



# Mush-On News

October 2023

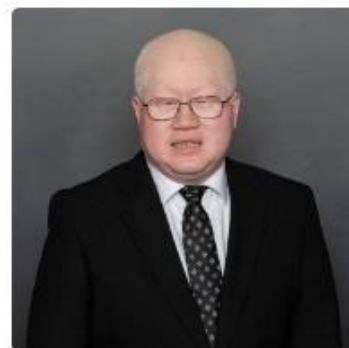
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## AKSNA President Letter

Gavin Northey, MBA, SNS

AKSNA President

The 2023 – 2024 school year is well underway. Everything was supposed to be “normal” by now, but that’s what we thought this time last year and it was anything but normal then. We continue to face the lingering impacts that started with the pandemic: inflation, labor shortages, and continued supply chain challenges that are exacerbated each time nutrition requirements become more stringent. It’s easy to feel overwhelmed; three and a half years after the pandemic began, it feels a lot like the movie Groundhog’s Day.



The truth is that you are some of the most resilient people; together, we serve 70,000 school meals each day in arguably the hardest-to-reach places in Alaska. I recently visited Dillingham, a community that most Americans would probably describe as “remote,” “rural,” or “off the beaten path;” however, in Alaska, we call it a HUB! The nutrition program in Dillingham was top-notch and its success is made possible by their dedicated staff. The work you do each day is critical to the lives and futures of so many Alaskans and you are amazing. Know that the monumental task of serving 70,000 in this great state is happening because of the dedication and skills for you and people like you. What is the Alaska School Nutrition Association’s role in supporting its members through these challenging times? AKSNA’s mission is to advance the quality of child nutrition programs in Alaska through education, advocacy, and engagement. Primarily, the board achieves these goals by hosting the annual conference in January which serves as an opportunity for both professional development and engagement. In addition, AKSNA sends delegates to Washington, D.C. each year to advocate for school nutrition programs during SNA’s annual Legislation Action Conference, publishes the Mush On news, sends a member to the SNA Annual National Conference each year, hosts other trainings such as LEAd to Succeed, and distributes awards for eligible dependents of members who have graduated high school and are pursuing postsecondary education; these are some but not all of the ways that your board serves you. We have the opportunity to do more for our members. We must regularly ask ourselves if the organization is

adapting to the evolving needs of its members; I don't know if it is or is not, but I do believe members' needs have changed in the past two or three years quite substantially.

So, the next question we ask is what will it take to change the organization to meet the members' new needs? The answer is: you. We need member engagement to make this a healthy and thriving organization; our organization lives or dies by the quality of its members' engagement and service. Service is not necessarily a formal and time-consuming arrangement such as volunteering on a board or committee; it could be a member willing to mentor a new member struggling to learn all of the meal pattern requirements or how to completed verification of eligibility. Member service could be a small role such as serving on for a committee that meets just once or twice a year; or it could be a more significant contribution such as volunteering to support and lead the board as we adapt to your changing needs. To paraphrase former President John F. Kennedy, ask not what AKSNA can do for you, ask what you can do for school nutrition. You are shaping the future, not only for the children who you serve, but also for the future professionals that will one day walk in your shoes.

Thank you for all that you do for the children of the great State of Alaska.

Sincerely,

Gavin Northey  
Your AKSNA President

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## ***AKSNA Food & Vendor Expo 2024 Registration Now Open***

The Alaska School Nutrition Association is pleased to announce that registration for the 2024 Food and Vendor Expo is now open. This is a great way for you to exhibition your products in front of school nutrition professionals representing over 75% of school meals served in the largest state in the union.

This year's Expo will be held 25 January 2024 from 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. at the William A. Egan Civic & Convention Center located in downtown Anchorage, Alaska.

For more information and to register visit: <https://aksna.org/expo>

We look forward to seeing you in January!

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## ***New Restaurant in Cordova School District!***

This year Cordova School District is doing something different with the Jr./Sr.High school. They revamped their menu to look more like a restaurant menu, branded with their mascot. They added on a Sub Sandwich and Entree Salad of the week. They also added a flavor station with sugar free, salt free seasoning mixes that the students can use to spice up their food how they like it. It has



been very well received. Their meal counts have gone up approximately 45%.

