

2026 NSNA FALL NEWSLETTER

LET'S CONNECT →

Hello NSNA Members,

What an incredible summer conference! Thank you to everyone who joined us as we celebrated our School Nutrition Heroes—your dedication and passion were the heart of the event. Our food show was a standout success, showcasing innovative products and creative menu ideas that sparked great conversation and practical takeaways for school kitchens across Nebraska.

I also want to give a giant thank you to everyone who helped behind the scenes to make our state conference the success it was; your hard work does not go unnoticed. Highlights included inspiring keynote presentations from Jarrett Krosoczka and Jeff Joiner that energized our work and reminded us of the positive impact we make every day for students.

I'm proud of the collaboration, learning, and camaraderie we shared. I am also excited to announce next summer's conference theme: "Fueling the Future of School Nutrition Starts Here." We look forward to building on this momentum with new ideas, training, and recognition opportunities. Please mark your calendars for our summer 2027 conference, taking place in Kearney from June 27-30, 2027.

The Commodity Foods Show will take place on October 8, 2027, from 1:00-4:00 p.m. Look for more details in Let's Connect.



NEBRASKA
SCHOOL
NUTRITION
ASSOCIATION



Perhaps this coming year would be a great time to take on a more active role in our Nebraska School Nutrition Association. Whether at the district or state level, your input and contributions are always welcome. I encourage you to step out of your comfort zone, join a committee, or share your ideas to help enhance our organization.

As we look ahead, I am excited about the opportunities to continue "Fueling the Future of School Nutrition" through innovation, collaboration, and an unwavering commitment to student well-being. Together with our partners, schools, and communities, we will keep building healthier, more sustainable meal programs that nourish students, support their success, and create a lasting impact for generations to come. Thank you for being part of this journey—I look forward to shaping the future of school nutrition together.

Tara Brookings
NSNA President



NSNA Commodity Food Show



Event Details

- **Date:** October 8, 2026
- **Location:** Holiday Inn, 110 Second Ave., Kearney, NE
- **Seminar:** 1:00 PM
- **Food Show:** 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM



Seminar Information

We invite you to attend an informative seminar prior to the Commodity Show. **Brian Gerkenmeyer** from DHHS and **Eric Sweeney** from US Foods will provide a comprehensive review of the Commodity Program, including account setup and a Q&A session to address your specific needs.

Contact & RSVP

Please RSVP by September 28th, 2026 at nebraskasna.org

For any inquiries, please contact **Mary Pat Vacek** via email at execdirectornsna@gmail.com.



Feeding Bodies. Fueling Minds.™

Thank you 2026 Conference Platinum Sponsors

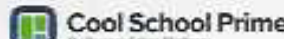


"SCHOOL NUTRITION HEROES"



