

# Road Runner

NEW MEXICO SCHOOL NUTRITION ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



Our Vision: Well-nourished students prepared for success

Spring 2024



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Greetings, New Mexico School Nutrition Association Members!

As we go into February, another exciting school year filled with opportunities and challenges is almost over, I am thrilled to share some highlights and updates with you. It was a busy start of the year, and I am proud of the dedication and passion demonstrated by our members in advocating for the betterment of school nutrition in our state.

One of the key pillars of our association is advocacy, and I am pleased to report that we have been actively engaged in advocating for policies that support healthy school meals and sustainable food systems. Recently, the NMSNA board members had the privilege of attending the legislature for Food and Farms Day, where we had the opportunity to advocate to support the governor's recommended budget for PED's Healthy Universal School Meal Program for \$43.5 million in recurring funds and \$19.9 million in supplemental funds. These funds are crucial for advancing our mission of providing nutritious meals to students across New Mexico, and I am looking forward to the positive impact they will have on our programs.

In addition to our advocacy efforts at the state level, the Vice-President, Industry Chair, and I had the pleasure of representing our association at the School Nutrition Industry Conference (SNIC) in Orlando, Florida. The conference provided a valuable platform for networking, sharing innovative ideas, and learning best practices from colleagues across the nation. It's truly inspiring to have the opportunity by the creativity and dedication of school nutrition professionals in addressing the evolving needs of our students.

Looking ahead, our association is gearing up for our annual conference, and I am excited to announce that our President-Elect, Dean Gallegos, has chosen the theme "Blast from the Past." This theme celebrates the rich history of school nutrition while embracing innovation and progress in our field. Our conference planning committee is hard at work curating an engaging program that will feature educational sessions, hands-on workshops, and networking opportunities to empower our members and enhance their skills.

As we strive to improve the quality of school meals, I am pleased to share that we are actively working on adapting our conference schedule to accommodate new requirements that support scratch cooking in school kitchens. This initiative aligns with our commitment to providing nutritious and delicious meals to students while promoting culinary excellence among our school nutrition staff.

In closing, I want to express my gratitude to every member of our association for your dedication, passion, and unwavering commitment to the well-being of our students. Together, we will continue to champion the cause of school nutrition and make a positive impact in the lives of children across New Mexico.

Warm regards,

Rachel Roybal-Rogers, President, New Mexico School Nutrition Association

## PRESIDENT ELECT'S CORNER

Dean Gallegos, President Elect, NMSNA

Hello New Mexico Lunch Ladies and School Food Dudes!

I am Dean Gallegos, Food Service Director with Rio Rancho Public Schools and New Mexico School Nutrition Association President Elect.

I am excited to tell you about our NMSNA State Conference to be held at the Isleta Hotel and Casino from June 5th - 7th 2024. This year's theme is "Blast from the Past" and we are asking for everyone to participate in the festivities. What is Blast from the past? Well we want everyone to go back to their youth when the only time you had to walk into a cafeteria was for your "School Lunch". It might have been back in the 60's, 70's, 80's, 90's or even now in the early 2000's. We want you to relive your high school years and come dressed as you would during your high school times.

Our banquet will be a homecoming dance and we would like for all of you to dress as you were going to yours. Music will be from all these years that I listed above and a King & Queen will be selected. This truly will be a "BLAST".

We will have some great classes during the conference and of course our food show which is everyone's favorite. Great speakers at our general sessions, we have Jose --- from JTM who is guaranteed to make you laugh. We are bringing back for our closing session Vera Jo Bustos who started her speaking career with the NMSNA 5 years ago. Ms. Bustos was a graduate from West Las Vegas and attended Adams State University in Colorado with a basketball scholarship where she broke almost every woman's scoring record for the University. She went on to play professional basketball in Greece. Attached will be short video of one of her many speaking engagements.

<https://topyouthspeakers.com/speakers-topics/coach-vj>

I hope to see everyone there!! More information to follow.

## EDUCATION CHAIR HIGHLIGHTS

*Shelley Montgomery, Education Chair*

Spring is coming soon and the school year will be winding down. In the midst of all the end of year activities don't forget your continuing education credits or professional standards credits.



One good way to receive all of your professional standards credits is to attend the Annual NMSNA Conference June 5-7 at the Isleta Conference Center. There will be classes offered in English and Spanish.

If you are unable to attend the conference, then take a look at ICN website for a lot of online classes that you can take free of charge.

The SB4 and Healthy Meals for All Students rule planning is underway and we should know the final rules pretty soon. PED will be holding (by invitation only) 3 rule writing working sessions in February.