"We have an enrollment of 130, with our High School having an open campus. We were losing a lot of them during lunch to go to the deli's at the grocery store, for deep fried foods. We Were doing 60-70 lunches a day. Now we are doing almost 100 per day." - Sandie Ponte



## WOLVERINE CAFE

# October

Cordova Jr. Sr. High

We require  
**The 5 Meal Components for School Lunch**

1	2	3	4	5
Meat or Meat Alternative	Cereal	Fruit	Vegetable	Milk

You choose **at least 3** including  
 • ½ cup of fruit or vegetable  
 • at least two other full components  
 For best nutrition, **choose all 5!**

### WEEK 1

<b>MONDAY</b>	2
<b>French Toast</b>	
<b>TUESDAY LUNCH</b>	
Spaghetti and Meat Sauce	
*****	
<b>TUESDAY BREAKFAST</b>	3
Scrambled eggs and toast	
<b>TUESDAY LUNCH</b>	
Beef Taco's	
*****	
<b>WEDNESDAY BREAKFAST</b>	4
Cinnamon Roll and Yogurt	
<b>WEDNESDAY LUNCH</b>	
Chicken Burger with French Fries	
*****	
<b>THURSDAY BREAKFAST</b>	5
Biscuits and Gravy	
<b>THURSDAY LUNCH</b>	
Teriyaki Chicken	

### SPECIAL MENU

<b>SALAD OF THE WEEK</b>
<small>WEEK 1</small>
SESAME CHICKEN
<small>WEEK 2</small>
CHEFS (HAM, TURKEY, EGG, CHEESE)
<small>WEEK 3</small>
CORB (BACON, CHICKEN, EGG, AVACADO)
<small>WEEK 4</small>
GRILLED SALMON CAESAR
<small>WEEK 5</small>
CHICKEN CAESAR
<b>SANDWICH OF THE WEEK</b>
<small>WEEK 1</small>
HAM AND CHEESE
<small>WEEK 2</small>
ITALIAN SUB (HAM, TURKEY, PEPPERONI)
<small>WEEK 3</small>
SMOKED TURKEY
<small>WEEK 4</small>
ITALIAN SUB
<small>WEEK 5</small>
TURKEY BLT
<b>ALL MEALS INCLUDE:</b>
Breakfasts include your choice of Fruit and Milk
Lunch includes complete Fruit and Veggie Bar and Milk

### WEEK 2

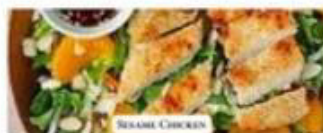
<b>MONDAY BREAKFAST</b>	9
No School	
Indigenous Peoples Day	
*****	
<b>TUESDAY BREAKFAST</b>	10
French Toast	
<b>TUESDAY LUNCH</b>	
Beef and Bean Burrito	
*****	
<b>WEDNESDAY BREAKFAST</b>	11
Scrumptious Coffee Cake with Yogurt	
<b>WEDNESDAY LUNCH</b>	
Hamburger with French Fries	
*****	
<b>THURSDAY BREAKFAST</b>	12
Biscuits and Gravy	
<b>THURSDAY LUNCH</b>	
Alaskan Pollock, Fried Rice	

### WEEK 3


	
<b>MONDAY BREAKFAST</b>	16
Bagel and Cream Cheese	
<b>MONDAY LUNCH</b>	
Cherry Blossom Chicken	
*****	
<b>TUESDAY BREAKFAST</b>	17
French Toast	
<b>TUESDAY LUNCH</b>	
Mini Meatloaf, Mashed Potatoes	
*****	
<b>WEDNESDAY BREAKFAST</b>	18
Cinnamon Roll, Yogurt	
<b>WEDNESDAY LUNCH</b>	
Chicken Burger, French Fries	
*****	
<b>THURSDAY BREAKFAST</b>	19
Biscuits and Gravy	
<b>THURSDAY LUNCH</b>	
Chili Mac/ Corn	

### WEEK 4

<b>MONDAY BREAKFAST</b>	23
Waffles and Sausage	
<b>MONDAY LUNCH</b>	
Grilled Cheese, Tomato Soup	
*****	
<b>TUESDAY BREAKFAST</b>	24
Breakfast Pizza	
<b>TUESDAY LUNCH</b>	
Turkey and gravy over noodles	
*****	
<b>WEDNESDAY BREAKFAST</b>	25
Scrumptious Coffee Cake with Yogurt	
<b>WEDNESDAY LUNCH</b>	
Hamburger, French Fries	
*****	
<b>THURSDAY BREAKFAST</b>	26
Biscuits and Gravy	
<b>THURSDAY LUNCH</b>	
Baked Lasagna	



