Bravo!

A CELEBRATION OF SNA NATIONAL AWARD WINNERS

2022-23
Patsi Gregory’s introduction to the school nutrition profession is marked by a mentor’s words: “You cannot teach a hungry child.”

“I found out very quickly that there are a lot of hungry students in our schools,” recounted Gregory in a conversation with SNA President Lori Adkins, MS, CHE, SNS. “Some come to school hungry. The rest? By the time it’s lunchtime, they’re hungry and ready to eat, so I knew I had a big responsibility to provide the food they needed.”

Understanding the significance of her new calling, Gregory soon recognized the need for a strong support group and joined the National Association and her State Association in 2012, the same year she entered the profession.

“I cannot do what I need to do by myself,” she acknowledged. “I did begin to go to every national meeting, to every state meeting that I could go to. I wanted to make contacts and I wanted to learn from people that I knew had more experience than I did.”

Her dedication to learning from her peers paid off—shortly into her career, Gregory became a trailblazer of positive change within her district. She resolved understaffing issues, created district-wide menus and ensured all schools operated within the same, sustainable ratio for expenses. The result: Lunch participation in Gregory’s district has increased by more than 28%, and there are now extra funds available for emergencies and improved staff benefits.

With her own support systems to guide her—whether it’s her family, staff or other State or National Association members—Gregory herself is equally dedicated to uplifting her community.

She developed the “Achieving Excellence” program to recognize outstanding staff members and, in 2014, began introducing motivational speakers, trainings from the Tennessee Department of Education and networking opportunities ahead of each school year, as well as teaching classes to help her staff earn SNA certificates. She committed to providing the tools those employees need to succeed.

As if that weren’t enough, Gregory also invests in students. After the final bell rings, she partners with a tutoring organization to implement the After-school Snacks Program and volunteers as a mentor herself, teaching cooking skills and inviting students to critique school breakfast and lunch meals. Additionally, to address inequities in internet access among students, she developed a monthly newsletter featuring the school menu that is mailed to each household.

“We in school nutrition have a high calling,” Gregory said to Adkins. “...By working together, we can meet the needs of the students in our country to help them be the productive citizens they need to be.”
Cecelia Ann Araiza can easily be described as a beacon of positivity—so much so that she's a valued member of Madison Park Middle School's Sunshine Committee. Through her 20+ years of work at Madison School District, Araiza’s passion for school nutrition and dedication to her school community shines, whether it’s in helping staff members find their passions and advance their careers or extending her commitment to her students beyond the cafeteria.

Education, equal opportunity and high spirits in the workplace—these are the values Araiza prioritizes when it comes to being a school nutrition manager. She encourages her staff’s professional passion, sharing her own knowledge and ideas, encouraging team-building and fun activities and leading trainings with all staff members, always providing training in Spanish and translating classes to give non-English-speaking employees the same opportunities as every other staff member.

For Araiza, that passion also applies to her students. “I have preschool through high school [students] on my campus, and I adore every one of them,” said Araiza in a conversation with SNA President Lori Adkins, MS, CHE, SNS. “When it comes to being passionate, it’s my students that really drive me to do things.”

This also takes Araiza outside of the cafeteria and into after-school hours. “I love to be out with them on campus and teach them nutrition education and other things they wouldn’t normally get just from the school cafeteria,” she explained.

Stepping into the role of teacher, Araiza leads nutrition education classes and cooking lessons for students in grades 5 through 8, as well as an after-school culinary club. Students are invited into the school kitchens to learn how to read recipes and prepare meals. Recognizing how expensive fresh produce can be for some families, Araiza also shares tips on how to substitute canned or frozen vegetables for each recipe.

Her nutrition and food education initiatives don’t stop there. Araiza partners with local farms and dairy farms for a farm-to-school program, even adopting a calf through a state dairy program! She hosts farmers markets and kitchen tours for students and has started an after-school garden club (in addition to the aforementioned culinary club).