At the June conference there will be classes on kitchen math, scratch cooking, and others related to SB4.



## DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Janet Sanchez- Executive Director NMSNA

Oh my how time flies. The NMSNA is excited to see the Healthy Meals for ALL bill going forward and by the time this newsletter is Spring is in the air and before you know it, you all will be counting down the days until summer break. A perfect time to join us at our Annual State Conference to renew your passion and the love of your job! We will share some great information on the SB4 bill, get energized with great keynote speakers and of course taste and see all the new products at the exciting exhibit and vendor show.

So SAVE THE DATE-June 5-7, 2024 at the Isleta Conference Center.

Also, we would love to share and showcase all the wonderful things you continue to do in your own districts to "Feed our Babies". Send your pictures to me at [jansan175@yahoo.com](mailto:jansan175@yahoo.com) or to our Marketing Editor Chimene at [chimeneq@gmail.com](mailto:chimeneq@gmail.com)

Don't forget to visit our website often to see all the great things going on and to look for updates, scholarship or award opportunities. [nmsna.com](http://nmsna.com)

Have a great rest of your year and I hope to see you in June!

**BLAST**  
from the  
**PAST**

June 5-7, 2024  
Isleta Resort & Casino  
Albuquerque, NM

... **REGISTER NOW!**

NEW MEXICO  
**SCHOOL**  
**NUTRITION**  
**ASSOCIATION**



## VICE PRESIDENT & MEMBER SERVICES' CORNER

Holly Valenzuela, Vice President NMSNA

Hello All,

In January 2024, I was invited to attend SNIC in Florida with President, Rachel Rogers and Industry Chair, Neil Harmeyer. What an eye opener with advances in AI and how we can use this new age knowledge to help enhance our Food Service Programs and Association on a day-to-day basis. I will also be attending NLC in April 2024, which is a great opportunity to enhance my leadership skills, discover critical information on SNA Association and networking with peers on the same leadership path.

The December 2023 Southwest Region Membership Report shows that we have 6,056 members, which is 334 less from January 2023 but 822 more than January 2022. We are still rebounding from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the growth continues to be supported by the expansion of some larger SDMs. All regions are showing growth compared to this time last year and the state of NM is currently at 713 members which we are just eleven members shy of our goal of for this year of 724. Members let's all work together to meet our goal by conference time and have as many members as we can attend our amazing 2024 Conference.

The deadline for nominations for Director of the Year, Manager of the Year and Employee of the Year is March 1, 2024. The state winners will be submitted to the National level. All state, regional and national SNA award winners will be recognized at the Awards Ceremony at SNA Annual National Conference this year which will be in Boston, Massachusetts. I am looking forward to seeing our state winners on stage at the NMSNA Conference and at the Annual National Conference.



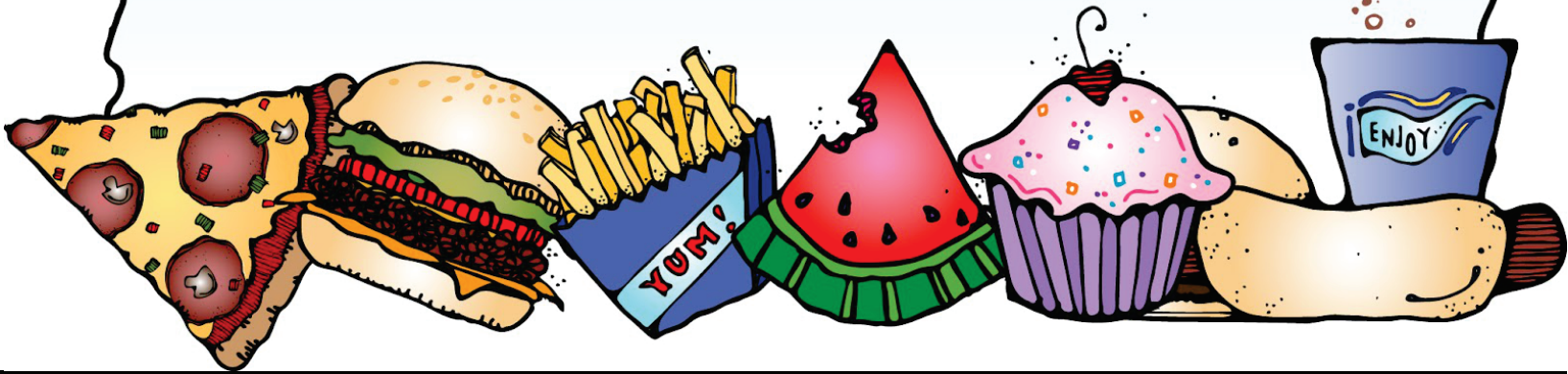
### Introducing the New Salad Bar at MISD Cafeteria-

