



News Release

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Chef Ann Foundation Receives Outstanding Program Award from Apprenticeship Colorado

Healthy School Food Pathway program recognized as a 2026 Colorado Apprenticeship Awards winner

Boulder, CO – The Chef Ann Foundation received an [Outstanding Program Award](#) this week from Apprenticeship Colorado, the State Apprenticeship Agency in the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment. The award recognizes the Chef Ann Foundation’s Colorado Healthy School Food Pathway program for its exceptional contribution to Colorado’s apprenticeship system.

The [Colorado Healthy School Food Pathway](#) Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship provide K-12 school food professionals with hands-on experience and in-depth learning across a wide range of topics needed to operate a successful scratch-cooked school meal program. Competencies include skill-building in financial management, menu planning, marketing, procurement, and scratch-cooking techniques. Upon completion, Apprentices also earn 31 credits towards an Associate of Applied Science degree from Emily Griffith Technical College.

The Chef Ann Foundation launched [Healthy School Food Pathway](#) in 2022 in California, where it has since provided training to 1,166 school food professionals across the state in partnership with over 80 school district host sites. In 2024, the Chef Ann Foundation brought the program to Colorado. To date, five school districts across the state have served as host sites for the program: Boulder Valley School District, Eaton School District, Greeley-Evans School District 6, Mesa County Valley School District 51, and Plateau Valley School District.

Colorado Healthy School Food Pathway has trained 46 Pre-Apprentices and 10 Apprentices, three of whom participated through the Chef Ann Foundation’s advanced 13-month [Fellowship](#) track. The program has helped these apprentices advance their careers and, in some cases, receive promotions.

“This program has opened many doors for me and given me valuable opportunities to grow and become more involved in our school nutrition program,” said 2025 Apprenticeship graduate, Luis Morales from Greeley-Evans Weld County District 6. “I’ve gained new skills, confidence, and connections that will continue to shape my work moving forward, and I’m truly thankful for the experience.”

School food policies, programs, reform, and administration have historically focused on compliance and nutrition, while overlooking the skilled professionals needed to make school food programs flourish. Healthy School Food Pathway is unique as a public-sector apprenticeship in a non-traditional field, creating a vital, professional pathway for school food professionals. Compared with the average Registered Apprenticeship, Healthy School Food Pathway also serves traditionally underrepresented populations, including women, Black, and Latinx workers.

“Making this program available to every district in the state would transform the school food workforce, create quality jobs for Coloradans, and ensure a return on the investments Colorado is making in school meals through Healthy School Meals for All,” shared Chef Ann Foundation’s chief executive officer, Mara Fleishman. “The positive outcomes of the Colorado Healthy School Food Pathway pilot program, combined with this exciting recognition from Apprenticeship Colorado, show that this program is working.”

The Chef Ann Foundation received its award at the 2026 Colorado Apprenticeship Awards ceremony on Tuesday, April 21. A [recording](#) of the event is available online.

Image: Apprentices build skills during a hands-on training day at Boulder Valley School District. Additional award ceremony photos are available [here](#).

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, delicious, scratch-cooked meals that support the health of children and our planet. To date, the organization has reached more than 19,000 schools and 5.9 million kids in all 50 states with healthy school food programming. Learn more on our [website](#) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [LinkedIn](#).