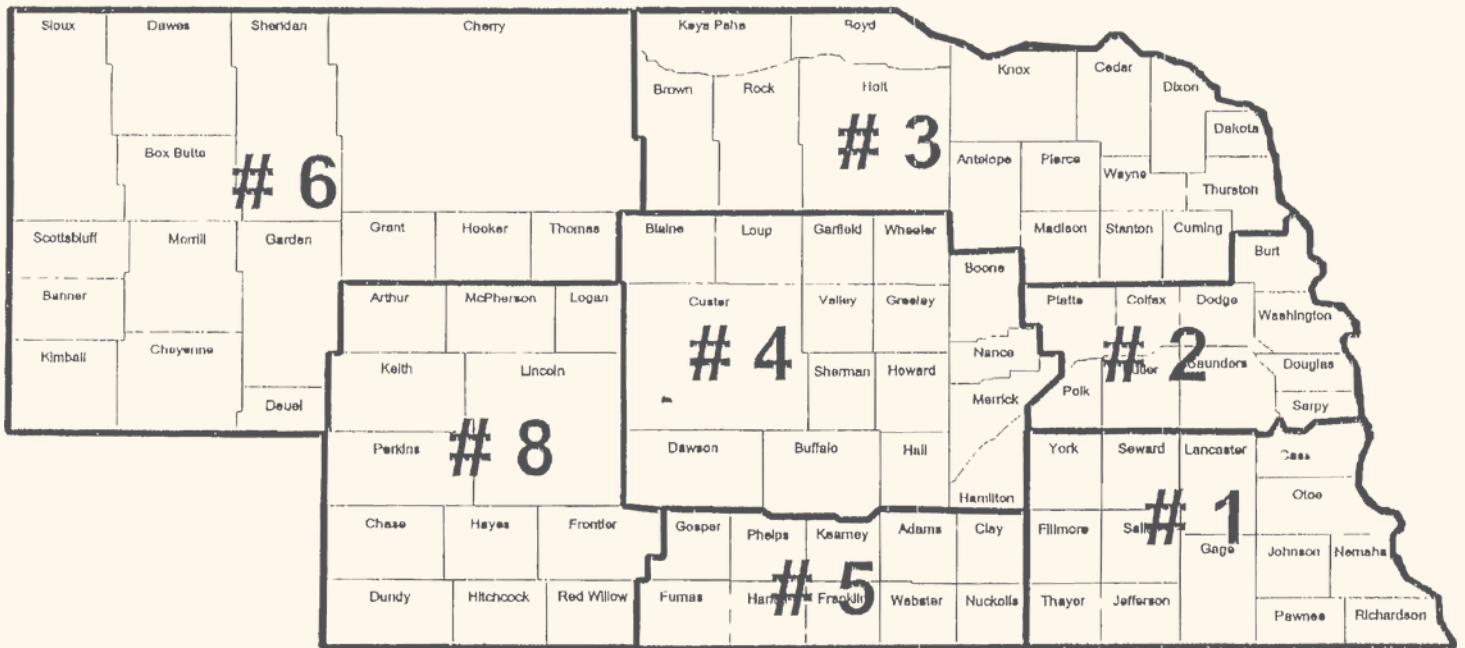
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Thank you 2026 Conference Gold Sponsors



"SCHOOL NUTRITION HEROES"

District Meetings



District 1 & 2

Saturday, October 17th
@ Affinity Group
in Omaha 8:30am

District 3

Saturday, October 17th
Winside High School
Time: TBD

District 4

Saturday, August 22nd
@ O'Connor Learning
Center, Grand Island
8am

District 6/8

Saturday, October 3rd
Wallace High School
Time: 10am

Unable to make your district's meeting. Join another district meeting.
Contact the President of the District for more details.



The 2026 Mountain Plains Crunch Off is an annual multi-state competition celebrating National Farm to School Month throughout October 2026. States within the USDA's Mountain Plains region compete to see which state can log the most per capita "crunches" into locally grown produce or minimally processed local foods (such as apples, carrots, cucumbers, popcorn, or seeds)



The Nebraska Farm to School program enriches the connection communities have with fresh, healthy food and local food producers by changing food purchasing and education practices at schools and early care and education settings.



National School Lunch Week will be celebrated from October 12 to October 16, 2026. The official theme for the 2026 celebration is "Cafeteria Circus: Where School Meals Take Center Stage," created to highlight the hard work and magic performed daily by school nutrition professionals.

NEBRASKA ANNUAL STUDENT ART CONTEST!

**Fueling the Future of School
Nutrition Starts Here!**

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

K-1

2-4

5-8

9-12

CONTEST THEME:

- Draw a creative picture about good health and nutrition!
- Show what good nutrition means to you!
- Get creative and inspire us!

FANTASTIC PRIZES!

Winners in Each Grade Group Receive:

- \$50 CASH AWARD
- Invitation to State Conference
- 1 Night Stay at Holiday Inn for family
- Attend Awards Banquet + FUN SWIMMING!

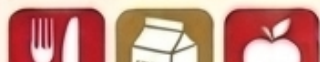
HOW TO ENTER:

1. Original artwork only!
2. Must be on 8x10 paper.
3. One entry per grade group.
4. Submit to your Food Service Manager

NSNA

Nebraska School Nutrition Association

SCHOOL NUTRITION





NEBRASKA
SSCHOOL
NNUTRITION
AASSOCIATION

ART CONTEST

“Fueling the Future of School Nutrition Starts Here”

Mail entry to: Nebraska School Nutrition Association, P.O. Box 45527, Omaha, NE 68145

