

Bravo!

A CELEBRATION OF SNA
NATIONAL AWARD WINNERS

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Beth Wallace,
MBA, SNS
SNA President, 2021-22



Patricia Montague,
FASAE, CAE
SNA Chief Executive Officer

This simple exclamation says so much about how school nutrition professionals have triumphed in the last year in the face of unprecedented challenges. **Bravo** for finding creative solutions when a broken supply chain let you down. **Bravo** for continuing to make the cafeteria a warm and welcoming place, even when you were short-handed in the kitchen or on the serving line. **Bravo** for resilience, for cooperation, for innovation and for commitment.

Bravo also for writing letters to lawmakers on behalf of the children and families in your community. **Bravo** for stepping up to volunteer service where and when you were able. And here, in this publication, **bravo** to our 2021-22 state, regional and national award winners. You fill us with enormous pride, respect and appreciation.

Winners of the national Employee, Manager, Director and Industry Member of the Year awards were first announced in May, and the recipients of the President's Award of Excellence, Recruiter of the Year and other categories honoring achievements by state association leaders were shared with their states in late June. We offer our heartiest congratulations to all for your dedication and service.

You are receiving this booklet prior to SNA's Annual National Conference

(#ANC22) in Orlando, Fla., where we are looking forward to seeing many of you as we return to an in-person format for this signature event! In the meantime, we encourage you to share this publication and celebrate these honorees with coworkers, supervisors, district leadership, Boards of Education, parents, students, teachers, colleagues, family, friends and many others in your community.

We also extend our deepest thanks to all those who took the time to write nominations; to the state and national leaders who served as judges; and to the Headquarters staff who manage the complex awards program. And most important, we thank all of SNA's members and friends for *everything* you do that is worthy of standing ovations day after day! **Bravo!**

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Director of the Year

Robert Rolfe

Henderson County Public Schools, North Carolina

Robert Rolfe realized at an early age that he liked to cook. After getting very acquainted with his own kitchen at home (“My older brother and I discovered that if we liked to eat, we ‘liked’ to cook, too!”), he found his first job as a teen in a restaurant kitchen, and moved up quickly through the ranks. “I was employed with a private clubs corporation, which provided excellent, high-end culinary training,” recounts Rolfe. “I was really interested in the artistic end of the culinary field—in presentation.” He discovered that he could hone his skills in this area as a banquet/catering chef and subsequently made this his professional niche for the better part of his career.



It’s a job that can take its toll—standing on his feet for 12 hours a day and often working all seven days in the week—and when it no longer held the same appeal, Rolfe decided to pursue an undergraduate degree in nutrition and dietetics. He started at a nearby community college, Asheville-Buncombe Tech, and eventually transferred to Western Carolina University, where he completed his studies and earned a Bachelor of Science.

One advantage of going to school on a part-time basis was having the luxury of time to scope out job possibilities before graduation, among them positions in K-12 school



nutrition, although he can’t remember exactly how the segment came to his attention. “I was looking for a normal Monday-through-Friday job,” Rolfe recounts. In pursuit of his degree, he was exposed to different professional practices. “I became very interested in community nutrition. I had done work with food banks over the years, and the whole notion of communities and nutrition intrigues me.”

He wound up applying for a child nutrition supervisor’s position at the school district of a neighboring county, “But when they called me for an interview, I didn’t remember applying!” Upon hearing more about the position responsibilities—75% being in schools and 25% administrative—and, of course, the straight-forward schedule, Rolfe’s interest was piqued. “It would be hands-on work and an opportunity to use my recently acquired knowledge plus my lifetime experience,” he says. It turned out to be a great match!

Rolfe has been with the Child Nutrition Services department of the 23-school Henderson County (N.C.) Public Schools system for 15 years, and he has served as its director for the last eight. “When my former director, Christina Dodd, announced that her family was moving to Colorado, it was a shock. I really, really, *really* liked her; she was a great teacher and mentor and did a lot to transform the program,” Rolfe says, remembering that he knew he would be filling some big shoes when he decided to apply to be her successor.



Robert Rolfe

Child Nutrition Director

Henderson County Public Schools,
North Carolina

SNA Member Since

2008

Education

Western Carolina University (BS)

**Strangest Food
I Ever Tried**

We went to Spain for our 30th wedding anniversary, and I was bent on trying local traditional dishes. I had Face & Snout—it was the pig's snout and a hunk of its face cooked into a viscous stew. Really rich, intense flavor, but the rubbery texture made it a challenge to eat.

Family

Wife Nadeen (married 36 years),
Sons Patrick and Dietrich, Daughter
Lillian and Grandson Corbin (8).

It's the kids who keep Rolfe inspired in his daily work. Each age group offers different delights and opportunities to engage. "Every year, the kindergarteners show up, scared to death, holding their tray at head-level at the tray line. They are so cute, and they ask great questions," Rolfe cites.

Of course, the challenge for imparting nutrition lessons gets a little tougher as they grow. "Middle school is interesting; you can break through, but they are more interested in themselves and their social group. But then there is an abrupt change. In high school, students are suddenly adults, and they communicate as adults; you can have meaningful conversations with them—humorous ones, too! You get good feedback from teens, and they often are willing to listen to the 'why' we can or can't do something with our cafeteria service."

