

SLUSH-ON

April 2023



A Word from Our State President – Trevor Bridgewater

Keep slushing along!



As our days get longer and evidence of winter continues to fade, the natural urge to get outside and enjoy the sun returns. Our yards and trails will continue to be a crunchy icy mess in the morning for a

couple more weeks, but the afternoons and evenings bring soggy snow piles and slushy pathways. An addition to this year's STEPS wellness program is to take advantage of the added resistance sloppy puddles and slushy snow can bring to your exercise routines. Bonus points for completing the spring season without any major physical injuries! Haven't been reaching your daily activity goals? Get out in the yard and use those snow piles for a new full body exercise, the crawl! Celebrate reaching your goals with a stomp that splashes everyone watching wondering if you've finally lost your marbles!

Learn from the children. Take advantage of this incredible exercise opportunity while Mother Nature provides it!

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Staff On!!

The Alaska School Nutrition Association's Definitive Source of Child Nutrition News

Alaska State Agency: Backfilling Vacancies with ChatGPT (AI)

Rob Ottik

Alaska's state agency has seen significant turnover this year. The Child Nutrition Programs Manager, NSLP Coordinator, SFSP Coordinator, and School Health and Wellness Specialist have all retired or moved on to new positions. "Ensuring sufficient support for Alaska's school meal programs remains a top priority," said Alaska Department of Education and Early Development Commission Otto Mason.

Mason said that Department staff began feeding emails and responses to and from all of Alaska's state agency into ChatGPT and it was able to respond to technical questions and provide regulatory and policy guidance, sometimes even successfully. The State has entered into a five-year agreement with State Agency Solutions, LLC, a Cleveland-based company that has installed over seven different Stage Agency management plans. This will be State Agency's first Child Nutrition program; five of its clients are state Division of Motor Vehicles, and the other two clients are Medicare.

Nadia Botnit, State Agency's President and CEO said they have invested a substantial amount of time to prepare for their first Child Nutrition state agency contract. "We've spent over six workdays preparing for this contact," Botnit said, "I know that doesn't sound like a lot, but in computer time that's like two or three human lifetimes." "Only one decision remains," said Mason, "we're undecided whether or not the AI should have human names and lifelike 3-D avatars."

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To Be Determined

Personal Expert Eating Posse

Personal Expert Eating Posse or PEEPs are here to save the day! This cluster of sweet food warriors are usually found in the spring time, but through an agreement with their union, we may see PEEPs year round in every school kitchen. Known for keeping their dead eyes focused on pressuring you into one more bite of chocolate, PEEPS will use their powers of persuasion to get kids to try that squash and take those green beans. Not particularly known for their cooking savvy, PEEPs are quick learners and do not give up. Minor issues such as melting when close to a heat source and bloating when exposed to water are being addressed through equipment grants available through USDA. Look for PEEPs in a school in your community, they traditionally come in groups of 5.



Anchorage schools deploy Japanese-style vending machines in lieu of filling vacancies

Ven Dhing

After two years of struggle to staff its school cafeterias, the Anchorage School District announced all schools had fully re-opened school meal programs including breakfast, lunch, and CACFP suppers (where applicable).

ASD has invested in 55 Japanese-style vending machines to support its Student Nutrition Department and an additional unit is being tested by nursing staff. The 55 Japanese-style vending machines can serve hot, cold, and ambient-temperature foods and can fully comply with offer versus serve.

“We’ve got hot soups, chicken-in-a-can, pastas, ramens, and more,” Vendi Meele, ASD Student Nutrition Director told Alaska’s Snooze Source. “We have whole grain bread in a can, whole grain rolls in a can, and on special days, we have birthday cake in a can.”

ASD’s Purchasing Director Oupsy Daisy said that a typo resulted in ASD purchasing a vending machine that is now being tested by the District’s nursing staff. “We wrote that we needed ‘ambient’ vending machines but I guess we accidentally missed the ‘t,’” Daisy said, “So we got a machine designed specifically for medication and we can’t return it because of the shipping cost, but then a nurse saw it and asked to use it to dispense over-the-counter medication.”

Reporters attempted to call the nurse to ask how the Ambien machine is working but were told by school staff the nurse was sleeping.

Ok, but seriously, lets...

MUSH-ON

April 2023

Spring Membership Report

Tanya Dube, SNS, Membership Chair
[aksna email address here](#)



I am thrilled for the opportunity to serve the members of AKSNA as your Membership Chair. Across the great state of Alaska, we are 91 members strong, 7% down from last year, but we are on the upswing. We are very close to reaching our 2023 membership goal of 100 members. Spread the word about the benefits of membership to your colleagues and co-workers, and we will hit that goal in no time!