Contest Deadline: December 14, 2026

All entries must be on 8x11 paper, and be the students original artwork. -----

Students Name: -----

Home Address:----- **Home Phone:** (____)-----

City:----- **State:**----- **Zip**-----

Grade:----- **Age:**-----

School:----- **School Phone:**-----

School Address:-----

City:----- **State:**----- **Zip:**-----

Principal:----- **Cafeteria Manager:**-----

(Principal's signature)

(Cafeteria manager's signature)

For association use only: Date received-----

Entry category K-1(____) 2-4(____) 5-8 (____) 9-12 (____)



MEMBERSHIP
forward
Grow Together

TOP REASONS TO JOIN SNA

When you become a member of SNA, you get access to a vibrant community dedicated to making a significant and enduring impact in the field of school nutrition.

HERE'S HOW SNA MEMBERSHIP CAN EMPOWER YOU ON YOUR JOURNEY TO SUCCESS:



EMPOWER YOUR GROWTH

Access to a library of 100+ educational webinars designed to quickly build your skills and knowledge on critical topics.



EXPAND YOUR NETWORK

Join a diverse community of nutrition professionals at our meetings and virtual events and gain fresh perspectives that will make an impact on the work you do.



AMPLIFY YOUR VOICE

Stand strong with us as we advocate for the critical issues impacting school meal programs at the state and national levels.



ADVANCE YOUR CAREER PATH

With SNA's Career Center, you'll stand out from the crowd, impress employers and find opportunities that will help you achieve your career goals.



CERTIFY YOUR EXPERTISE

Achieve recognition and validate your skills with our specialized certificate and credentialing programs.



PROMOTE YOUR PROGRAM

Utilize our comprehensive marketing and PR resources designed to promote and grow your school meal programs.



KEEP YOURSELF INFORMED

Get the latest trends, and success stories delivered through a subscription to SNA's SN Magazine.



GET MORE FOR LESS

SNA members always pay the lowest price and can find deep discounts on publications, conferences and courses.

BECOME A MEMBER TODAY!

Our mission: To empower and support school nutrition professionals in advancing the accessibility, quality and integrity of school nutrition programs.



National and State New Member Application

Member ID _____

① Have you ever been a SNA member? ☐ Yes ☐ No

② First Name _____ Last Name _____

③ Email _____ Job Title _____

④ School District _____ ⑤ School Name _____ ⑥ Chapter No. _____

⑦ Work Phone _____ Home Phone _____

⑧ Work Mailing Address (Please indicate preferred mailing address ☐ Work ☐ Home)
Address _____ Suite _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

⑨ Home Mailing Address
Address _____ Suite/Apt _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

⑩ Who referred you to SNA? First Name _____ Last Name _____ (Optional) Member ID: _____

⑪ Membership Category (Check either individual membership or school district/state agency membership (SDM). See back for description)

National Dues

Member Categories	Individual Membership	School District/ State Agency Membership
SN Employee	\$44 ☐	\$44 ☐
Student	\$44 ☐	N/A
Retired	\$44 ☐	N/A
SN Manager	\$46 ☐	\$46 ☐
District Director/Supv/Spec	\$155 ☐	\$155 ☐
Major City Director/Supv/Spec	\$155 ☐	\$155 ☐
State Agency Director and Staff	\$155 ☐	\$155 ☐
Nutrition Educator	\$155 ☐	\$155 ☐
Other	\$155 ☐	\$155 ☐
Affiliate Employee	\$22 ☐	N/A
Affiliate Retired	\$22 ☐	N/A

⑫ Employed by? ☐ Public School ☐ Private Management Company
☐ Private School ☐ CACFP

⑬ Does your employer pay your dues? ☐ Yes ☐ No

⑭ Are you responsible for school nutrition operations in your school district? ☐ Yes ☐ No

National, State Dues and Processing Fee are required.

⑮ NATIONAL DUES \$.

NE ⑯ STATE DUES* \$.

⑰ PROCESSING FEE \$ 3 . 0 0

⑱ TOTAL DUES \$.

⑲ Tax-deductible contribution to SN Foundation
___\$10 ___\$25 ___\$50 ___Other \$.

⑳ TOTAL PAYMENT \$.