This wide range of interactions is what Rolfe finds most interesting about this foodservice segment. "From the beginning, I enjoyed being in the schools with the students and, of course, getting to know and work with all our amazing employees." Making the most of creative opportunities—like establishing a successful, two-vehicle "Meals on the Bus" initiative for summer foodservice; launching second-chance breakfast at select middle and high schools; opening three new kitchens; starting a composting program at six elementary schools; and hosting an annual "Top Scholars" banquet—has been another plus.

Dodd had introduced Rolfe to SNA when he was a supervisor. He admits to some initial reluctance to join, centered on the prospective time commitment of getting involved. Hadn't he just transitioned from a go-go 70-hour work week to a more manageable 40-hour alternative? It was the inspiration of a colleague's growth that helped him see the advantages of membership more clearly.

"One of our managers at the time was really involved [with SNA], and she is an example of what the Association can do for people," Rolfe explains. "It provided her with peer support, educational support and a template for how to better yourself professionally. I could see the advantages of belonging, including those networking possibilities. I did join and after the first couple of meetings and observing Christine networking and seeing what she got out of membership, I thought, 'I want that, too.'"

Today, as a director, Rolfe promotes SNA membership to his entire team. "It's easier to learn from others than from a textbook," he says of the value of professional membership. "Meeting and networking with others who have 20 or 30 years of experience and know the ins and outs of the business, is a real shortcut to getting ahead of the learning curve. *That's* the SNA benefit."

Manager of the Year

Sharon Owensby, SNS

Lee's Summit R-7 School District, Missouri

Some of the words used to describe this year's national Manager of the Year honoree include "positive," "creative," "service" and "professionalism," and the superlatives don't end there. As district Catering Manager working out of Lee's Summit High School, Sharon Owensby, SNS, does it all, and she does it *exceptionally* well, reports her boss and nominator, Lee's Summit Nutrition Services Director Lori Danella, SNS. From running a successful catering business to conducting staff trainings and being an active SNA member, Owensby brings attention to detail to everything she does, and she has earned a reputation for her quality work—not to mention her kindness.



Like many school nutrition professionals, Owensby was working in commercial foodservice when she started to seek a career alternative that would offer a better work/life balance while she raised her five daughters. "I was looking for a job that would better suit being a working mom," she explains. "I liked the idea of no weekends, no holidays and summers off. Now, it's been 25 years since I gave cafeteria subbing a try and discovered, "Wow, I really like this!" My kids were young, and I could be off work by the time they were home from school. I could attend all of their activities. And I was home for the holidays!"

Everything Owensby learned about school meals, she learned on the job. She'd had no personal experiences—good or bad—with school lunch when she was a student, walking home, a block away from her small parochial school, for the midday meal or brown bagging it at her cafeteria-less high school. "I didn't know anything about school lunch until having a conversation with some ladies who worked at my kids' school, who were talking about how they needed help in the cafeteria," Owensby recounts. Substituting soon turned into a full-time gig, and she rose to take on managerial responsibilities, first at the middle school, then the high school and, since August 2021, as the catering manager for the department.

Launched in 2019 to keep the millions of dollars spent with outside caterers within the Lee's Summit district, the LSR7

Nutrition Services catering program is a service for meetings and events at 31 different school and office sites across the district, ranging from staff meetings, recognition events and classroom celebrations to team banquets, cookouts, homecomings and proms. Owensby was the inspiration for the program, credits Danella. "She always catered trays and cookies for various events at her school. I saw how much she was doing at her building—and the funds it was bringing in—and made the decision to create a program and hire a manager to cover the entire district," she recounts. While Owensby *didn't* apply for the inaugural position, she regularly assisted the catering manager. So, when the position was vacated in 2021, Danella coaxed Owensby into applying.






Sharon Owensby,
 SNS

Catering Manager

Lee's Summit R-7 School District,
Missouri

SNA Member Since

1997

**Favorite School
Meal Today**

Taco Salad

**Favorite Dish to Cook
for Family**

When my now-adult daughters were growing up, a family favorite comfort meal was chicken tenders with mashed potatoes and corn.

Family

Five daughters, seven grandchildren (two girls and five boys, so I'm finally "learning" about boys) and lots of "grandpuppies," too!

Today, she manages the catering program from the same high school she used to manage, which proved valuable in helping her successor transition into that role, says Danella. And when Owensby doesn't have catering jobs, she assists at the school's cafe, working with staff and students who know her well. But catering keeps Owensby very busy, with orders coming every day—sometimes as many as four or five in a day. "She recently did an evening barbecue event for students and families at one elementary school and served more than 700 people!" says Danella. While Owensby has managed beautifully with the assistance of staff members eager for extra hours, Danella says the program has grown so much that she's authorizing an additional position to support Owensby.

"I guess I'm a foodie," says Owensby of her enthusiasm for menu items she has served in the cafeteria and elsewhere. "I like to look at food shows and magazines for inspiration. I am always trying to see what's popular in the community, what restaurants the kids are going to and what foods they like. At school, they like stuff they can grab-and-go, especially at the high school level when they are busy and might not stay in the cafeteria to eat. They want something simple they can take with them, like Bento boxes, and eat while they work on a project."

Owensby's ongoing advice for her colleagues throughout the district is to remember that the cafeteria is so much more than a mere meal to the students they serve. "When I'm training new people I say, 'Lunchtime is their break; it's their good time,' so when students come through our line, they need a good lunch—and a smile," she says. "The cafeteria needs to be a happy place. They have enough problems in their classrooms and everywhere else, so we try to make it welcoming and fun."

