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55 K-12 Foodservice Heroes who made a difference over the past year

Here are some of the submissions from the K-12 Schools community that Food Management received in response to its call for nominations of Foodservice Heroes who stepped over the past year to keep kids fed.

Mike Buzalka | May 12, 2021

When Food Management sent out a call for nominations of Foodservice Heroes—individuals who stepped up beyond the call of duty over the past year in the face of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we received a large number of nominations from foodservice operations across the country. Earlier, we highlighted 16 individuals from all the nominations we received including several from K-12 meal programs. Featured on the following slides are other submissions from K-12 Schools operations of individuals who stepped up to ensure that kids continued to be fed over last summer and then this school year. The stories are in the lightly edited words of the respective nominators and are listed in alphabetical order of nominees' last names.



37.

Maureen Rice, General Manager

Commack (N.Y.) School District/Whitsons Culinary Group

Nominator: Chris Fautas, SVP Operations New York Region, Whitsons Culinary Group

“I nominate Maureen Rice who is with Culinary Works for Whitsons Culinary Group. Currently Maureen is the General Manager for the Commack School District on Long Island. During the pandemic Maureen took the food service program to new highs serving the community.

Here is a letter from Laura A. Newman, the associate superintendent for business & operations.

‘Maureen Rice has been our school lunch director in Commack School District for three years. We contract with Whitsons Culinary Group, who staffs the entire program. We have approximately 5,700 students and are located on Long Island, New York. I can honestly say we would not have had a successful school lunch program during this pandemic without her. Maureen not only continued to feed the children of our school district during a time when the governor closed schools, told schools to send staff home, yet charged us with feeding all the children. Maureen did not hesitate. She rallied her staff and designed a program to produce delicious, healthy lunches, planned for the bagging of all the components as required by the Federal School Lunch Program, established the method and location of distribution, and continues to do so 15 months later with the same enthusiasm!

Maureen took a school lunch program that served 2,200+ lunches per day, added a full breakfast meal plan and now produces, serves and delivers breakfast and lunch to all students whether they are attending our in-school program or receiving remote learning to the tune of 1,500 lunches and 1,800 breakfast each day! Since September she has served more than 340,000 meals to our students. She designed a full ‘grab and go’ component for families during recess break weeks, extended weekends and more. All to be sure students have healthy, nutritious food when they are in school and not in school.

She does so with a smile, a ‘can do’ attitude and never asks anyone to do something she will not and does not do herself. She is caring, sensitive and truly loves her role in feeding our school children. Every day, no matter what new wrench we or the state throw her way, she makes it happen. Maureen never asks for thanks, never asks for praise or accolades; she simply does what she believes is right.

Commack School District is the lucky recipient of her efforts. It is the partnership and support of the District, Whitsons Culinary Group and Maureen Rice that the students in this district benefit from. She is a true pioneer working in this unprecedented time and making a difference in our kids’ lives!

Regards,