㉑ For credit card payment, please visit www.schoolnutrition.org

㉒ Individual Membership Signature _____ Date _____

For SDM multiple applicants, you may use a spreadsheet found at www.schoolnutrition.org/sdm.

See reverse side for important information.

Dues subject to change.

㉓

FOR SCHOOL DISTRICT MEMBERSHIP (SDM) ONLY

SDM Main Contact Name _____

(Optional) SDM Main Contact Member ID _____

Email _____

Business Phone Number _____

SNA National and State Membership Application Guidelines

Membership Application for Individual and School District Memberships.

Instructions for completing the front of this application:

1. Please indicate if you have ever been a SNA member.
2. Print your full name as you would like it to appear in your membership record and on your membership card.
3. Print your email address and job title. All SNA members automatically receive emailed information related to the Organization.
4. Print your current school district.
5. Print your current school name.
6. If you know your local chapter number, please fill in.
7. Print your work and home phone number.
8. Print your work mailing address.
9. Print your home mailing address.
10. Print full name of member referrer who introduced you to SNA (only needed for new members). This will give the person credits for Star Club and annual membership campaign drives. Optional: Include referrer's SNA member ID.
11. Please review the membership categories listed. Check one that best describes your position. **School District/State Agency Membership (SDM) is a membership managed or coordinated by the school district/state agency and can be transferred to another individual in the same membership category. Please check with your district to see if you are eligible for SDM.**
12. Please check if you are employed by public school, private school, or private management company.
13. Please indicate if your employer pays your dues.
14. Please indicate if you are responsible for school nutrition operations in your school district.
15. Record your national dues based on membership category checked.
16. Record your state dues based on the dues listed on left side of application under "Your state dues are:"
17. All applications must include the processing fee.
18. Please add national, state dues and processing fee amounts. This is the total dues amount to be paid. Applications with incorrect total amount will be returned resulting in a delay of member benefits.
19. Record your optional contribution to the School Nutrition Foundation. The School Nutrition Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization and donations are tax deductible. Your contribution of \$10 or more will be acknowledged by the School Nutrition Foundation.
20. Add national dues, state dues, processing fee and any optional contributions. This is the total payment.
21. If paying by credit card, please visit www.schoolnutrition.org.
22. This box must be completed for SDM applicants.
23. Please sign and date your completed application. Required for individual membership only. Mail your application and payment to SNA, SNA Depository PO Box 719297, Philadelphia, PA 19171-9297

Membership dues cover a full year of member benefits. Processing of application takes approximately two to four weeks from receipt of payment. Once application is processed, new members will be able to access and print their membership card by logging in at www.schoolnutrition.org.

Dues Category	Membership Category	Description	Individual Membership	School District/State Agency Membership
SNE	School Nutrition Employee	Cooks, chefs, bakers, bookkeepers, technicians, assistants, etc.	\$44	\$44
STU	Student	Full-time students enrolled in post-secondary nutrition, health or other food related program. Does not include right to vote.	\$44	N/A
RET	Retired	Retired Members.	\$44	N/A
SNM	School Nutrition Manager	Managers, head cooks, head chefs, assistant managers.	\$46	\$46
DDS	School Nutrition Director, Supervisors, W Specialist, Executive Chefs	Working in a school nutrition program at the school district level.	\$155	\$155
MCD	School Nutrition Director, Supervisor, Specialist (Major City)	Working in a school nutrition program where the school district enrollment is 40,000 or more or city population is 200,000 or more.	\$155	\$155
SDS	State Agency Director, Supervisor, Specialist	Working in state office for child nutrition programs, including nutrition education.	\$155	\$155
EDU	School Nutrition Educator	Faculty working in a college/university setting.	\$155	\$155
OTH	Other	Principals, Superintendents, Teachers, etc. Does not include right to vote.	\$155	\$155
AFE	Affiliate Part-Time Staff (less than 4 hours daily)	Optional membership category for retired or part-time school nutrition staff. Does not include a subscription to SN magazine or the right to vote in the annual SNA election.	\$22	N/A
AFR	Affiliate Retired		\$22	N/A

Note: Contributions or gifts to SNA are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes. Contributions to the Foundation are deductible for IRS purposes. \$2.00 of your national dues is used for your subscription to the SN magazine.

