

Mush On

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A Note from the State Association President

Sue Lampert

My time as being AKSNA President is coming to an end. I am not sure where the eighteen months have gone but it was a busy and rewarding experience to serve as Alaska's State President in the School Nutrition Association.

I am so proud of all our members who exceeded what was expected of them during the Covid-19 pandemic. I loved hearing the stories of how you delivered meals to children using school busses, stood outside during a snowstorm to hand out meals to families and added weekend meals to ensure that the children were fed seven days a week. You all are my School Lunch Hero!

I would like to close by saying thank you to the AKSNA executive board who have served along with me. I would also like to wish our new incoming President Sandie Ponte and President- Elect Trevor Bridgewater the best of luck in the next upcoming year.

I would also like to give a very special thank you to Past President Jo Dawson whose commitment to AKSNA and child nutrition is nothing more than amazing.

Enjoy your summer and I will "see" you in the fall!

Respectively,

Sue Lampert
AKSNA President

Congratulations to the 2021 AKSNA High School Graduation Award Recipients

AKSNA Scholarship Committee

Three graduating seniors will each receive a \$750 gift to support their post-secondary endeavors. Learn more about our three award recipients and read excerpts from each of their essays on Food Insecurity.

Congratulations:

- Alexander Colvin,
- Jenae Pusich, and
- Kyle Richardson

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Juneau Schools, NMS Present Virtual Chef Day with Real Food

Adrienne Schwartz, MBA, SNS



NMS Chef Day at Juneau School District provided an opportunity for the JSD Food Service Staff to step out of the kitchen and teach students about nutrition, food preparation, kitchen safety, and careers in the culinary industry.

Considering the circumstances, this year, NMS, the Juneau School District Food Service provider, presented a virtual Chef Day event for students fulfilling its commitment to nutrition and culinary career education. Virtual? Yes, instead of our project team visiting JSD schools for the special lunch hour event, NMS worked with a local production company to create a short video. The video provided culinary education, a cooking demonstration and information about careers in the culinary industry.

JSD hosted NMS Chef Day on Thursday, March 18. The video was viewed in classrooms, cafeterias and online for remote learners. 1075 meals were served that day. The main course of Mac & Cheese was the very meal that was used in the cooking demonstration along with a blood orange, which also made an appearance in the video.

Feedback from school administrators was positive as well. The principal at Floyd Dryden, Kristy Germain said, "At FDMS, we got positive feedback for playing the video in the Commons while students were getting their meals. Many staff members were able to eat as well and were very appreciative. Our Life Skills classes were able to watch the video in class and appreciated having the materials to support Chefs Day." Another principal, Joanna Hinderberger, from Riverbend Elementary had this to say about NMS Chef Day, "We had positive feedback from Chef Day! Overall kids enjoyed the mac and cheese and appreciated the variety. We also had an increase in participation on that day. Thank you!"

State Agency Update

Jo Dawson, MS, SNS

Summer is knocking on the door, here's to hoping for wonderful weather and time for friends and family. A few things of note before summer break:

1. P-EBT: remember to make sure the families at your schools have up-to-date addresses on file and if you are a school district that accepts applications, you'll want to assess those before break. Students eligible for free or reduced-price meals at the end of the school year will be eligible for P-EBT benefits for this past school year and summer too. Applications received in the summer for students not previously eligible will be eligible for summer benefits. For more information on P-EBT, please see our website at <https://education.alaska.gov/cnp/pandemic-ebt>.
2. Emergency Operating Costs: USDA has authorized funds to schools to help make up for lost revenue last spring (March – June 2020). For each month USDA revenue from 2020 is compared to the same month in 2019. Any loss of revenue is then multiplied by 55% (except March which is again reduced by half). Notices of grant award will be sent to districts in June and distribution should be made early July.
3. CEP Data: Although many district will probably opt for waivers to operate under Seamless Summer Option with the higher reimbursement rate, don't let that stop you from assessing Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) data. Even if you don't operate under CEP this next year,

your rate may have improved and you want to take advantage of that by locking it in as it is good for 5 years.

4. Round Tables: Since March 2020 we have been holding roundtable meetings nearly every Wednesday to discuss USDA policy, state waivers, and other operating issues. These roundtables will continue into the summer. Please contact Elizabeth Seitz at Elizabeth.seitz@alaska.gov to register if you are not on her mailing list.
5. Annual Training: Annual training will be held the week of July 26, 2021, please contact Debbie Soto to register or get more information Debbie.soto@alaska.gov.