### WEEK 5

	
<b>MONDAY BREAKFAST</b>	30
Bagel and Cream Cheese	
<b>MONDAY LUNCH</b>	
Chicken Alfredo	
*****	
<b>TUESDAY BREAKFAST</b>	31
Boo Berr cakes, Monster Toes, Bat Juice	
<b>TUESDAY LUNCH</b>	
Eyeball Tacos, Refried Beans, Bat Juice	
*****	



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## Innovation Competition



AKSNA is pleased to announce the second annual Arctic School Food Service Innovations Competition. The competition recognizes an individual in school food service that has contributed an innovation that has expanded access to school meals, improved the quality or nutritional value of school meals, improved student and community relationships of the school meal program, improved logistical or financial support of school meals, and/or overcome another challenge to making, distributing, and

serving school meals.

**The winner will be selected by people's choice award at the 56 th Annual AKSNA Conference in Anchorage, Alaska, 23 – 25 January 2024.**

**The winner will receive travel and registration to the SNA Annual National Conference in Boston, Massachusetts, 14 – 16 July 2024.**

**Nominations** Anyone with direct knowledge of the innovation may nominate an AKSNA member; self-nominations are allowed. The person submitting the nomination need not be an AKSNA member. Examples of qualified nominators include the nominee, the nominee's supervisor, colleague, business manager, teacher, principal, or superintendent.

To nominate an individual, complete the nomination form at <https://aksna.org/arctic-school-food-service-competition/>

Your nomination should include:

- A photo of the nominee
- photo documenting the innovation and/or result of the innovation, additional photos are encouraged
- A short report detailing the innovation (recommended word length 500-1000 words) the report should include an explanation of:
  - What was the innovation?
  - What challenge/improvement was address?
  - What was the nominee's contribution?
  - What date did this start? How long did it take?
  - How the innovation impacted students?
  - If there was a change in participation, please include relevant participation data.
  - What was the impact on the school community?
  - Why was the innovation important?

About the Alaska School Nutrition Association

AKSNA is the state affiliate of the School Nutrition Association (SNA), a national, nonprofit professional organization representing



more than 46,000 members who provide high-quality, low-cost meals to students across the country. Recognized as the authority on school nutrition, SNA has been advancing the availability, quality and acceptance of school nutrition programs as an integral part of education since 1946.

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## **What's Happening in Anchorage?**

The Anchorage School District has started a once-a-month meal that is culturally influenced. So far, we have had a moderate success, and I would love to share the details with everyone.

In August we attempted a zesty gravy influenced by a French lemon chicken dish. The high schoolers were not fans of the gravy. However, the elementary kids enjoyed the opportunity to try something new, even though they did not like the flavor the new item still perked their interest. We had a district-wide response in September when we tried the Filipino inspired Pancit. The only negative comment was that we used whole wheat noodles instead of rice noodles. Everyone requested we do it again!

Our most recent attempt was a German inspired Bierock. This is a dish that most cultures have some version of...it is a meat filled bread. We chose to create it as two meat filled dinner rolls to a serving. Again, we had mixed reviews. I am choosing to listen to the Elementary kids that ate everything available. The response we hear is that the kids are interested in trying anything new after many years with minimal changes to the menus. We are excited to bring other new items in the future. Fish will be reintroduced, trying an African curry, and to round out the school year a barbeque chicken taco with cole slaw.

If you ever want to talk recipes or just bounce ideas to find inspiration, let me know and I will happily talk your ear off. Good Luck this school year everyone!



**Zesty Gravy Over Chicken and Rice**



**Fresh Veggies with Chicken and Noodles**



**Meat Filled Dinner Rolls**

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Catering to the wants of an entire elementary school population can be a tall task. As program operators, we look to do the most good for the most children by offering appealing and nutritious food students will actually eat. What I may think is a delicious breakfast may not be the choice of most of our students, so it is important for our managers to be conscious of the popular items and the ones not chosen at the end of every meal service. Regularly getting feedback from students and staff on offerings gives insight as to what you should be on the lookout for and the type of items to get samples of from brokers and manufactures.