BENEFACTOR PROGRAM



Have you ever wanted to attend the Nebraska School Nutrition Association State Conference or perhaps a continuing education class but affordability is a problem? You will be glad to know there are scholarship funds available for you through our benefactor program. For several years, the NSNA benefactor program has been raising funds to provide scholarships to SNSA members for conference registration/or national conference and other educational funding. Contact Johnny Ahlers or any board member if you are interested in receiving a scholarship application. All applications must be approved by the Executive Board before money can be awarded.

Donations range from \$10.00 - \$50.00+. You can contact Johnny Ahlers at: jahlers@ehpirates.org for more information. Donations can be made at anytime throughout the year. Donations from members such as a you and I help our members achieve their educational dreams.

Johnny Ahlers, Benefactor Chair



LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Greetings!

As I write this I am remembering our last conference. I handed out yellow bags at our food show. With each bag I said - "Take a bag, Run for office!" I hope that it got some of you thinking about the opportunities there are running for office! This year we are looking for candidates to serve as Vice President and Treasurer, as well as Members at Large to be on committees.

I can not stress enough how serving on the board has made me grow both professional and personally, getting me out of my comfort zone; as many of you have heard me say before! Being on the board does take some commitment - quarterly meetings, on a Saturday and usually in Kearney. Having attended may District meetings the last two years, I have met a lot of people who could fill the positions listed above. You have the passion for NSNA, feeding the students and for making sure that we grow in the right direction. There are others that will lend a helping hand, you are not in it alone! Reach out to me if you have questions or are interested - I'll be reaching out to you! And remember those that were at conference, You took a bag - You run for office! I am looking forward to hearing from you, it really is a great position to hold!

Johnny Ahlers

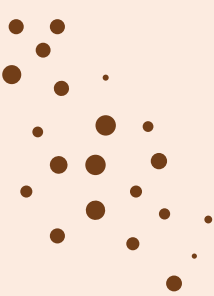
LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES



NLC²⁰₂₇ NATIONAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

The School Nutrition Association (SNA) National Leadership Conference (NLC) 2027 will be held on April 15–17, 2027, in Omaha, Nebraska. The event is designed for current and incoming state association leaders to build skills, network, and prepare for the future

68th Nebraska School Nutrition Association Annual Conference June 27-30, 2027 Kearney, NE



Congratulations! Free Conference winner for 2027 was Kenneth Bright from Wilber-Clatonia High School

2026 School Nutrition Association Annual National Conference



Pictured: Renee Cornett, Charleen Henry & Tara Brooking

The 2026 School Nutrition Association Annual National Conference (ANC26) was held July 12–14 in Charlotte, North Carolina. The conference brought together school nutrition professionals from across the country to learn, network, and share ideas about improving school meal programs. The theme, “The Power of School Meals,” emphasized the important role school nutrition plays in supporting student health and success.

Two highlights were the general session speakers, John Register and Col. Nicole Malachowski (Ret.). Register, a Paralympic silver medalist and Desert Storm veteran, encouraged attendees to turn setbacks into opportunities and embrace change. Malachowski, the first woman pilot to fly with the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds, shared her experiences with leadership, perseverance, and overcoming adversity.

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins also addressed attendees and discussed upcoming USDA regulations affecting school nutrition programs. Her remarks provided insight into changes on the horizon and what school nutrition professionals can expect as they work to meet new requirements.

Overall, ANC26 provided valuable education, networking, and inspiration, giving attendees new ideas and renewed motivation to strengthen their school nutrition programs and continue supporting students.





NSNA Website

This will be the last issue of Let's Connect newsletter in print. We want to thank Morris Printing out of Kearney for always working with us and producing quality printed newsletters over the years!

Newsletters starting in the Spring of 2027 will be on the Nebraska School Nutrition Association's website. Check out the site for all things NSNA as well as State Conference Registration Information.

NSNA T-SHIRTS

Be on the look out on the NSNA website for opening dates to purchase your very own Nebraska SNA t-shirt in a variety of colors.



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GOODS & GIFTS

Open

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Mission: To advance good nutrition for all children.

Vision: Healthful meals and nutrition education are available to all children.



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– NEWSLETTER –