Owensby is similarly passionate about supporting her staff and fellow SNA members. She has served twice as local chapter president and regularly assists in fundraising projects to help bring other managers to Association conferences. Throughout her career with the district, she has consistently been a cheerleader for SNA membership and helps new staff members to join and earn their Level One SNA Certificate in School Nutrition.

"When I came to this district, they recommended SNA membership, and once I started going to the meetings, I realized it was a great way to network with people—even people in your own district," says Owensby. "You don't necessarily see the other managers when you're all in your own kitchens. Meetings give us time to talk and catch up and meet new people. There is always a great guest speaker to learn from, but just connecting with each other, realizing we're not alone, we're in this together, is so valuable. I enjoy being part of something bigger—it gives you a team feeling and confidence in knowing you're doing a good thing."

Employee of the Year

Stephanie Sheley

Holmen High School, School District of Holmen, Wisconsin

“From the day I interviewed Stephanie, I knew she was going to be a little bit different as far as her ability to really change the culture of the kitchen in our high school,” says Michael Gasper, SNS, Director of Nutrition Services for School District of Holmen (Wis.). “We were in a state of transition, and she came in and was able to instantly connect with our kids.”

That was nine years ago, and Stephanie Sheley remains a passionate, enthusiastic force of fun on the team. What’s her secret? First, it’s the genuine love she has for the students she serves, and second, it’s the numerous opportunities she’s given to be creative with both meals and the cafeteria environment.

“This job—it’s fun!” says Sheley. “I love talking, goofing around and dancing with the kids. Hanging around young people makes you feel young. Also, I am creative—I got my Bachelor of Fine Arts in photography—and I am so glad I can still use my artistic abilities in so many ways in my work.”

From painting murals on cafeteria walls to decorating monthly chalkboard displays to crafting eye-catching, delicious fruit parfaits, Sheley brings an artist’s eye to everything she does at Holmen High School—and beyond. She has painted murals at two of the district’s elementary school cafeterias, and Gasper reports that when a professional graphics company was hired to explore opportunities to improve the décor at those sites, “They insisted that the murals go untouched, and they developed new graphics around *her* color schemes.”



Salad bars are a particular point of pride for Sheley, and they have become a student-favorite. Gasper insists they rival “any restaurant in our area,” noting that regular praise is conveyed by parents, as well.

“I’m very particular,” remarks Sheley. “I take great pride in my salad bar. I like it clean with fresh veggies, and I like to introduce new toppings to keep it interesting.” She also creates unique grab-and-go salads, including the Strawberry Bacon Feta and the Cranberry Walnut Blue Cheese, as well as standout wraps, with menu items in both categories regularly selling out each day.

Gasper says it’s not just Sheley’s delicious and eye-catching menu craft that makes her serving line the most popular. “It’s a joy to watch her ability to truly connect with students,” he says. “We have over 1,200 kids at that high school, and I believe many kids get in her serving line specifically for the memorable interactions they know they will have with her.”

Gasper continues emphasizing the value of the personal touch. “In schools, it’s not just food we’re serving; we’re serving those individual interactions. Kids see lunch staff every single day, which gives us a unique opportunity to make those connections, and their impact can last a lifetime.”




Stephanie Shelley

Cook

Holmen High School,
School District of Holmen,
Wisconsin

SNA Member Since

2014

Education

University of Wisconsin-Stevens
Point (BFA)

Favorite Dish to Cook

I'm half-Polish, and when I was young, we would celebrate Wigilia, the traditional Christmas Eve vigil supper in Poland. You eat when the first star comes out, and you don't eat any meat—it's kind of being respectful to the animals in the Nativity manger—and so we would eat fish and certain Polish dishes including perogies. I usually make a twice-baked potato and stuff it, and that's what we bring to our huge Christmas celebration.

Family

Married to high school sweetheart
Todd, Daughter Penelope
and Son Xavier

He knows that Sheley works diligently to remember each student's name to ensure that personal bond. "She's just one of those people students are going to remember when they're 40 or 50 and think 'That lunch lady was really incredible!' because she has that ability to make everybody feel welcomed and important."

Sheley also brings her fun, infectious energy to local SNA chapter meetings and other conferences. A positive and active participant at these, she is always willing to pitch in and help organize and even run meetings when needed, says Gasper. He describes her as an "unofficial leader" who is always willing to go the extra mile, whether that means staying late to finish a project or appearing in a Nutrition Services staff recruitment video to be shared with the community via social media.

"It's been so fun over the years to see her grow, says Gasper. Even though they have been short-handed, Sheley continues to exceed her required annual training hours and is working toward her certificate, Gasper reports. When Sheley attends a meeting or a conference, she "puts what she learns into action" in an effort to improve.

"We go to the annual Wisconsin SNA conference every year, and it's a great place to learn and bring ideas back to your kitchen," says Sheley. "You keep up on rules and regulations, you meet other people and exchange ideas on what's working and what's not. And for our staff, it's a great road trip and bonding opportunity that keeps our unit nice and strong."

"We are the largest group at the summer Wisconsin SNA meeting—they all know the Holmen ladies!" Gasper reports of his team that spans six different school sites. "I look at SNA membership, and conference registration, as a great investment in my team—the bonding, the educational resources and the networking opportunities are all valuable. Plus, it's a reward for a job well done. It's worth every penny."