With that I wish you all a wonderful summer,

Jo

Getting More from SNA Starts with You

Gavin M. Northey, MBA, SNS

Each day, dedicated SNA members, like yourself, feed America's school children, supporting the mission from kitchens and offices across the country from Utqiagvik to Key West. SNA member-volunteers such as your AKSNA Executive Board support child nutrition by advancing professional development and advocating for our mission and needs to national and state legislatures as well as industry representatives.

I recently read a Facebook comment complaining that SNA does not sufficiently represent its members before Congress and needs to do more. I was reminded of a line from former President John F. Kennedy's inaugural speech, "ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country."

Likewise, we as SNA members should ask what we can do to support SNA, an organization that ultimately benefits us. Volunteering to serve on the AKSNA board, committee, or a national SNA committee is one way. Many of us do not have the time for such a commitment, but there are many other ways you can contribute to SNA which require much less time.

One such way is simply sharing your own stories of successes, challenges, opportunities, and needs. These can be shared in this state newsletter, the *Mush On*, to inspire and educate your colleagues across this great state. Your stories can also be shared with our U.S. Congressman and Senators as well as state representatives by our PP&L committee. The few minutes to snap a photo or video or write a short paragraph explaining your story can go a long way. No one knows your story like you do.

The direction of an organization depends upon those who actively participate. When you choose to contribute a little, or a lot, of your time and talents, you become a part of the progress and direction of the organization.

Due to Production Issues: Managing Inventory through a Pandemic

Trevor Bridgewater, SNS

"Sorry Johnny, we are all out of that right now..."

As students are coming back to schools in greater numbers School Food Authorities are having to increase production on a weekly basis. Forecasting needs and placing orders based on historical data are less effective for meeting needs because of factors such as all meals being free and students learning from home. Having a good relationship with your distributor used to be enough to get supplies in a rush but now national and international production shortages due to the global pandemic has

everyone searching for items that were never issues in the past. Here in Alaska we are already limited in the number of distributors and vendors available to our programs. Packaging and paper goods have become scarce and fresh items such as milk are also starting to be affected. These scenarios make you want to have a hoarding mentality and buy all the available items you can find, but that doesn't make financial sense when trying to maintain your budget for the rest of the department. I wish there were an easy solution that won't impact the offerings to our students.

The production issues are supposed to be a temporary problem and as they say, "this too shall pass" but in the meantime solutions have to be found. Sharing with your neighbor, whether it is school to school or district to district can help us all get through these times. Reaching out to brokers and even manufactures to let them know how outages are impacting your menu is important communication. We all have been affected by the pandemic but with price increases on almost all items customer service shouldn't be out of stock as well. By keeping the pressure on our vendors to deliver what was agreed, we are keeping our commitment to our customers for the products and services we advertise.

The long-term impact of this pandemic will not be known for a while but with USDA approving free meals for SY21-22 participation should continue to increase and the demand for our industry specific products will as well. So be the "squeaky wheel" and hold your vendors to their word because the more of us that speak up the better chance that we can continue to feed students nutritious meals.

2021 AKSNA High School Graduation Award Recipients

AKSNA Scholarship Committee

Three graduating seniors will each receive a \$750 gift to support their post-secondary endeavors

Alexander Colvin graduated from Kotzebue High School in Kotzebue and will attend University of Alaska Southeast. Colvin is the son of Amber Colvin from Northwest Arctic Borough School District.

Being efficient with what we already have could be much more beneficial to those in need because that means that the government may not have to step in as much. This means that the government could put more funding towards providing new jobs to aid those unemployed and in poverty, and the contributions from others would be even more beneficial as this would give more options as to where their contributions can help.

Jenae Pusich graduated from Juneau-Douglas High School in Juneau, she has not selected a post-secondary institution. Pusich is the daughter of Catherin Pusich from Juneau School District.

I am humbly aware the reason I am not familiar with food insecurity is because I have never experienced this insecurity and I am now also aware that there are over 37 million people that have food insecurity in the United States... I think it starts with awareness. Many of us are not thinking about the 37 million people who are wondering where their next meal is coming from, but it is possible we can think about the 990 children in our hometown that have food insecurity.

Kyle Richardson graduated from S.A.V.E High School in Anchorage and will attend AVTEC Alaska. Richardson is the son of Karen Richardson from Anchorage School District.

Food insecurities have always been around, however due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, light has been shed on this subject, and has raised awareness about how critical food service and their employees are to every community... Although the COVID-19 global pandemic had hardships on the world, one of the silver-linings that came out of it was the issue of food insecurity and how people come together during the worst of times, to make sure people are fed.