Araiza’s passion for her students is proven by her commitment to always going above and beyond her day-to-day role—all to provide her students with extra learning opportunities and empower them to make healthy choices by showing them what goes into their food, from the ground all the way into the kitchen.
Employee of the Year

Connie Kingsley
Inventory Specialist
Lee’s Summit R7 School District, Missouri
SNA member since 2003

When someone retires, you don’t expect them to hop back into the workforce—but that’s exactly what this year’s National Employee of the Year Connie Kingsley did. After working in the school nutrition profession for nearly 30 years, Kingsley put a pause on her retirement plans to return to Lee’s Summit R7 School District, but just as a fill-in...until it turned into a full-time position.

Kingsley’s reinstatement at Lee’s Summit R7 School District can be summarized with one phrase: stepping up to the plate. She stepped up for her district when it needed her most by eagerly returning to work and renewing her SNA membership and certification, as well as attending food shows, conferences and USDA training sessions.

In stepping up to her new role as Inventory Specialist, which requires carefully tracking orders, shortages, substitutions and inventory, Kingsley discovered inaccuracies in a distributor’s crediting and bid pricing and recovered thousands of dollars owed to her district. For her fellow staff members, she stepped up to be a “Nutrition Wellbeing Champ”—a representative for the district’s Employee Wellness Program—and dedicated her time to attending monthly staff meetings and keeping colleagues informed about insurance benefits and district programs.

Kingsley’s commitment to her district shows that her passion for school nutrition has never faded, which made her return to work well worth it in her eyes. “My passion has always been school nutrition. Being able to share my time and knowledge and skills [is] my way to give back to our community,” said Kingsley in a conversation with SNA President Lori Adkins, MS, CHE, SNS. “Our daily goal is to ensure that our students are fed great nutritious meals and that they don’t have to worry about any of the behind-the-scenes hiccups that might occur.”

Kingsley’s role may have changed—she now focuses on supporting staff by keeping them informed of packaging changes, product substitutions and shortages and by making sure invoices are paid, orders are billed correctly and important data stays organized—but her invaluable contributions to her district and her outlook on the importance of her profession has not.

“As a previous manager, I understand how vital this [job] is,” she shared with Adkins. “It alleviates some of [employees’ and managers’] stress so they can focus on what is most important, which is our students.”
During Carole Erb’s nearly 20 years in school nutrition—and 18 years as an SNA member—she has not only dedicated herself to J.T.M. Food Group, where she is Senior Director of Sales, but she’s also committed to countless hours of volunteer work on behalf of the Association.

A quick snippet of her Association resume: Erb not only served on the SNA Industry Advisory Council from 2013–15, but followed it up with a stint on the Professional Standards Committee from 2016–18. As a regular attendee and advocate for her home state of Ohio at SNA’s Legislative Action Conferences, she also volunteered for SNA’s 2021 Child Nutrition Reauthorization Task Force, working alongside other members to outline legislative priorities for Congress.

Erb shares her expertise as a speaker as well, and has so far spoken at two of SNA’s Annual National Conferences and at Ohio SNA’s 2023 Annual Conference. Pulling off national SNA conferences take a village and, earlier this year, Erb played an integral role in the planning of the 2023 School Nutrition Industry Conference as one of its co-chairs.

“Our work on that conference was impactful and promoted school nutrition by building up the very operators doing the heavy lifting,” she said.

Erb doesn’t just showcase her commitment to the profession through SNA. She also served as the Industry Representative on the American Commodity Distribution Association’s (ACDA) Board of Directors from 2018–23, as well as on the ACDA Processing Committee for more than six years, where she promoted and supported the USDA Foods program.

In her role at J.T.M. Food Group, Erb regularly works with her dedicated K-12 team to support SNA and others within the school nutrition field, always encouraging other employees to join, support and volunteer to serve the members of the national and state associations.

“I have been enormously blessed to have the opportunity to learn about this segment and the incredibly important work of school foodservice directors, their staff, state agencies, distributors, manufacturers, brokers and USDA,” Erb reflected. “Each stakeholder has important roles and responsibilities, and I have developed a love and respect for each of them. It is only with a collaborative effort that we will be able to continue to nourish this nation.”
Congratulations to All State and Regional Employee, Manager and Director Winners!

