

FOOD FOR THOUGHT



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Happy New Year!

by Joanne Morrissey, SNA of Mass. President

As you receive this issue of *Food for Thought (FFT)*, we are about to start the second half of the school year. It is so amazing how fast the years fly by. Our association has accomplished much this year and so much more is in the works.

To find out what is happening and when, be sure to log on to our web site www.schoolnutrition.info and click on our *new online calendar*. And, if you have a school nutrition related event happening that you think our members should know about, email the information to our Executive Director at info@schoolnutrition.info for posting on the calendar.

The School Nutrition Associations annual Legislative Action Conference will take place March 2-5 in Washington DC. We are hoping to have a strong group representing Massachusetts at the conference and on the hill to talk about the issues facing school nutrition programs. Hot issues this year are sure to include national uniform nutrition standards. SNA national has established a task force of food service directors, state agency directors and industry members who have developed a "draft" set of nutrition standard recommendations for both reimbursable meals and food and beverages sold or served outside of

reimbursable meals. Members are encouraged to read and comment on the draft standards which are available online at www.schoolnutrition.org. A national summit to discuss these draft standards is being held in January, 2008. Jackie Morgan, our President -Elect will represent SNA of Massachusetts at the summit.

On the state legislative scene, House Bill 4199 "An Act to Promote Proper School Nutrition" sponsored by Rep. Peter Koutoujian was passed by the Public Health Committee and referred to the Health Care Financing Committee. (See Legislative Chair Judy White's summary of the bill in this issue of FFT.) On 11/19/07, the bill was reported out favorably with a new bill number **House 4376** and sent to the House Ways and Means Committee for consideration. In order for the bill to become law, it needs favorable action by House Ways and Means, passage by the full house and then sent to the Senate for action (amendment or approval). A long and winding road but it is important to keep tabs through the process to be aware of any amendments that may occur.

Our Professional Development Committee has planned a fantastic Spring Conference for March 11 and 12 at the award winning Cranwell Resort in Lenox MA. Not only is this a top notch "spa" facility where you can take a little time to pamper yourself (20% discount for spa services), but the program and speakers are top notch as well. Our keynote speaker will let us know "It's never too late to have a happy childhood". We'll learn how to take care of ourselves with yoga and mindful eating sessions, about taking care of our customers, making our healthy foods look great on the line, and implementing the new dietary guidelines and locally grown purchasing programs in our school meal programs.

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Membership Committee

by Sheila Parisien, SNS, SNA Membership Chair
Sixth of a series focusing on SNA of Mass. committees.

Membership in the School Nutrition Association is the support system that we all need to keep us up to date and well prepared to advance good nutrition for all children.

The membership committee is here to assist you with taking advantage of your many **benefits** as well as spearheading our **recruiting and retaining** efforts. In my travels I hear folks say that membership is only beneficial to Directors. This is not true; it's managers and staff that are affecting the greatest possible change and benefits for our children. They are the face, the voice of our mission and the recipe for our student's success. This is what one manager had to say about membership in SNA. *"I am a member of SNA because I get ideas from other managers that help me in my kitchen. I also enjoy reading the magazine that gives me information on all kinds of articles pertaining to students and staff. As a manager of a middle school, I need new ideas to keep the students interested in our program."* Donna Landry, Manager Academy Middle School in Fitchburg. Staff member Elinore Repucci of Manchester High School said *"being a member of SNA makes me feel like I'm more than a lunch lady. I get to read about and better understand what my job entails and why all the regulations are so important. We really do get to make a difference in kid's lives and that feels great."*

You'll be hearing about our Spring Membership Drive very soon. Sign up your managers and staff; there are benefits for everyone to empower them to grow both professionally and personally. If you know a director that is not currently a member please recruit them. The larger the association of members is, the greater voice we have in advocating for our child nutrition programs.

What else does the membership committee do? The membership committee is the go to gang to learn about and apply for **scholarships**. There are many available, both locally and nationally. If you're presently enrolled in classes or are thinking about going back to school, we'd like to help finance you. Contact our membership committee member Jill Lucius at jlunch@charter.net

Professional Development opportunities also fall under the umbrella of the membership committee. At our Spring Conference in March, we will be offering SNA's credentialing exam. Becoming a School Nutrition Specialist is raising your professional status to its highest degree. For more information on becoming credentialed or signing up to take the exam contact our committee member Julie Dougal at jdougal@hwrdsd.org

Becoming certified through SNA is a means for everyone to raise their professional status and be recognized as a viable nutrition point person in your district. Becoming certified is much easier to attain than becoming credentialed. For more information contact committee member Carla Tuttle at ctuttle@milfordma.com

Awards are another area the membership committee oversees. It's not too late to nominate a director, a manager or a staff member for an award that will recognize them for their efforts to improve the health of our children and their program. For more information on awards or what the qualifications are contact committee member Sandy Slosek at pat.sandy.slosek2verizon.net

The rest of our committee is made up of Karen McDonald of Thurston Foods who is the industry link and idea guru for our membership drives and Donna Landry is our manager representative. Please feel inspired to contact myself parisiens@mersd.org or any of the committee members to learn more about the committee's work, to hear how you can become a member of this or any other of our committees or to learn how you can become a member of SNA's Executive Board.