And while awards and national recognition certainly are nice, Sheley is just as excited to simply be part of a great school nutrition team. She says she's lucky to be surrounded by so many talented colleagues. "We have an amazing staff this year," she reports. "I think we have 'clicked' with personalities and work ethic—we just have a great group."

Her modesty may prevent her from taking credit for that "clicking" of the team, but Gasper doesn't hold back: "She mentors others in the kitchen and sets a positive example each day when she comes to work. She leaves the outside world behind at the door and works to make everyone she encounters feel special through her words, smiles and actions. She is the perfect example of what a school nutrition professional should be!"

Industry Member of the Year

Frank Massabni

Cool Tropics

Like many success stories, Frank Massabni's begins with a combination of vision and talent—and a dash of fate. In 1993, within four short years of moving to the United States at 16, Massabni had founded Tropical Paradise, a frozen drinks company that soon began selling its Cool Tropics product, in tandem with machines, to higher-volume foodservice accounts, such as restaurants, movie theaters and theme parks. To break with its seasonal identity, the company began offering a slush drink, featuring 100% juice and no added sugar, and a decade later, a conversation with then-school nutrition operator Nancy Padrone, RDN, SNS, prompted him to take a serious look at the K-12 segment.

The rest is history. "Our school business grew so quickly, we decided to go all-in and divest the other parts of our business in 2004," Massabni recounts. "Cool Tropics had been the first to market in K-12 with a 100% juice slush dispenser program, followed by a 100% juice slush line of shelf-stable pouches in 2009."

In 2005, Cool Tropics became a national member of SNA, a relationship that has continued uninterrupted to this day. "We love the SNA community and the mission: feeding the future of America. Schools are always first to the front lines to feed



the community in a crisis. We are proud to be associated with that," he says.

Today, with almost 30 years of experience in the school nutrition segment, Massabni has guided his Cool Tropics team through more than a few challenges. In the process, he has discovered that his own leadership style has changed as he's grown and learned from others. One thing that hasn't changed. His belief that it all starts with having a vision.

"Helen Keller was once asked if being blind was the worst thing that can happen to a person, and her answer has stayed with me all of my life," says Massabni. "She replied, 'The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision.'" He continues to explain his leadership philosophy: "As a leader, you evolve over the years, and I'm a different leader than I was six or seven years ago. When you do something for 29 years, you learn to see six or seven or nine steps ahead. Our approach is all-inclusive; we like to debate things, kind of like the British Parliament. People come in with their ideas and vision, and nine times out of ten, we're in agreement. It's the one time out of ten when we're not that's where my job as leader comes in."

Massabni also credits the influence of colleagues, friends and family for the evolution of his leadership style.



Among them is Bill Crosby, a longtime sales rep at Cool Tropics and the person who nominated Massabni for the SNA award. “He’s been a great mentor to me, as has my brother-in-law Don. You pick up different habits from different people.” Crosby makes a point to call out Massabni’s leadership through the COVID-19 pandemic, explaining that he has been a steady force for the whole team at Cool Tropics. “Frank gave us a battle cry during that time: ‘Control the controlables,’” he recounts. “That was so interesting to me because so many things felt *out* of our control, that it affected one’s whole mindset. There were a lot of things happening in our industry and with our customers, but there were things we could do to maintain control of the situation. I thought ‘Control the control-ables’ was a very grounding thing to talk about.”


Frank Massabni
President and CEO
 Cool Tropics
SNA Member Since
 2005
Favorite School Meal
 Chicken nuggets or a good
 old-fashioned American
 cheeseburger!
Family
 Wife Erinn King, Mother Ibtihaj,
 Sisters Ghada and Mayada

SNA membership has also helped Massabni and Cool Tropics navigate the choppy waters of the COVID-19 years. In fact, he credits “the power school nutrition” with a particularly challenging situation he faced with customs officials. “Last year, we had a shipment that was stranded at customs,” he recounts. “We sent a letter explaining that this product was destined for emergency feeding for students in need across the United States, and our shipment was released the same day. *That* is the power of school nutrition. It is no exaggeration to say that our association with SNA has been a big part of who we are today.” In return, Massabni has sought ways to serve his industry colleagues and operator customers within SNA. His thoughtful enthusiasm led to an invitation to serve on the Association’s 2021-24 Strategic Planning Committee, as well as being named Co-Advisor for the 2022 School Nutrition Industry Conference in San Antonio this past January—SNA’s first national event to return to an in-person format. Cool Tropics also has been an active member of the SNA state affiliates in Texas for 10 years, Colorado for six, Florida for five and New York and Massachusetts for four.

As the K-12 segment continues to navigate the challenges of supply chain disruptions, burnout and the ongoing pandemic, Massabni is grateful to be a part of this family—the SNA family—as they carry out meaningful work. “What higher purpose can there be than feeding the future of America? The networking, sharing of ideas, relationships and support systems are invaluable. We are honored to be part of the beautiful K-12 community and that circle of trust that exists among the schools, SNA, fellow industry partners, brokers, distributors and state agencies.” If you had told that 16-year-old immigrant that he would one day be lobbying on Capitol Hill, as a citizen alongside school lunch heroes, he would have said, “That only happens in the movies!”



Congratulations to All State and Regional Employee, Manager and Director Winners!