**STATE WINNERS**

**ALABAMA**
Cacyce R. Davis, MPH, RDN, SNS
CNP Director, Elmore County Public Schools

**ALASKA**
Rachel Spencer
School Nutrition Specialist, Yukon Koyukuk School District

**CALIFORNIA**
Polly Barbara Houston
Food Service Director, Lennox School District

**COLORADO**
Craig Schneider
Director of Child Nutrition, Poudre School District

**CONNECTICUT**
Jennifer Bove
Director of Food & Nutrition Services, East Hampton School District

**GEORGIA**
Cathy Johnson, MBA, SNS
Director of School Nutrition, Richmond County School District

**ILLINOIS**
Stefanie Giannini, MA, SNS
Director of Food & Nutrition Services, Marquardt School District 15

**INDIANA**
Erin Coleman, RD, CPT
Director of Child Nutrition, Perry Township School District

**IOWA**
Stephanie Hawkins
Food Service Director, Fairfield Community School District

**KANSAS**
Laura Fails
Food Service Director, USD 320 Wamego

**KENTUCKY**
Kelly Holt, SNS
Director of Nutrition & Dining Services, Warren County Public Schools

**MAINE**
Alisa J. Roman
Director of Nutrition & Transportation, Lewiston Public Schools

**MASSACHUSETTS**
Jeanne Johnson, SNS
School Nutrition Director, Dedham Public Schools

**MICHIGAN**
Shelby Turnquist
Food Service Director, Houghton-Portage Township Schools

**MISSISSIPPI**
James Mike Robertson
Child Nutrition Director, New Albany School District

**MISSOURI**
Carmen Fischer
Director of Child Nutrition Services, Rockwood School District

**NEW MEXICO**
Rachel Roybal-Rogers
Director, Mora Independent School District

**NORTH CAROLINA**
Danelle Moore Smith
Director, Lenoir School District

**OHIO**
Vicky Nieset
Food Service Director, Clyde-Greensprings School District

**MID- ATLANTIC**
Lisa Winter, SNS
Virginia

**MIDWEST**
Stephanie Hawkins
Iowa

**MOUNTAIN PLAINS**
Craig Schneider
Colorado

**NORTHEAST**
Jeanne Johnson, SNS
Massachusetts

**SOUTHEAST**
Patsi Gregory, SNS
Tennessee

**SOUTHWEST**
Rachel Roybal-Rogers
New Mexico

**WESTERN**
Lynne Shore
Oregon

**TEXAS**
Lacy Willey, RD, SNS
Director, Cleveland Independent School District

**VERMONT**
Scott Fay, SNS
Director of Child Nutrition, Essex Westford School District

**VIRGINIA**
Lisa Winter, SNS
Senior Director of School Nutrition, Norfolk Public Schools

**WEST VIRGINIA**
Renee Griffin, MS, RD, LD, SNS
Child Nutrition Director, Ohio County Schools

**WISCONSIN**
Jamie Wilson, SNS
Director of Foodservice, Superior School District

**DIRECTOR OF THE YEAR**

**REGIONAL WINNERS**

**MID- ATLANTIC**
Lisa Winter, SNS
Virginia

**MIDWEST**
Stephanie Hawkins
Iowa

**MOUNTAIN PLAINS**
Craig Schneider
Colorado

**NORTHEAST**
Jeanne Johnson, SNS
Massachusetts

**SOUTHEAST**
Patsi Gregory, SNS
Tennessee

**SOUTHWEST**
Rachel Roybal-Rogers
New Mexico

**WESTERN**
Lynne Shore
Oregon
Manager of the Year
in honor of Louise Sublette

STATE WINNERS

ALABAMA
(Connie) DeAnn Davis
CNP Manager, Springville Middle School,
St. Clair County Schools

ALASKA
Mica Night
Operations Supervisor, Anchorage School District

ARIZONA
Cecelia Ann Araiza
Manager, Madison Park Middle School,
Madison School District

CALIFORNIA
Judith Whitney
Nutrition Service Multi-site Manager,
Twentynine Palms Elementary School,
Morongo Unified School District

COLORADO
Barbara Coffey
Nutrition Lead, Falcon Elementary School,
El Paso County School District 49

CONNECTICUT
Suzanne Fallucco
Kitchen Manager, Robert E. Fitch High School,
Stenon & Hudsonville Public Schools

DELAWARE
Jane Mutter
Cafeteria Manager, Lake Forest High School,
Lake Forest School District

FLORIDA
Keila Sanchez
School Food Service Manager, Cypress Springs & Deerwood Elementary Schools,
Orange County Public Schools