The cafeteria at the Mora Independent School District (MISD) is unveiling its latest culinary innovation – the Touchless Salad Bar. Recognizing the importance of maintaining a safe and hygienic dining environment, The Touchless Salad Bar represents a significant upgrade in both convenience and sanitation, promising a dining experience that prioritizes health, and safety while promoting nutritious options. Which is part of MISD's commitment to promoting healthier eating habits among students and staff. With the Touchless Salad Bar, we hope to minimize food waste through precise portion control. The cafeteria is not only reimagining the way we serve food but also setting a new standard for safety, convenience, and culinary excellence.





# School Lunch



## Increase Your District's ADP ASAP

Sneak a peek at a couple of our free recipes to increase your district's ADP:

- Beef & Lentil Taco with Cilantro Yogurt Sauce
- PB&J Overnight Oats



[Discover More »](#)





## LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

*Virginia Schroeder, Legislative Chair*

March 3-5, 2024 I will be traveling to Washington, D.C. to attend the School Nutrition Association's Legislative Action Conference. There will be several NM SNA members from around the state joining me for this important conference. We will visit every New Mexico Congressperson and Senator asking for their support on important school nutrition legislation. Attached, last page, is the 2024 New Mexico Position Paper. This is the one page document that we provide to our legislators detailing our requests.





# 2024 Position Paper

School meals are an essential investment in the future of America's children. They are [proven](#) to boost academic achievement, improve student behavior and health, and combat food insecurity and obesity. School meal programs are at a perilous juncture since Congress has allowed critical federal assistance to lapse while financial, operational and complex regulatory challenges escalate. *To ensure the long-term sustainability of school meal programs, the non-profit School Nutrition Association (SNA) urges Congress to:*

**Permanently increase federal reimbursement rates for the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Program (NSLP/SBP) by 40 cents per lunch and 15 cents per breakfast.**

In a recent [SNA survey](#) of school meal program directors, virtually all (99.3%) reported challenges with increasing costs and fewer than 1 in 5 indicated the current reimbursement rate is sufficient to cover the cost of producing a lunch. Critical assistance for historically underfunded school meal programs is expiring; the loss of [Keep Kids Fed Act](#) reimbursements in July 2023, combined with the end of [Supply Chain Assistance funds](#) in September 2024, will force many districts to tap education funds to cover meal program losses. When asked about the financial sustainability of their programs in just three years, 91.6% of directors flagged concerns. Increased reimbursements are crucial to cover costs, enhance menus and support hiring and retention, as 90.5% of programs report challenges with staffing shortages.

**Ensure USDA maintains the current, successful school nutrition standards, rather than implementing additional [rules](#).**

[Research](#) shows students eat their healthiest meals at school, thanks to current [nutrition standards](#) which already limit calories, fat and sodium and require fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein and low-fat milk in meals. In School Year 2023-24, schools made additional sodium reductions and most [increased](#) scratch preparation (52.6%) and locally grown foods (55.6%) on menus.

Regardless of those efforts and despite a lack of any nutrition mandates for dining or retail foods, USDA has [proposed](#) even more restrictive, long-term school mandates that fail to account for known challenges, including palatability and student acceptance, as well as availability and pricing of prescriptive foods formulated solely for schools. Contending with skilled labor shortages, insufficient reimbursements and increasingly complex rules, many schools will be forced to rely on highly processed foods to meet additional mandates. Over 93% of school nutrition program directors have [expressed](#) concerns about proposed further sodium cuts and new milk and added sugar mandates. To keep students eating healthy school meals, USDA must support school nutrition professionals in their continued efforts to maintain the current, successful standards.

**Expand NSLP/SBP to offer healthy school meals for all students at no charge.**

School districts that offer free meals to all, through state initiatives or the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), have [reported](#) a variety of successes, including decreased stigma for low-income students as well as increased school meal participation and operational efficiencies. Of school meal programs that must now charge students for meals following the end of pandemic waivers, 92.8% report challenges with unpaid meal debt. Congress should ensure every student has equal access to nutritious school meals that support their academic achievement. SNA also supports federal and state proposals to advance this goal, including eliminating the reduced-price category and increasing the CEP multiplier.