



Page 3
PRESIDENT LETTER

Page 4
SNACT's 2026-2027 EVENTS

Page 25
CORPORATE MEMBER
CONTACTS



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All CT students have access to nutritious school meals that promote a healthy lifestyle

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Striving for excellence through:
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Dedication



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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear SNACT Members and Friends,

In some ways it is hard to believe we are nearing the end of the 25-26 school year and in other ways it is a huge reprieve. As we look forward to year end celebrations, closing down kitchens; or heading into summer feeding programs, 25-26 has been jam packed with a rollercoaster of happenings. First and foremost, I would like to thank all of the board members, committees, and the entirety of our membership for showing up every day for the kids of Connecticut. You all willingly hop right into the rollercoaster without hesitation, with the continued strength, persistence, and determination to make school meals in CT the best they can possibly be.



This year, more than ever before, school nutrition professionals were heard by our state legislature. Not only were we heard, but were repeatedly asked to sit at the table with regards to us being the subject matter experts in this field. We engaged with partnering organizations in so many spaces - End Hunger CT, dietitians, pediatricians, farm-to-school, all culminating in the successful passing of universal free breakfast for next school year. Additionally, we have created such a force that supportive lawmakers are already looking ahead to getting the next step done in the upcoming budget year - universal free lunch! We have a lot to look forward to come the fall!

SNACT held two great conferences this year, membership surpassed five hundred members for the first time in years, and we have many new faces contributing to the work of all our committees. The program committee is well on their way planning the fall conference and we are excited to be hosting the 2026 Northeast Leadership Conference. The northeast is the only region still holding these!

On a personal note, as I exit my 3-year presidency cycle I am flooded with emotions. I could not imagine not taking the opportunity to enter the leadership chain three years ago, even though I had no idea what I was in for. Organization leadership work is definitely not easy, but the experiences, personal growth gained, and professional networking not only across CT, but across the country, is irreplaceable. I could not have done any of this without the support of the varying executive committees over the last few years, the work of our committees and membership, and the every-second-behind-the-scenes work and dedication of Denise Di Mare, our executive director.

I encourage anyone considering leadership to take the leap and plunge! It is my hope that I leave you all feeling you can always reach out to me to talk leadership, policy, school meals, pets, Taylor Swift...I digress...I also want to send well wishes and a huge congratulations to all of the directors and food service workers that are retiring this year. Lastly, I look forward to continuing my work on the board as Nominating Committee (I see you upcoming leaders!) and Public Policy & Legislation co-chair. I hope you all have a wonderful summer!

Signing off with gratitude and warmth,

Stephanie Deason, MS, RD, SNS

President, School Nutrition Association of Connecticut

SAVE THE DATES FOR 2026-2027 SNACT EVENTS!



October 29-30, 2026 Fall Conference & Trade Show at Mystic Marriott **Fueling Futures: Growing Impact in School Nutrition**

Keynote Speaker: Joe Pettit

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Joe's unique approach is grounded in real-world application, and his sessions are renowned for their activity-based, tangible takeaways. He will inspire you with his insights and empower you to become a better leader!



Conference registration will open in June. Attendees can choose from a two day registration that **includes hotel** (a great bargain!) to 1.5 days and individual days. However you choose to attend, we hope to see you there!



Nov 12 -14, 2026 Northeast Region Leadership Conference at Mystic Hilton **Fueling Futures: Growing Impact in School Nutrition**

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Katie Wilson

SNACT is hosting NERLC this year, bringing in SNA state leaders from the NE region for learning and sharing. We're excited to welcome fellow leaders and hope SNACT members will attend this conference!

January 28, 2027 Winter Conference & Trade Show at the Aquaturf Club

Snow Much Nutrition: Fueling Schools the USDA Way

Keynote Speaker: TBD

USDA and more

ADVOCACY UPDATES

Another busy CT legislative session:

CT adopts universal breakfast

A Session Defined by Momentum and a Historic Win

The 2026 Connecticut General Assembly – February 4 through May 6 – delivered SNACT's most significant legislative achievement in years: universal free school breakfast, fully funded in the state budget at \$14 million, reaching an estimated 164,000 additional Connecticut students beginning in the next school year. That victory, years in the making, did not arrive by accident. It was the product of sustained, coordinated advocacy by the PP&L Committee, SNACT's broader membership, and its coalition partners – executed with a strategic discipline and a relationship infrastructure built deliberately over several sessions.

The session also demonstrated, with equal clarity, that SNACT's advocacy capacity has grown into something qualitatively different from prior years. The organization entered the Capitol not as a stakeholder seeking attention, but as a trusted technical partner – consulted by legislators on bill language, embedded in coalition strategy, and visible in media and policy narratives from the opening day of session through the final gavel. That elevated standing is the compound interest on years of showing up, providing expertise, and delivering results.

"The new budget marks a successful conclusion to Lamont's two-year effort to provide free breakfast at all Connecticut public schools for all students, allocating more than \$14 million for that initiative."

– Connecticut Public Radio / CT Mirror, May 2, 2026

Not every priority crossed the finish line. The path to universal free lunch for all students – the next logical step – remained is still in question, with several dedicated school meals bills falling short in committee or dying in the Senate. But the structural gains made this session – in relationships, in legislative credibility, in coalition depth, and in the budget baseline now locked in – position SNACT for an even stronger advance in 2027.

You can read the full report from John M. Bailey II, Legislative Specialist, TCORS Capitol Group on [SNACT's website!](#)



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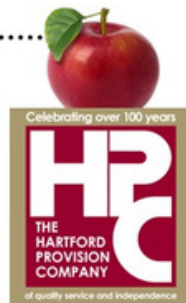
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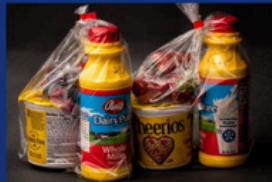
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Thank you to the hosts of Hot Topics for Directors

Thank you to the hosts of 2025-2026 Hot Topics! Hot Topics are free lunchtime discussion opportunities for SNACT Director members (meal included) That give directors an opportunity to meet and discuss topics in a casual setting.

October 3 New & returning Director support
hosted by Core Foods & Driscoll Foods

February 27 Menuing USDA Foods
hosted by American Patriot Sales & AJ Letizio

April 24 Tapas and Hot Topics
hosted by Acxion, ConAgra, Land O Lakes, Pilgrim's &
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Regional Training!

On May 6 Yankee Chapter hosted a fantastic "**Easy, Local Food Prep**" training taught by Becky and Alyssa, Regional Farm to School Coordinators- UConn Extension. A delicious dinner was provided by American Patriot Sales and AJ Letizio and capped with a special celebration for retiring director, Beth Pratt.



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On March 27 the Urban School Food Alliance presented **Team Up for School Nutrition Success Procurement Training** - it was a day of fun and learning!





SNACT's 2026 Fall Conference

Fueling Futures:

Growing Impact in School Nutrition

October 29-30, 2026 Mystic Marriott

Trade Show on October 29

featuring keynote speaker Joe Pettit

Why should you attend?

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Build practical skills: Boost your culinary expertise with Smart Swap Recipes and the Scratch Cooking sessions

Network and connect with vendors and colleagues at the Food & Industry Trade Show

Celebrate at the Carnival Extravaganza: Bingo & Awards Night!

Registration will open in June!