GEORGIA
Missy Williams
Manager, Westside Elementary School,
Coffee County School District

IDAHO
Angela Hentges
Child Nutrition Coordinator, Washington Elementary School, Lake Pend Oreille School District No. 84

INDIANA
Teresa White-McDonald
Food Service Manager, Prince Chapman Academy, East Allen County Schools

IOWA
Donna Holman
Manager III, West High School, Davenport Community Schools

KANSAS
Amber Workman
Kitchen Manager, Meadows Elementary School, Topeka USD #501

KENTUCKY
Maggie Oswalt
Cafeteria Manager, Great Crossing High School, Scott County School District

MAINE
Susan Maynard
Food & Nutrition Services Manager, Loranger Memorial School, RSU 23

MASSACHUSETTS
Stacey Birkbeck
Cook Manager, John Ahern Middle School, Foxborough Public Schools

MICHIGAN
Linda Willemstein
Kitchen Manager, Hudsonville Central Kitchen, Jenison & Hudsonville Public Schools

MINNESOTA
Deb Vera
Kitchen Manager, Columbia Heights High School, Columbia Heights Schools, ISD 13

MISSISSIPPI
Wendy Robinson
Cafeteria Manager, Northside & Eastside Elementary Schools, Clinton Public School District

MISSOURI
Stacy Carter
Elementary Manager, Highland Park Elementary School, Lee’s Summit R7 School District

NEBRASKA
Tara Brooking
Manager, Gretna Public Schools

NEW MEXICO
Gale Montoya
Manager, Mora Independent School District

NEW YORK
Elizabeth Corrigan, SNS
Cook Manager, Liverpool Central Schools

NORTH CAROLINA
Natashia McKeel
School Nutrition Manager, Rock Ridge Elementary School, Wilson County School District

NORTH DAKOTA
Kristin Jameson
Middle School Kitchen Manager, Carl Ben Eielson Middle School, Fargo Public Schools

OHIO
Lisa McDonald
Kitchen Manager, Mason High School, Mason City Schools

OKLAHOMA
Joycelynn Byrd
Kitchen Manager, Sangre Ridge Elementary School, Stillwater Public Schools

SOUTH CAROLINA
Angel Tollison
Manager, E.B. Morse Elementary School, Laurens 55 School District

TENNESSEE
Chantal Parker
FCS Manager, Moore Elementary School, Franklin Special School District

TEXAS
Maria Carlos
Child Nutrition Operations Manager, YES Prep Public Schools

UTAH
Ryan Spencer
Kitchen Manager, Wasatch Elementary School, Ogden School District

VIRGINIA
John Feist
School Nutrition Services Manager, Cedar Lane Elementary School, Loudoun County School District

WEST VIRGINIA
Cheryl Hillberry
Cafeteria Manager, Long Drain School, Wetzel County Schools

WISCONSIN
Megan Walters
Lead, Hillside Elementary School, School District of New Richmond

REGIONAL WINNERS

MID- ATLANTIC
Cheryl Hillberry
West Virginia

MIDWEST
Megan Walters
Wisconsin

MOUNTAIN PLAINS
Stacy Carter
Missouri

NORTHEAST
Stacey Birkbeck
Massachusetts

SOUTHEAST
Chantal Parker
Tennessee

SOUTHWEST
Cecelia Ann Araiza
Arizona

WESTERN
Angela Hentges
Idaho
STATE WINNERS

ALABAMA
Allison Skipper
7-hour CNP, Rocky Ridge Elementary School, Hoover City Schools

CALIFORNIA
David Saliba
Supervisor, Foothill High School, Kern High School District

COLORADO
Paula Dailey
Nutrition Assistant, Stetson Elementary School, El Paso County School District 49

CONNECTICUT
Doreen McHugh
Cook, Mystic River Magnet School, Groton Public Schools

FLORIDA
Emelita Bugarin
Administrative Assistant, Santa Rosa County School District

GEORGIA
Pamela Heesh
Food Assistant, Matthew Arthur Elementary School, Houston County School District

ILLINOIS
Jennifer Wagner
Administrative Assistant, Harlem 122 School District

INDIANA
Janis Engerman
Food Service, Eel River Elementary School, Northwest Allen County Schools

