

## News Release

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# **Chef Ann Foundation Announces 2024 Cohort of National Healthy School Food Pathway Fellowship**

*Program designed to cultivate next generation of school food leaders*

**Boulder, CO** – The [Chef Ann Foundation](#) (CAF) today announced it has selected 24 school food visionaries from across the country to participate in its [2024 Healthy School Food Pathway Fellowship](#). Selected Fellows are experienced school food professionals committed to driving healthy, sustainable, and equitable school food reform.

Now in its second year, the Fellowship program was designed to cultivate school food reform leaders. Over a 13-month period, Fellows will deepen their knowledge about how school food is influenced by and affects the wider US food system; become experts on and advocates for healthy school food policy; and expand their professional network.

“With more than 20 years of food service experience, I have seen first-hand the academic and health benefits nutrition has had on students,” said incoming Fellow Judith Crumpler. “With this Fellowship, I am eager to be part of the change across our country, helping children live up to their full potential.”

Each Fellow will design and execute a unique capstone project that will not only benefit their home school district but also serve as a model for districts nationally seeking to enact transformative school food change – such as increasing local food procurement and working with sustainable farmers, transitioning from serving students heat-and-serve meals to serving scratch-cooked meals; introducing culturally relevant menu items; reducing food and packaging waste; and much more.

School food professionals prepare and serve meals to [nearly 30 million children](#) at schools across the United States. The extent to which a child has access to quality school meals – and finds those meals appetizing and satisfying – can influence their academic performance as well as their physical and emotional well-being. Additionally, the ways in which school food is sourced and prepared has compounding effects on local and national food systems. School food professionals play a critical role in not only shaping children’s health – and their eating habits later in life – but are also in a position to enact widespread food systems change.

“After witnessing the inspiring accomplishments of the inaugural Healthy School Food Pathway Fellowship cohort, we are beyond excited to see how this new group of Fellows make the program their own,” Chef Ann Foundation CEO Mara Fleishman said. “Fellows were able to successfully expand scratch-cooked menus, develop school food workforce training programs, increase local food sourcing, work with students to ensure their diverse needs were represented across menus, and so much more.”

#### **The 2024 Fellowship cohort members include:**

- Aaron Shipp (Weld County School District 6 Greeley, CO)
- Akasha Anderson-Nelms (KIPP NYC, NY)
- Ana Bush (San Ysidro School District, CA)
- Beth Bailey (Humboldt County Office of Education - Juvenile Hall, CA)
- Bryanna Ippolito (Acton Boxborough Regional School District, MA)
- Chelsey Bennett (Monona Grove School District, WI)
- Christy Nezgodinsky (Pointe Coupee Parish School Board, LA)
- Jennifer Hutchinson (Barre Unified Union School District, VT)
- Jennifer Ruiz (Hacienda La Puente Unified School District, CA)
- John Haley (Salamanca City Central School District, NY)
- Jorie Gronek (Boulder Valley School District, CO)
- Josh Perkins (Madison Metropolitan School District, WI)
- Judith Crumpler (Bear Valley Unified School District, CA)
- Judy Mireles (Menifee Union School District, CA)
- Kindy McCullough (Sutter County Superintendent of Schools, CA)
- Maraiah Popeleski-Tilley (Mansfield Public Schools and Region 19 High School, CT)

- Maria Amerman (Roseville Area School District and Saint Anthony New Brighton School District, MN)
- Melissa (Missy) Terrell (Pittsburgh Public Schools, PA)
- Mike Bottarini (Willows Unified School District, CA)
- Muhamed Yasin (Napa Unified School District, CA)
- Randolph Rios (Lodi Unified School District, CA)
- Richard Hannan (Berkeley Unified School District, CA)
- Shawn Marie Rivera (Sacramento City Unified School District, CA)
- Toni Jackson (Trimble County Public Schools, KY)

*Chef Ann Foundation's Healthy School Food Pathway Fellowship is made possible by the generous support of founding partners Whole Kids and the state of California, with additional support from the California Workforce Development Board's High Road<sup>SM</sup> Training Partnership.*

### **About Chef Ann Foundation**

[Chef Ann Foundation](#) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit working to ensure that school food professionals have the resources, funding, and support they need to provide fresh, healthy, delicious, scratch cooked meals that support the health of children and our planet. To date, the organization has reached more than 14,000 schools and 3.4 million kids with healthy school programming. Learn more on our [website](#) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [X](#), and [LinkedIn](#).