Employee of the Year

State Winners

ALABAMA

Rita Brannon

Lunchroom Worker, Haleyville
Elementary School, Haleyville City
School District

CALIFORNIA

Joni Delgado

Account Technician, Morongo
Unified School District

DELAWARE

Jennifer Lynn Foraker

Cook/Baker, Central Elementary,
Lake Forest School District

GEORGIA

Robert Johnson

Food Assistant, Morningside
Elementary School, Houston County
Board of Education

ILLINOIS

Tammy Dickey

Foodservice Worker, Johnsburg Junior
High, Johnsburg School District 12

INDIANA

Sara Laboube

Food Service Employee, Belmont,
North Adams Community Schools

KENTUCKY

Jackie Coffey

Food Service Worker, Winburn
Elementary School, Fayette County
Public Schools

MAINE

Angela Fagen

Foodservice Assistant, York High
School, York School Department

MARYLAND

Joseph Baker

Production Center Assistant,
Bel Air Middle School, Harford
County Public Schools

MINNESOTA

Marilyn Veryzer

Nutrition Assistant, Johnsville
Elementary, Anoka-Hennepin Schools

NEBRASKA

Lori Waterman

Kitchen Assistant, Gretna Middle
School, Gretna Public Schools

NORTH CAROLINA

Annie Davis

Cafeteria Assistant, Northwest
Elementary School, Lenoir County
Public Schools

NORTH DAKOTA

Sheena Lee

Administrative Assistant, West Fargo
Public Schools

OHIO

Erna Brace

Cafeteria Worker, Brown Local Schools

OREGON

Lori Dyson

Lead Managing Cook, Estacada High
School, Estacada School District

VIRGINIA

Barbara Donecuff

Baker/Cook, Kellam High School,
Virginia Beach City Schools

WEST VIRGINIA

Anne Marie Philips

Cook, Peterson Central Elementary,
Lewis County Schools

WISCONSIN

Stephanie Sheley

Cook, Holmen High School, School
District of Holmen



Regional Winners

MIDEAST

Jennifer Lynn Foraker

Delaware

MIDWEST

Stephanie Sheley

Wisconsin

NORTHEAST

Angela Fagen

Maine

NORTHWEST

Lori Dyson

Oregon

SOUTHEAST

Annie Davis

North Carolina

SOUTHWEST

--

WEST

Joni Delgado

California

Manager of the Year
in honor of Louise Sublette

State Winners

ALABAMA

Renea Powell

Manager, Hillcrest High School,
Tuscaloosa County Schools

CALIFORNIA

LaShawn Bray

Supervisor II Manager,
Hesperia School District

CONNECTICUT

Deborah Timek

Cafeteria Manager, Thomas Hooker
Elementary, Meriden Public Schools

COLORADO

Crystal Bruns

Kitchen Manager, Caliche School,
RE-1 Valley Schools District

DELAWARE

Jeannette Latchford

Manager, William Penn High Schools,
Colonial School District

FLORIDA

Misty Fried

Food Service Manager, Homosassa
Elementary, Citrus County Schools

GEORGIA

Amber Martin

Manager, Henderson Middle School,
Butts County School System

ILLINOIS

Fawn Felski

Food Service Manager, Conant High
School, Township High School
District 211

INDIANA

Ruth Hacha

Food Service Assistant Manager,
Heritage K-12, East Allen County
Schools

KENTUCKY

Tanya Wilson Rickert

Food Service Manager, Sandersville
Elementary, Fayette County Public
Schools

MAINE

Amy Manning

Kitchen Manager, Windham Primary
School, RSU #14 School District

MINNESOTA

Tracy Alexander

Business Systems Manager, Saint Paul
Public Schools Nutrition Center, Saint
Paul Public Schools

MISSOURI

Sharon Owensby, SNS

Catering Manager, Lee's Summit R-7
School District

NEBRASKA

Sherry Bennett

Manager, Falling Waters Elementary
School, Gretna Public Schools

NEW MEXICO

Kimberly Mendoza

Site Supervisor, Farmington High
School, Farmington Municipal Schools

NORTH CAROLINA

June Rich

School Nutrition Manager, Woodington
Middle School, Lenoir County Public
Schools

NORTH DAKOTA

Elisabeth Wiest

Liberty Middle School, Assistant
Manager, Fargo Public Schools

OHIO

Amy Uecker

Child Nutrition Manager, West
Clermont High School, West Clermont
Local School District