KENTUCKY
Casey Pfost
Assistant Manager, Great Crossing High School, Scott County School District

MAINE
Donna Thomas
Cook, Woodland Consolidated School, School Union 122

MASSACHUSETTS
Pamela Anderson
Kitchen staff, Andover High School, Andover Public Schools

MINNESOTA
Mackenzie Herbst
Kitchen Assistant, Foley High School, Foley Public Schools

MISSOURI
Connie Kingsley
Inventory Specialist, Nutrition Services Office, Lee's Summit R7 School District

NEBRASKA
Pam Heon
Employee, Gretna Elementary School, Gretna Public Schools

NEW JERSEY
Paola Francisco
Lead Person, Albio Sires Elementary School, West New York Schools

NEW MEXICO
Juhree Castelman
Administrative Assistant, Hobbs Municipal Schools

NORTH CAROLINA
Norma Smith
School Nutrition Assistant, Moss Hill Elementary School, Lenoir County Public Schools

OREGON
Alejandrina Zepeda
Nutrition Services Lead, Washington Elementary School, Woodburn School District #103

SOUTH CAROLINA
Connie Godfrey
Operator, Ford Elementary School, Laurens 55 School District

UTAH
Shelley Marriott
Assistant Kitchen Manager, James Madison Elementary School, Ogden School District

REGIONAL WINNERS

MID- ATLANTIC
Paola Francisco
New Jersey

MIDWEST
Jeannette Barteck
Wisconsin

MOUNTAIN PLAINS
Connie Kingsley
Missouri

NORTHEAST
Doreen McHugh
Connecticut

SOUTHEAST
Pamela Heesh
Georgia

SOUTHWEST
Shelley Marriott
Utah

WESTERN
Alejandrina Zepeda
Oregon

VIRGINIA
Susan Marihew
Culinary Development Chef Assistant, Office of Food Services, Virginia Beach City Public Schools

WEST VIRGINIA
Billie Jean Holman
Cook, Peterson Central Elementary School, Lewis County Schools

WISCONSIN
Jeannette Barteck
Cook, Southern Bluffs Elementary School, La Crosse School District
2022-23 STATE ASSOCIATION HIGHLIGHTS

- Continued to advocate for the Free Meals for All initiative and successfully secured funding for free breakfast for all students for the 2023 and 2024 school years.
- Hosted two legislative visits in Harrisburg, Penn., and a virtual meeting with state legislators.
- Held an in-person conference and professional development opportunities for the first time since the start of the pandemic.
- Created the Edward J. Schindel Industry Partner of the Year award to recognize outstanding contributions from industry members.
- Established itself as the voice for child nutrition in Pennsylvania with a seat on the Governor’s Food Policy Council.

1,001+ MEMBERSHIP DIVISION
GEORGIA
President: Alyssia Wright, Ed.S.

- Hosted “Heartbeats on a Mission” and “Adopt-A-Heartbeat” membership drives to exceed the 2022-23 membership goal of 2% by 377 members, winning SNA’s Fall Membership award.
- Hosted professional development and industry-partnered events such as the Equipment Academy, Industry Seminar and Fall Expo to encourage attendees to connect with vendors.
- Welcomed more than 1,100 attendees at GSNA’s 68th Annual Conference and debuted the Cooking with Heart culinary demonstrations program featuring three local chefs.
- Digitally relaunched Georgia Gems magazine as a resource for members and industry partners.
- Embraced social media marketing to increase Facebook followers by 4.9%, Instagram followers by 23.11% and Twitter followers by 2.27%.

501-1,000 MEMBERSHIP DIVISION
PENNSYLVANIA
President: Megan Schaper, SNS
1-500 MEMBERSHIP DIVISION
CONNECTICUT
President: Erin Perpetua

2022-23 STATE ASSOCIATION HIGHLIGHTS

- Testified several times in person before the State Legislature, including in front of the Appropriations Committee, to advocate for free meals for all in Connecticut.
- Continued to regularly offer Focus Fridays, a mentoring program and educational trainings for members.
- Hosted March Menu Madness—a new event offered for members to share new and creative menu ideas.
- Joined the CT Farm Collaborative and became a leading member of the School Meals 4 All CT coalition.