By belonging to AKSNA, you are joining 50,000+ committed members across the United States who have committed to feeding the future. SNA membership provides educational and advocacy resources, as well as professional development and networking opportunities that support your career and enhance your school nutrition program.

School District-Owned Membership

I encourage District Directors to take advantage of School District Membership (SDM), a membership alternative designed to make it easy to manage and pay for memberships, allowing their school nutrition professionals to enjoy the many benefits of SNA. The membership is transferable to another employee in the same membership category if the original assignee leaves the district. Please contact me if you need assistance setting this up; I'm happy to help.

Certification & Credentialing

Enhance your professional image with supervisors, parents, and administrators and stay current on the latest issues and solutions related to your job by becoming a Certificate holder or a School Nutrition Specialist (SNS). Certificates are available in Levels 1-4. The SNS Credential is the pinnacle of excellence and achievement that reflects what it takes to manage school nutrition programs in today's challenging climate. More information on these programs can be found in the Careers & Training area of the SNA website.

Save the Date

56th Annual AKSNA Conference, BP Energy Center, Anchorage, AK

Pre-Conference: Jan. 22, 2024

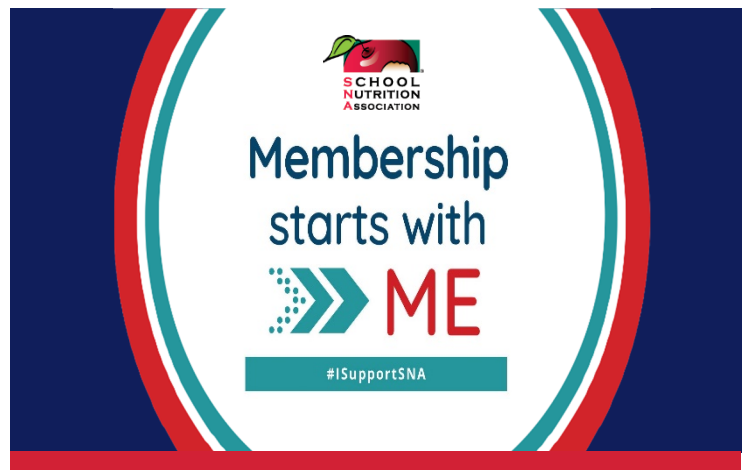
Education Sessions and Vendor Show: January 23-25, 2024

SNA is excited announce the all-new monthly membership campaign, Membership Starts with Me #ISupportSNA.

From August through May, this revamped approach to the Annual Membership Campaign will have randomly selected winners and prizes each month. This is a great opportunity to promote recruiting throughout the year and provide more opportunities for member engagement and recognition at the National and State levels – members can also win great prizes!

Monthly campaign prizes include:

- Free SNA membership
- Free Training Zone class
- SNA Shop gift card



To be eligible for a monthly prize, members just need to recruit at least ONE new SNA member. Winners will be selected through a random prize drawing each month.* In addition to winning a great prize, monthly campaign winners will be showcased on SNA social media platforms. We encourage you to share the campaign and rally members to recruit!

Public Policy & Legislation

What's new?

Senator Lisa Murkowski's office has teamed with AKSNA to advocate to fully fund the Meals To You program for FY23-24, in addition to filing an Agriculture Appropriations Bill to try to block some impending USDA nutrition standard changes to the NSLP (88 FR 8050).

Senator Dan Sullivan's office is looking to introduce a bill (MAZ23102) in the Senate that would push more Alaskan seafood into school lunches across the country.

Be in the Know!

USDA currently has a comment period that closes May 8th 2023 for the "Child Nutrition Programs: Community Eligibility Provision – Increasing Options for Schools", which would lower the minimum ISP from 40% to 25%. While this is an exciting prospect, here's what you need to know: lowering the ISP without increasing the multiplier can mean Local Education Agencies (LEA's) will pay a larger percentage to cover the cost of meals. We strongly encourage each district to counsel together and submit comments regarding this proposal. For more information, in addition to where to comment, please visit <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/community-eligibility-provision>.

The Alaska School Nutrition Association strongly encourages all members to be actively engaged in USDA proposed rules and regulations. If you need assistance or have any questions, please feel free to contact the Public Policy & Legislative Chair, Rachel Spencer, at rspencer@yksd.com.