriers can be developed and tested. The final two articles in this issue address Pre-K and summer foodservice programs. Based on identified barriers and best practices, foodservice directors can be better prepared to plan nutrition programs that will meet the needs of their school district.

Abstracts from the 2006 Child Nutrition Showcase also are included in this issue. We are pleased to see research related to school nutrition programs being completed at many universities across the United States, often in partnership with school nutrition directors. Collaborations between academicians and practitioners will yield research that can make a genuine difference in the operation of school meal programs. An update on the research activities of the National Food Service Management Institute (NFSMI) is also included. I encourage readers to contact NFSMI with questions or research ideas.

Finally, I would like to thank all of the individuals who contributed to *TheJournal* this year by serving as reviewers. The role of a peer reviewer is extremely important to maintain the quality and integrity of *TheJournal*, and I appreciate your contributions more than you know.

Have a healthy, happy holiday season and best wishes for a successful 2007!

Jeannie Sneed, PhD, RD, CFSP, SFNS

*Editor*