Listen into SNA's brand-new podcast, "School Food for Thought," a valuable source of insights and knowledge about the latest trends and timely topics in school nutrition!
Earn up to 0.5 CEUs per episode for listening.

Listen on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts or online at www.schoolnutrition.org/podcast
**President's Award of Service**

_in honor of Thelma Flanagan_

Amanda Bridges-Dunn, Alabama  
Trevor Bridgewatter, SNS, Alaska  
Cynthia T. Gammon, MS, Arkansas  
Jennifer Davis, SNS, California  
Molly Brandt, RD, SNS, Colorado  
Erin Perpetua, Connecticut  
Amanda Nask, MS, RD, SNS, Delaware  
Alyssa L. Davis Wright, Ed.S., Georgia  
Anji Branch, BS, SNS, Idaho  
Michele Hepner, Illinois  
Christine Clarahan, MS, RDN, SNS, Indiana  
Billie Veach, Iowa  
Karla Capansky, Kansas  
Leah Feagin, SNS, Kentucky  
Lucretia Jones Hertzock, MS, RD, LDN, SNS, Louisiana  
Whitney Thornton, Maine  
Megan Doran, SNS, Maryland  
Mary Darnton, SNS, Michigan  
Cheryl Pick, CDM, CFPP, Minnesota  
Keba Laird, EdD, MBA, RDN, ACSM EP-C, SNS, Mississippi  
Linda Webster, Missouri  
Renata Nichols, FSD, Montana  
Shelia Sanford, Nebraska  
Rhonda A Peckham, SNS, New Hampshire  
Hallie Berutich, RD, SNS, New Jersey  
Marie E. Johnson, SNS, New Mexico  
Caitlin Lazarski, MS, RD, SNS, New York  
Ruth McDowell, MS, North Carolina  
Cindy Hogenson, RDN, North Dakota  
Janelle Brunswick, SNS, Ohio  
Shonia Hall, RPS, SNS, Oklahoma  
Debby Webster, SNS, Oregon  
Megan Schaper, SNS, Pennsylvania  
Donna Davis, South Carolina  
Rhonda Ramsdell, CDM, CFPP, South Dakota  
Peggy Hamby, Tennessee  
Darin Crawford, MBA, Texas  
Candace Parr, CHES, Utah  
Harley Sterling, SNS, Vermont  
Edwina Forrest, MBA, RD, SNS, Virginia  
Caitlin Harrison, NDTR, Wisconsin  
Gina Blackburn, Wyoming

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Audrey Hamilton  
**Director of School Nutrition**  
Clayton County School District, Georgia  
Recruited 390 new SNA members during 2022-23 membership year.

Over her decades-long career in school nutrition and 15 years as an SNA member, Audrey Hamilton has become a powerful voice for the Association—even though K-12 foodservice isn’t where she got her professional start.

In fact, Hamilton began her foodservice career while she was still in college, working part-time in her university’s campus dining and catering department. After graduating, she stuck with the field, eventually becoming the Foodservice Director for some of the most prestigious historically Black universities in the U.S. After finally making her transition to the K-12 school foodservice field in 1998, she became a member of Georgia School Nutrition Association in 1999 and the National Association in 2007.

Since then, Hamilton has gone above and beyond in encouraging her peers to join SNA alongside her, recruiting an astonishing 390 new Association members during the 2022-23 membership year.

“I believe that being a member of an organization that aligns specifically with your career is important,” said Hamilton, who recognizes that newcomers to the field and school nutrition veterans alike can find value in being an SNA member. “I encourage my peers in other school districts, and [those] who are new to the profession, to be a voice at the table. Get involved with an organization that will support your needs and help build and guide your career with opportunities for professional development, networking, legislative activities, scholarships and sustainable relationships.”

Hamilton explains that membership perks include click-of-a-button resources that are vital to staying abreast of the latest trends and changes in the K-12 industry.

“K-12 is not a fixed environment, but a fluid environment that is likely to change repeatedly and unexpectedly based on the weather, laws, diseases and the availability of goods and services,” she explained. “SNA is in-tune with these changes and provides the information and resources to help us act in an ever-changing environment. For operators like myself and others, we need to have timely information to be successful in this industry—that is why SNA membership is more important now than ever before.”