PENNSYLVANIA

Monica Casey

Head Cook, Plymouth Elementary,
Colonial School District

SOUTH CAROLINA

Lisa Hayes

Food Service Manager, Liberty High
School, School District of Pickens
County

TENNESSEE

Tara Scott

School Nutrition Cafeteria Manager,
Franklin County School District

VIRGINIA

Bonnie Gassett

Cafeteria Manager, Landstown High
School, Virginia Beach City Public
Schools

WASHINGTON

Erika Santana

Kitchen Lead, Seahurst Elementary,
Highline Public Schools

WEST VIRGINIA

Sandy Kotson

Cafeteria Manager, John Marshall High
School, Marshall County Schools

WISCONSIN

Maggie Hubbard

Nutrition Team Leader, Prairie View
Elementary, School District of Holmen

Regional Winners

MIDEAST

Amy Uecker

Ohio

NORTHEAST

Deborah Timek

Connecticut

SOUTHEAST

Bonnie Gassett

Virginia

WEST

LaShawn Bray

California

MIDWEST

Sharon Owensby, SNS

Missouri

NORTHWEST

Erika Santana

Washington

SOUTHWEST

Crystal Bruns

Colorado





Director of the Year

State Winners

ALABAMA

Elaine Vaughn

Child Nutrition Program Director,
Russellville City School District

ARIZONA

Elizabeth Thrower

Child Nutrition Director, Yuma School
District One

CALIFORNIA

Vivien Watts

Food Service Director, Alhambra
Unified School District

COLORADO

Danielle Bock, SNS

Director of Nutrition Services,
Greeley-Evans, Weld County School
District

INDIANA

Amanda Worrick

Director of Child Nutrition, Mississinewa
Community Schools

IOWA

Coni Dobbels

Director of Food and Nutrition Services,
Davenport Community School District

KENTUCKY

Michelle Coker, RD, LD, SNS

Child Nutrition Director, Fayette County
Public Schools

MAINE

Kathy Kittridge

Nutrition Services Director, RSU #22

MARYLAND

Jodi Risse, RD, LDN

Supervisor of Food and Nutrition, Anne
Arundel County Public Schools

MINNESOTA

Vickie Speltz

Food Service Director, Lewiston-Altura
Independent School District

MISSOURI

Patti Turner

Food Service Director, Kirbyville R-VI
Schools

MONTANA

Jessa Youngers

Food Service Director, Great Falls
Public School

NEW MEXICO

Sonya Moore

Food Service Director, Hobbs Municipal
Schools

NORTH CAROLINA

Robert Rolfe

Child Nutrition Director, Henderson
County Public Schools

OHIO

Lori Brace

Food Service Supervisor, Wapakoneta
City Schools

PENNSYLVANIA

Allison Kimmel

Nutrition Services Director, Marion
Center Area School District

VIRGINIA

Heather Snead, SNS

Food Service Coordinator, Franklin
County Public Schools

WEST VIRGINIA

Amanda Kimble

Director of Child Nutrition, Tyler County
Schools

WISCONSIN

Bobbie Guyette

Supervisor of School Nutrition, School
District of New Richmond



Regional Winners

MIDEAST

Lori Brace

Ohio

MIDWEST

Coni Dobbel

Iowa

NORTHEAST

Allison Kimmel

Pennsylvania

NORTHWEST

Jessa Youngers

Montana

SOUTHEAST

Robert Rolfe

North Carolina

SOUTHWEST

Danielle Bock, SNS

Colorado

WEST

Elizabeth Thrower

Arizona

President's Award of Excellence

The volunteer leaders of SNA's state affiliates take on an impressive breadth of challenges, ranging from legislative advocacy to membership recruitment to fundraising to organizing dynamic networking events and more. Their efforts are recognized with the President's Award of Service in honor of Thelma Flanagan (page 16). Each year, a few state presidents stand out for their *extraordinary* leadership in successfully implementing strategies that help advance the profession, SNA and their state organization. This year, there are three recipients of the President's Award of Excellence, one in each of SNA's membership divisions: **Kate Murphy, SNA of Connecticut**; **Sharon Glosson, SNS, Texas Association of School Nutrition**; and **Emily Hamlin, SNS, Georgia SNA**. SNA applauds the leadership, innovation and commitment of these deserving individuals. Let their brief reflections here serve as inspiration to future Association leaders.

Kate Murphy, SNS

*Naugatuck Public Schools/Sodexo
School Nutrition Association of Connecticut,
Small Affiliates (1-525) Membership Division*

Q *Tell us which of your achievements as state president make you most proud—and why.*

A There's a lot to choose from—it was a busy year! We advocated relentlessly—along with a coalition of partners—to encourage decision-makers in our state to develop a universal meals program for Connecticut students that would take effect once federal waivers and funding had expired. As a result of our efforts, Connecticut has initiated SMART (School Meals Assistance Revenue for Transitions) Funds, which we hope will lay the groundwork for universal meals in our state soon. We also jumped on every opportunity to tell the school nutrition story in traditional media (television, radio and newspaper), as well as social media.

To help support the professional growth of members, we created an SNS study group and offered the exam in October. Our state now has 13 members who have earned the SNS credential! We continued to offer and promote training to help school nutrition staff meet mandatory hours for professional standards. We pivoted between in-person and virtual events, sometimes with just a few weeks' notice! We also continued our Focus Fridays weekly hour-long discussion group for directors.

I'm also proud to report that we organized our first group volunteering event. A SNACT group volunteered with Connecticut

FoodShare, a statewide food bank and anti-hunger organization, loading more than 4,800 pounds of meat for distribution to hungry families.

Q *How did you and your leadership team innovate throughout the last year?*

A We worked to raise our "social media game," bringing much higher visibility to non-members and providing members with content they could share on their own social media pages. It also gave us a broader platform for advocacy and information sharing among members and the general public.

We also worked to increase awareness of farm-to-school resources among members. One way we did this was featuring an outdoor farmers market at our fall conference. It was a great opportunity for farmers and school nutrition directors to meet in a safe, socially distanced way!

Q *How has the experience of being a state president helped you to grow?*

A I have had a lot more exposure in traditional and social media, being the "face" of Connecticut's school nutrition programs. I've enjoyed helping to get people excited about what in school nutrition, such as highlighting our travel adventures to national conferences.



Q *What advice do you have for state leaders following in your footsteps?*

A Start small. Remember that it does take a village, so delegate—and rely on your board for help!

Q *Why is national and state membership in SNA more important now than ever?*

A It's so important in successfully advocating for our programs and our students with different stakeholder groups. Membership is also valuable in keeping us up to date on the ever-changing regulations and the child nutrition landscape.