Remember Membership in SNA is Your Recipe For Success!

Food Allergies in Schools

by Rhonda Spigel, MA, RD, LDN, Director of Food Service, Waltham Public Schools
Nutrition Committee Chairperson, SNA of Mass.

When many of us were growing up in the 1960's and 1970's a peanut butter and jelly sandwich was not considered life-threatening, and parents were not visiting school nurses to develop IHCPs (Individualized Health Care Plans) for their children. School lunches were regularly traded and bake sales were the norm. But in schools today the incidence of food allergies is reaching alarming levels, increasing as much as 55 percent since the late 1990's. A 2001 study in the *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine* by Ann Nowak-Wegrzyn found that nearly 1 in 5 children with food allergies had a reaction while at school.

Recognizing the importance of educating school communities on food allergies, The Massachusetts Department of Education published a manual in 2002 titled "Managing Life Threatening Allergies in Schools". The DOE has encouraged school districts to set policies that will protect students from dangerous allergic reactions. The Manual states that schools should have a written plan outlining emergency procedures for managing life-threatening allergic reactions. The publication lists the eight foods responsible for most food allergies: peanuts, tree nuts, milk, egg, soy, wheat, fish and shellfish. Of these foods, peanuts and tree nuts are responsible for 92 percent of serious and deadly anaphylactic reactions.

While fewer than 20 percent of schools are totally nut free, many schools have tables where students who are eating nut-containing foods sit or tables that exclude nut-containing foods. Additionally, to protect the allergic students, areas must be wiped down prior to meal service and after meal service to prevent cross contamination. Students should also wash their hands prior and post meal service to prevent contamination of classroom chairs and desks with food allergens.

The Labeling and Consumer Protection Act of 2004 assists in identifying foods allergens. This legislation requires that all food labels produced on or after January 1, 2006 must state if the product contains any of the eight highly allergic foods. Excluding nut-containing products from school food service programs is easy, but excluding wheat, milk, egg and soy is more difficult. Many school food service items such as chicken nuggets and beef patties contain soy protein in an effort to reduce fat and increase lean protein in school lunches. Also, many items contain eggs and milk in their ingredient list. For students with soy, wheat and milk allergies, all menus and food labels must be reviewed in advance.

The best way to protect students from a life-threatening allergic reaction is to limit situations that can cause a child to come into contact with an allergen. The cafeteria is only one of many places within the school environment where a student may be exposed to allergens. Empty food containers such as peanut butter jar may be used to store supplies such as paint brushes, while food for classroom pets may contain allergens too. Consideration should be given to students eating on buses, classroom parties that contain food, and food sold at school-sponsored events such as dances and sporting events.

In the unfortunate event that a student does have an allergic reaction at school, the emergency procedures outlined in the response plan should be carried out. There should always be someone available who is prepared to handle an allergic reaction and administer an EpiPen. If you would like more detailed information on establishing a policy for your school district or how to identify allergic reactions visit the following links: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/cnp/allergy.pdf> and <http://www.foodallergy.org>.

Commodities – It's That Time of Year Again!

By: Cliff Meyers, Vice President of Business Development, K12 Services, Inc.

It's January, the holidays are over and a new year has started. If you are like me it is time to pay for the holiday presents! It's also time to look toward next school year and develop your "Commodity Plan". At this time of year most of you begin asking yourselves, "Should I further process or accept ready to eat USDA "brown box" offerings." If I process, "Who should I divert to?" "What are the deadlines?" "What new products are available?" "How much entitlement do I have to work with?" It can be a very confusing process and one in which the "rules of engagement" often change. There are new USDA commodity values to consider, new opportunities with commercial distribution, new federal procurement regulations, etc. The entire topic of commodities can often feel overwhelming, especially to those food service professionals who are new to school food service.

The important thing to remember is that you are not alone and that you have an extensive support network. Whether it is the State office of Food Distribution, processors, brokers, distributors, etc., these professionals are all interested in assisting you in making productive decisions about what to do with your district's entitlement for next school year. It's also that time of year where you have the opportunity to attend meetings and food shows which are fantastic opportunities to receive additional information and training on the various options available for your consideration. I strongly encourage you to take advantage of these opportunities and bring lots of questions.

In order to begin to get your arms around commodities and start your plan, I would encourage you to first take a deep breath and acknowledge that there are various ways to go about structuring your commodity plan. Do not pressure yourself to find the singular definitive way to approach commodity utilization because you will drive yourself crazy. Remember, your goal is to maximize and receive as much beneficial value out of the donated food program as possible.

I suggest that you consider starting your commodity plan by looking at what you currently purchase today and use that as a guide. Integrating commodity dollars into products that support a well written menu that drives participation is the best way to maximize the commodity benefit as opposed to writing menus that are based upon what commodities are offered on a periodic basis. That goal can be achieved using both brown box and processed commodities.

