



**ARIZONA DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION**



THE CHEF ANN FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES NEW HEALTH AND NUTRITION PROGRAM “CREATING YOUR KITCHEN” WITH KEY COMMUNITY PARTNERS

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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

PHOENIX - The Arizona Department of Education’s Health and Nutrition Services Team is excited to announce a brand-new program, “Creating Your Kitchen” to support schools in their work to exceed standards, and provide their students with healthy, nutritious meals. With funding support from Life Time Foundation and Whole Kids Foundation, this two-phase program is designed to provide 10 Arizona Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) with the expertise and support needed to reclaim their kitchens and menus as they recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is no secret that our schools have been severely impacted by COVID, including health and nutrition operations. As Arizona schools continue to navigate, and recover from COVID-19, the ADE and our partners in this effort also recognize the current opportunity we have to transform our school meal programs post-COVID. The “Creating Your Kitchen” partners will work with schools to assess operations, finances, and food procured to offer schools a path toward serving less pre-packaged (or pre-made) and more fresh foods in schools. Operational support partners for this initiative are part of the [ScratchWorks](#) collective, a newly launched initiative founded by school food operators and organizations dedicated to scratch cooking in schools.

“Over the past year, it has become clear to everyone that one of our schools most essential services is providing healthy, nutritious meals to every student. I am grateful to have a team that is willing to view the hardship of this past year as an opportunity to improve and innovate all to better serve Arizona’s students and families,” said Superintendent of Public Instruction Kathy Hoffman. “With the help of professionals like the Chef Ann Foundation, Life Time Foundation, Whole Kids Foundation, ScratchWorks and the incomparable team of experts at ADE and within Arizona schools, I can hardly wait to see the results of this one-of-a-kind effort.”

"Improving the quality of school meals in the wake of COVID-19 is incredibly important. We're proud to help districts take a systems approach to scratch cooking that will improve food quality, and food service department budgets," said Anneliese Tanner, Director of Research and Assessment at the Chef Ann Foundation. "We are grateful that the Arizona Department of Education is taking a proactive approach and making this a priority for Arizona school districts."

"I am so excited for the opportunity to serve the state of Arizona, and am particularly inspired by the collaborative approach of this initiative. Over the years we have built such wonderful partnerships with the various organizations involved and we now have this unique opportunity to use our different strengths towards one shared goal. Together, we will support school districts to provide the best food possible to students, so they are ready to learn and live healthy, happy lives. To engage in this collaborative work with the amazing School Food Professionals and the AZ Department of Education is extraordinary. I applaud the incredible passion and dedication that the team at DOE has for the districts they serve. We are honored to be part of this work. We are so much stronger together!" said Valeria La Rosa, Senior Manager of the Life Time Foundation.

Throughout this partnership, ADE will work alongside the "Creating Your Kitchen" team to develop the framework for future iterations of this work to provide the same level of support to other schools in Arizona.

Participating Schools:

Alhambra Elementary School District
Antelope Union High School District
Casa Grande Elementary School District
Concordia Charter School
Litchfield Elementary School District
Oracle School District
Palominas School District
Phoenix Elementary School District
Queen Creek Unified School District
Washington Elementary School District

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About ADE

Equity for all students to achieve their full potential. This is the guiding vision of the [Arizona Department of Education](#) – the state agency tasked with overseeing Arizona's K-12 public education system. Our department, led by a publicly elected Superintendent of Public Instruction, comprises more than 600 staff across four state offices working to serve Arizona's students, families, educators, and school communities.

About The Chef Ann Foundation

[The Chef Ann Foundation](#) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit working to provide school communities with the tools, training, resources, and funding that enables them to create healthier food and redefine lunchroom environments. To date, the organization has reached more than 13,000 schools and 3.3 million kids with healthy school programming. Our work to ensure access to fresh, healthy school food for all is built on the idea of equity. We support and celebrate differences, and our team and community are stronger with every new voice. Learn more at [chefannfoundation.org](#) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

About Life Time Foundation®

As a public charity created by [Life Time](#), the Life Time Foundation is committed to helping children grow up strong, smart and loved. We believe that for children to reach their full potential, they must have access to nourishing meals. We partner with schools to eliminate foods containing highly processed and artificial foods in favor of wholesome, real food alternatives. Unlike many other charitable organizations in which a portion of donations is consumed by administrative costs, 100% of every dollar donated to the Life Time Foundation directly supports our mission because all administrative costs are contributed by Life Time, Inc. For more information, visit [www.lifetimefoundation.org](#).

About ScratchWorks

[ScratchWorks](#) is a collective of school food professionals and non-profit organizations committed to supporting school districts in cooking school meals from scratch using whole, fresh ingredients that provide students with the nutrition they need for their educational success, health, and wellbeing. We operate three main initiatives: an Annual Gathering, a Mentorship Program and Advocacy.

ScratchWorks began in the spring of 2019 with a commitment from six food service directors and six supporting organizations to envision what could be possible, to design a collective vision for the future of school meals. We all came together believing that the 31 million children eating school meals deserve the best food possible. Our team represents years of experience and thousands of relationships that will help us to build the collective.

About Whole Kids Foundation

[Whole Kids Foundation](#) supports schools and inspires families to improve children's nutrition and wellness. Founded by Whole Foods Market in 2011, the independent, nonprofit organization is based in Austin, Texas. The organization has served over 10 million kids in the U.S., Canada, and the U.K. in its ten-year history. The Foundation seeks to influence every intersection of child nutrition which includes transforming school food through scratch cooking initiatives, salad bar grants, school gardens and edible education. For more information on the Foundation's school programs visit, [wholekidsfoundation.org](#). For ongoing news and updates, follow Whole Kids Foundation on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) or [Twitter](#).