Sharon Glosson, SNS

North East Independent School District

Texas Association for School Nutrition

Medium Affiliates (526-975) Membership Division

Q Tell us which of your achievements as state president make you most proud—and why.

A I was proud that TASN held all of our normal in-person meetings this year! These included two conferences, plus a number of board meetings and two training academies for managers/administrators. We also held a Partnership Collaboration Summit to bring together operators and industry for education and sharing on challenges and solutions. It was wonderful to see everyone beyond the computer screen and get a chance for better networking. I think we all felt boosted by doing something “normal.” The return to in-person events also increased member engagement and revenue for our Association.

Q How did you and your leadership team innovate throughout the last year?

A We converted our quarterly newsletter, *TASNews*, from print to digital-only. This helped us to continue to provide content, while decreasing expenses. It also gives members faster access to information.

TASN, working with the Education Service Centers in our state, also created a promotional video for membership recruitment. It will be shown in trainings for new school nutrition directors and introduce them to the Association and the benefits of membership.

Q How has the experience of being a state president helped you to grow?

A Getting involved in a leadership role always forces you to step outside of your comfort zone. I’ve found that I’ve grown by meeting new people, learning about new aspects of our profession and industry and realizing the wide variety of perspectives there are among school district program operators. I’m also grateful to have formed personal friendships with other state leaders—I know that these will outlast this particular leadership journey!

Q What advice do you have for state leaders following in your footsteps?

A Ask how you can help. Don’t wait for someone to ask you to volunteer, because many people are hesitant to request help. If you want to get involved, contact your current leaders—they will be ecstatic to plug you in somewhere!

I also want to pass along an insight once shared with me: Good leaders are always looking out for others more than for themselves. I think you must maintain an attitude of servitude, or servant leadership, in order to be successful. You will be amazed at how your sacrifices will come around to benefit you with opportunities in the future.



Q Why is national and state membership in SNA more important now than ever?

A We cannot operate successfully on the individual islands of our districts and communities—we need each other more than ever! SNA and its state affiliates provide the networking and learning opportunities that we all need to stay encouraged and persevere. This profession can often be really difficult, and we have to stay connected in order to thrive.

Emily Hanlin, MBA, RDN, LD, SNS

Cobb County School District
Georgia School Nutrition Association
Large Affiliates (976+) Membership Division

Q Tell us which of your achievements as state president make you most proud—and why.

A While in any other year this may sound mundane, it was having our in-person conference in April. A large part of what makes the school nutrition community great in Georgia is the connections that we have across the state and across our districts. Our focus on being able to bring everyone back together to celebrate all that we have accomplished over the last few years—while incorporating education and networking—was the capstone to our year of reigniting excitement throughout GSNA. I believe that promoting this event, in addition to our membership drives, helped us to retain existing members and attract new ones.

Q How did you and your leadership team innovate throughout the last year?

A While we had shifted to a number of virtual events in SY2020-21, we wanted to focus on transitioning to being back together in person this year. We took baby steps toward this goal, including implementing a new regional expo concept. Instead of having one large commodity-processed food show in the fall, we established three smaller shows, held in northern, central and southern parts of the state. This provided an opportunity for members to attend with a smaller group of people and at a venue closer to home, allowing most to avoid overnight hotel stays.

Q How has the experience of being a state president helped you to grow?

A My biggest “a-ha!” moment as a state leader was realizing that I can’t take for granted that others in school nutrition are as knowledgeable as I am about how the programs—and our Association—work. It made me think differently about how I communicate. I now try to put myself in the shoes of a new Association member or a district team member whenever I’m crafting messages about how things work, the importance of what we do and how to be an effective member of those teams.

Q What advice do you have for state leaders following in your footsteps?

A We always accomplish more together! Find the different talents in your organization and give those people the opportunity to shine. Allowing people to do things they love in service to our Association and their fellow members lets them be actively involved in a way they can feel great about.



Q Why is national and state membership in SNA more important now than ever before?

A Our state and national Associations really allow us to have a voice. It’s been a chaotic few years, and I believe that active participation—especially as it relates to legislative priorities—has been critical. Both SNA and GSNA have fought for our programs, educating members on how best to interact with their legislators on issues that impact how we operate, as well as on funding for programs and benefits for team members.

2021-22

President's Award of Service

in honor of *Thelma Flanagan*

This award recognizes the dedication and commitment that state presidents provide throughout the year as they work with their leadership teams to accomplish SNA's mission, vision and strategic goals.

Donette Worthy, SNS, Alabama
Sandra Ponte, Alaska
Lorrie Ahern, Arizona
Tammie Works, Arkansas
Nicole Meschi, SNS, California
Amy Faricy, RD, SNS, Colorado
Kate Murphy, SNS, Connecticut
Caitlin Gee, RDN, LDN, Delaware
Jud Crane, Florida
Emily Hanlin, RDN, LD, SNS,
Georgia
Rebecca Elmore, SNS, Idaho
Kevin Harris, MEd, SNS, Illinois
Stacie Light, Indiana
Willow Kriegel, RDN, SNS, Iowa
Richard Hampton, Kansas
Jack Miniard, Kentucky
Lucretia Jones Hertzock, MS,
RDN, LDN, SNS, Louisiana
Tina Fabian, Maine
Barbara Harral, RDN, Maryland
Debra Lee Mugford, MEd, SNS,
Massachusetts
Jennifer Mattison, Michigan
Carrie Frank, Minnesota
Jimmy Buchanan, Mississippi
Joene Drechsel, Missouri