One thing for you to consider is that even though you do not receive an invoice for commodities, you still receive a deduction in your entitlement account for what you accept. That means that USDA commodity brown box pineapple tidbits which are valued at more than ten dollars more per case by USDA versus a comparable commercial item may not be the best use of your entitlement dollar. A good general rule to keep in mind is to ask yourself if you would purchase the product if you had to pay cash for its value. For example, would you pay ten dollars more for pineapple tidbits? If the product does not positively impact participation, why would you spend the extra money for it?

It is a new year and I would like you to consider setting a new year's work resolution to utilize more commodity entitlement than you used last year. I look forward to meeting you all at your spring conference where we can work on that goal together. Happy New Year!

Special thanks to the Fall Auction Donors

See the complete listing of those companies that donated to the Fall 07 Auction on our website www.schoolnutrition.info.
Thank you for your support!

An Act to Promote Proper School Nutrition House Bill 4376

by Judy White Orlando, SNA of Mass. Legislative Chair

House Bill 4376 – What does it mean? This bill is trying to regulate foods sold during the school day that are not part of the school lunch/breakfast meal. It will apply to: School Food Service a la cart sales such as ice cream and snacks, School stores, School snack bars, Vending machines in all areas of the building and school campus. The Department of Public Health will establish a list of foods and shall develop nutritional guidelines and standards for any competitive foods or beverages provided or sold in Massachusetts schools. When they make the report they will consider such factors such as:

- adequate phase in time for compliance to implement new nutritional standards
- time of the school day during which guidelines will apply
- additional training in nutrition for food service directors
- capacity, resources and equipment available in public school kitchens
- application of nutritional standards during school sponsored fundraisers
- special exemptions from said guidelines for school sponsored events
- adequate amounts of time for school lunch periods
- exemptions from said standards for competitive foods or beverages sold before or after the end of the school day

For more details on this pending legislation visit our website: www.schoolnutrition.info and click on the Legislative Page.

Did You Know?

SNA of Mass. exhibitors donated 500 pounds of food from the Fall 07 Food show to The New England Shelter for the Homeless Veterans.

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We are most fortunate to have the very dynamic Dr. Christine Economos from the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University speaking to us about community based obesity prevention and intervention programs and the “Shape Up Somerville” program. The “show” part of the conference will include the Commodity Connection where you can sample USDA processed commodity items and a new session concept for buyers “Speed Dating with your Vendor” where you’ll get information about new products, menu ideas and distribution channels.

As we head towards spring and the end of the school year, we will hold the election for the 2008–09 School Nutrition of Mass Executive Board. The many activities and goals we achieve each year are totally dependent on our members who volunteer their time. Board positions open for election this year include Delegate–elect for each of our Chapters, Treasurer and Vice President. Please consider running for one of these positions or just as important, serving on one of our committees. For more information and words on encouragement, feel free to contact me or any member of our very talented and dedicated Executive Board.

Welcome New 2007 SNA Members!

Karen Alarie, Kathleen Annese, Nike Areago, Christopher Avtges, Edrie Bates, Rita Beauregard, Elizabeth Blenkhorn, Linda Bottai, Dennis Bouchard, Lee Bourdon, Doris Burke, Judy Chin, Judy Cicero, Linda Cloonan, Karen Cloutier, Kirk Conrad, Elissa Covello, Pat Croteau, Eleonora Davolio, Shelly Demmon, Alicia Dillon, Patricia D'Innocenzo, Georgine Diorio, Lynne Doolan, Roberta Farina, Terri Feole, Judy Flohr, Denise Fournier, Cheryl Frederick, Bonnie Fritschy, Teresa Gaudet, Edward Gilbert, Diane Gill, Lynne Gorrie, Elizabeth Guglielmello, Patricia Gyolai, Elvy Hambaker, Rosemary Hawkins, Janice Hines, Deborah Hockman, Elisabeth Johnson Ostrye, Jennifer Jones, Jack Jones SNS, Joan Kadlik, Shirley Kenney, Bonnie Kit Sakos, Arlene Langseth, Dawn LaValle, Carolyn Mackey, Lisa Magowan, Maria Mastroianni, Sandy Mattson, Denise McGrath, Joan McIntyre, Penny Morse, Kathleen Myrick, Susanne Nangle, Elijah Norris, Debbie Noyes, John O'Donnell, Ruthy Olney, Nancy Parisi, Colleen Reddy, Mary Jane Rossbach, Brendan Ryan, Dawn Seretta, Diane Sherry, Venice Smith McCain, Eileen Snyder, Alana Soucy, Patricia Stern, Joanne Swenson, Diana Tidlund, Kathleen Tomaus, Mark Van Etten, Janet Volker, Terri Walima, Valerie Walsh, Joseph Watson, Kenneth Whittier, Nancy Wiseman, and Andrea Zaines

Congratulations LAC 08 Scholarship Winners

Doreen Iovanna, Debra Korzec-Ramirez, Gail Koutroubas, April Laskey and Anne Marie Stronach. The Legislative Action Conference (LAC) is being held March 2-5, 2008 in Washington DC.



258 Harvard St., PMB 283
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Register Now!

SNA of Mass. Spring Conference

March 11-12, 2008