Creating a committee of managers and staff is a great way to sift through comments and opinions on current selections and propose new items. In Fairbanks, elementary managers are doing just that in efforts to make sure we are keeping up with new trends and offering the products students like that can meet USDA regulations. Developing surveys to find out what students are eating when they are not in school and what favorite items they would like to see are key to getting the feedback for successful procurement process.



Having a diverse group of committee members helps to get different perspectives and can go a long way in developing tools that will provide meaningful feedback. Identifying each member's individual goals helps to unify the group and recognize that they are all there for basically the same reason. To find more breakfast items that the students will enjoy. Monthly meetings are scheduled to revise surveys and samples will be requested from manufacturers. The extra time put in by staff to improve what we offer is worth the money when we see more smiling faces in our breakfast line. We will keep you posted on our progress in Fairbanks throughout the year.



# Take Your First Step Towards Achieving the SNS Credential



Once again, this year as a pre-conference option, there will be a chance to take the School Nutrition

Specialist Exam on January 22, 2024. Now the important question, why should I take this exam? First, status...since we all live and breath school nutrition, why not get the credentials to show off that we know so many interesting things. Second, learning...this is a great chance to refresh all the information that you may not use on a daily basis. For anyone new to school nutrition, this would be the opportunity to dig into information that may not have been necessary yet. Finally, when applying for help from the national School Nutrition Association, having those three letters after your name does help.

So, what is included in taking this exam? The exam will cover all aspects of a school nutrition program. Menu planning, kitchen set up, counting & claiming, and program restrictions are just a few of the topics. There are study guides and flash cards available from SNA at their website. Alaska School Nutrition Association will also be putting together a study group that will meet every other Monday starting October 30 th at 1:30 if you would like to sit and listen to what is included before deciding. The cut off on registering to take the exam is January 1, 2024. If you are interested in joining the study group, please contact Tiffany Kurani to get the Zoom link. Some technical stuff: You can check out more information concerning the SNS exam at [schoolnutrition.org](https://schoolnutrition.org) under Careers & Trainings, select Credentialing.

Each person will need to register individually at this website. Last I checked it was a main in registration, so plan ahead. If you want to talk it through with other people studying for it first, that is a great plan.

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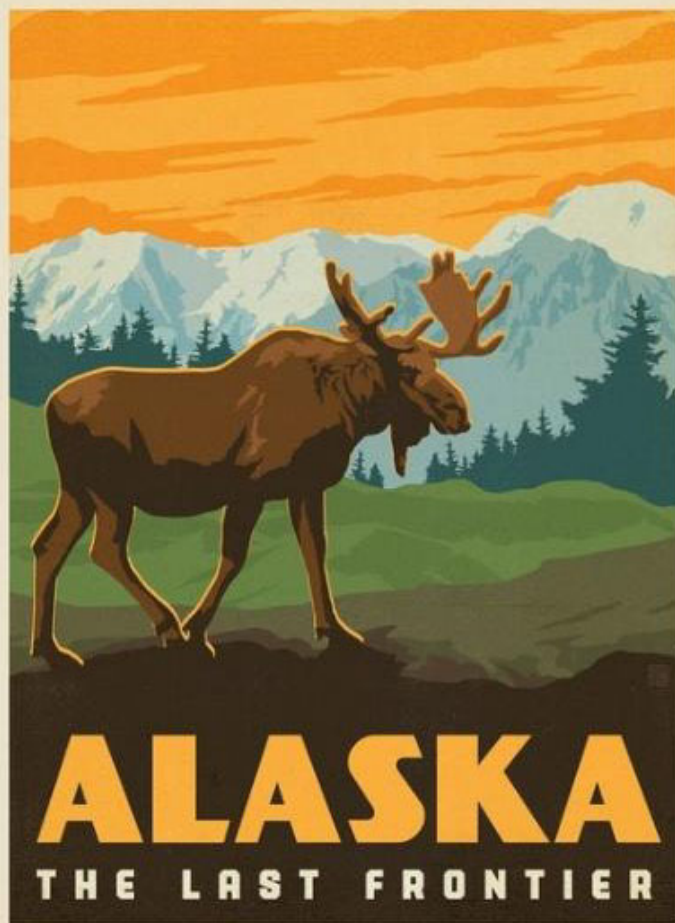
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