Tammy Wham, Montana
Karee Nielsen, Nebraska
Cory Smith, Nevada
Morgan Trahan, New Hampshire
Daniel Witowski, New Jersey
Marie Johnson, SNS, New Mexico
Donna Riviello, New York
Dana Edwards, North Carolina
Dana Rieth, RDN, LRD, SNS,
North Dakota
Tiffany McCleese, SNS, Ohio
Pamela Suyematsu, SNS, Oregon
Dimitra Barrios, MBA, Pennsylvania
Cindy Jacobs, South Carolina
Dave Tolliver, South Dakota
Vickie Dunaway, Tennessee
Sharon Glosson, RD, SNS, Texas
Amy Woolsey, SNS, Utah
Scott Fay, SNS, Vermont
Andrea Early, MS, RD, Virginia
Marcia Wagner, MS, RD, SNS,
Washington
Mary Cook, West Virginia
Irene Pawlisch, CSC, SNS,
Wisconsin
Dawndrea Daly, Wyoming



2021-22 Membership & Professional Development Growth Awards

MEMBERSHIP DIVISION CHAMPIONS

Large (976+)
Alaska (numerical increase)
Michigan (percentage increase)

Medium (526-975)
Colorado (numerical increase)
Texas (percentage increase)

Small (1-525)
Idaho (numerical increase)
Vermont (percentage increase)

2% MEMBERSHIP GOAL AWARDS

Alaska	Louisiana
Arkansas	Mississippi
California	Nevada
Connecticut	New Jersey
Georgia	Utah
Iowa	

INCREASING MEMBERSHIP AWARDS

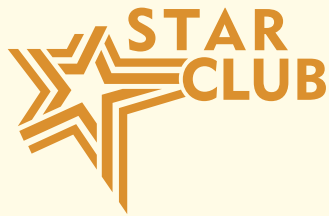
Delaware	Nebraska
Massachusetts	

2% CERTIFICATE PROGRAM GOAL AWARDS

Alaska	Connecticut
Arizona	Texas

CREDENTIALING DIVISION CHAMPIONS

Small: Connecticut
Medium: Texas
Large: Michigan



Recruiter of the Year

Tina Farmer, MBA, SNS, Georgia

During the 2021-22 membership year, Tina recruited 125 new SNA members!

“Membership Starts with ME” Campaign Winners

Lisa Blackburn, Alabama

Ryan Cengal, SNS, Texas

Katy DiCara, Maine

Michele Dupont, New Hampshire

Gizelle Thomas, Georgia

Elizabeth Wellman, Ohio

Top Star Club Members

Marcia Smith, Florida

Denise Hooper, Tennessee

Sonja Anthony, SNS, Alabama

Denise Lamar, SNS, North Carolina

Deborah Wuest, SNS, Florida

Jessica Shelly, SNS, Ohio

Meredith Potter, SNS, Georgia

Gretchen Wilson, SNS,

North Carolina

Angela Broussard, Louisiana

Rosie Jackson, Louisiana

Top Star Club States

Florida

Georgia

Tennessee

North Carolina

Louisiana

Alabama

Minnesota

South Carolina

Virginia

Kentucky

Recruiter of the Year

SNA's Star Club recognizes and thanks members who recruit and retain fellow members in the Association. For her efforts in ensuring her employees are connected to critical professional development resources and linking them to a nationwide network of peers, Tina Farmer, MBA, SNS, is recognized as Recruiter of the Year. (Other top recruiters are recognized at left.) Here, Farmer offers her reflections on sharing the incredible benefits of SNA membership.

How long have you been an SNA member and what made you decide to join when you did?

I have been an SNA member since I joined the school nutrition profession in 2005. I was a policy and procedure supervisor in Cabarrus County, North Carolina, and my director at the time was extremely supportive of SNA and encouraged me to join and get involved. I realized right away the benefits of the Association through *School Nutrition* magazine and conferences.

How has your SNA membership helped you grow in this profession?

I have grown in so many ways through the many training opportunities that are available, along with networking at the local, state and national levels. I also recently attained my School Nutrition Specialist (SNS) credential. Some of my favorite resources have been the different conferences I've attended—both in person and virtually—which are so beneficial for sharing ideas and resources. I especially love attending the annual Legislative Action Conference, because each time I learn more about the legislative process as it pertains to school nutrition. I truly enjoy meeting with the elected officials who make decisions about our programs and giving them details about our local district.

Tina Farmer,

MBA, SNS

Executive Director of School Nutrition and Procurement Services, Cherokee County School District, Canton, Georgia



Why do you encourage your staff to become members of the national Association?

We made the decision to expand to a districtwide membership this school year because we saw the tremendous value in having *all* of our staff connected to our professional organization. We've explained to them that they are school nutrition *professionals*, and we feel that it is important to make this investment in their career growth.

Do you encourage peers in other districts—especially those new to the profession—to join SNA?

Yes. Georgia SNA has 10 regional districts, and when I was president of District 7, I regularly encouraged the school nutrition directors in the area to get involved in the Association. I've always found that if a director is supportive of SNA, then staff will also be more willing to join and support the organization.

Why is SNA membership more important today than ever?

As school nutrition programs grow more complex, the need for our professional organization is so important. The training, collaboration and outreach that comes from membership is critical to the success of school nutrition programs and those who run them.