Registration is Now Open for Virtual ANC!

The School Nutrition Event of the Year has gone virtual! Registration is now open for #ANC21, July 12-15, 2021. SNA is laser-focused on bringing members the same exceptional [keynote speakers, pre-conference workshops, educational sessions, exhibits, networking events](#) and opportunities to connect as at an in-person event. We will be limiting our educational sessions to mostly afternoons (Eastern time zone), and the exhibit booths will be open all day each day. We also have selected a highly robust virtual experience platform to deliver an event that is as close as possible to the real thing! Plan now to join us and enthusiastically participate as we get ready to “see the possibilities” and “embrace the future!” [Register now.](#)

Opportunity to Participate in a CDC Focus Group

The CDC Foundation is seeking participants for a focus group with school foodservice workers (e.g., food servers, foodservice directors, district-wide managers, school nutritionists, etc.) scheduled for Wednesday, May 19 from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm ET. The goal of the focus group is to help the CDC Foundation learn how foodservice workers have safely provided healthy meals, supported students' food needs during the COVID-19 pandemic, and recommendations for consideration for providing meals to students for the upcoming 2021-2022 academic year.

The discussions will take no more than 1.5 hours and will be recorded only for notetaking validation purposes. All participants' information will be combined and reported out without the use of names. The results will be used to find helpful ways for schools to better support foodservice workers and the important role they play for students for the upcoming school year. Everyone who is selected to participate will receive a \$75 Amazon gift card for their time.

If you would like to join the focus group, please fill out this short survey at bit.ly/K12FoodServiceStaff by Monday, May 10, 2021 at 12:00 pm ET (9:00 am PT). Please note that there are a limited number of spots available and filling out the survey does not guarantee that you will be selected for participation.

If you have any questions, please contact Gizelle Gopez, ggopez@deloitte.com from Deloitte Consulting, LLC.

Upcoming SNA Webinar: A Guide to Reopen Schools: Best Practices in Food Safety and COVID-19 Prevention

Join us Wednesday, May 19 for [A Guide to Reopen Schools: Best Practices in Food Safety and COVID-19 Prevention](#). In this session, CDC and USDA speakers provide an overview of best practices for COVID-19 mitigation and school-reopening. USDA representatives will provide an update on USDA's most

recent waivers and discuss food safety best practices for all service models for back to school planning. A CDC representative will discuss current COVID-19 safety guidance in school food service and serving meals in schools. Speakers will share and discuss materials containing actionable information on best practices for COVID-19 prevention and re-opening schools. [Register now!](#)

Biden Administration Publishes Proposal to Expand Access to Free School Meals

On April 28, the White House announced President Biden's proposal to allow more schools to participate in the essential Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) as part of [The American Families Plan](#). CEP allows qualifying schools and districts to serve free school breakfast and lunch to all students, and this proposal would significantly increase the number of students with access to school meals. This proposal would also [expand direct certification](#) with Medicaid for free and reduced-price meals, as well as a proposed demonstration to provide additional funding to schools exceeding school meal standards. Read SNA's [full press release](#).

Innovative Solutions Showcase On-Demand

If you missed the opportunity to participate in SNA's Innovative Solutions Showcase (ISS), take advantage of the on-demand edition! [Preview](#) the recordings from our industry partners showcasing their new products, services or equipment that you will need for the school year.

SNA Monitors Related Federal Register Notices

SNA monitors the Federal Register for notices impacting school nutrition programs including recent Proposed, Interim, and Final Rules, and changes to existing Rules. Check for updates, including SNA comments, and share your comments on [SNA's Action Network](#).

- **Federal Register: School Meals Operations Study.** FNS published the [Federal Register notice](#), "*Agency Information Collection Activities: School Meals Operations Study: Evaluation of the COVID-19 Child Nutrition Waivers and Child Nutrition Programs.*"

New School Meal Bills Introduced

All school nutrition-related bills and legislation can be found on SNA's [Action Network](#). Three (3) new Federal bill impacting school nutrition programs were introduced in April 2021:

- Reps. Don Young (AK-At Large-R) and Rick Larsen (WA-02-D) introduced [H.R. 783](#), the *Summer Meals Act of 2021*
- Rep. Rosa DeLauro (CT-03-D) introduced [H.R. 2772](#), the *SWEET Act*.
- Senators Cory Booker (NJ-D) and John Cornyn (TX-R) introduced [S. 1421](#), the *Food and Nutrition Education in Schools Act*.

Share your success! Send articles, photos, success stories, and more to share with your colleagues working across the Great State to fuel our future. Email: news@aksna.org.