

AAFB Board Member David Schwake Named 2017 School Nutrition Hero

The national, nonprofit School Nutrition Foundation (SNF) has recognized Food Service Director David Schwake, MS, RD, SNS, of the Litchfield Elementary School District #79 (AZ), as a 2017 School Nutrition Hero.

David started a backpack program and school gardens in his district, using support from the local Kiwanis Club. He has been a board member of the Association of Arizona Food Banks for nine years. During these years of service, David helped find opportunities to educate communities, schools, and parents about available resources.

“DAVID CARES SO DEEPLY ABOUT ENSURING KIDS ARE FED HEALTHY MEALS, AND ALWAYS HAS NEW IDEAS TO DO EVEN MORE TO ENSURE THE 1 IN 4 KIDS IN ARIZONA WHO ARE AT RISK OF HUNGER HAVE SOMEONE ON THEIR SIDE,” said Angie Rodgers, President and CEO of AAFB.

2017 School Nutrition Heroes are recognized at SNF’s Celebration of School Nutrition Heroes, which is held during the School Nutrition Association’s 45th Legislative Action Conference in Washington, DC, in April 2017.



David Schwake, MS, RD, SNS.

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Congress Should Reject Proposals to Gut Hunger Programs

By Casey Dreher

There's been a lot of talk from our new Congress and President Trump about helping ordinary Americans who've been left behind economically. So it's truly puzzling that some members of Congress are preparing to attack the very safety net programs their own constituents depend on to survive, like SNAP (formerly food stamps).

ABOUT ONE IN FIVE ARIZONANS STILL STRUGGLES WITH HUNGER. But without the anti-hunger programs we have in place right now, that number would be much higher. SNAP, for example, serves as a lifeline to approximately one million Arizonans, nearly half of them children. But we can never forget that these are more than statistics. **THEY REPRESENT REAL HUMAN LIVES: OUR NEIGHBORS, OUR COMMUNITY – US.**

During my own foundational years, I spent more time wondering where I would get my next meal than what homework was due. I still remember the embarrassment I felt as the sounds from my empty and grumbling stomach would echo through the class for all to hear.

I remember a time in 3rd grade when my mother, who was a victim of domestic abuse, told us to grab whatever we could in five minutes so we could leave and get away from the violence. My siblings went for books and clothes, while I raided the fridge for a carton of milk and a box of cereal. Food was always on my mind. Even at a very young age, I recognized the importance of the 1st of the month, when food stamps would come.

Even years later, after serving my country in the military and beginning college, I would have to choose between lunch or the \$5 in gas it would take for me to drive to and from classes. Yet today, I am a first generation college graduate, a community advocate, and a national leader in my field. **MY STORY ISN'T UNIQUE; IT IS REFLECTED IN THE LIVES OF THE 40,000 VETERANS IN ARIZONA WHO RELY ON SNAP TO HELP THEM GET BY, AND THE ONE IN FOUR ARIZONA KIDS WHO STRUGGLE WITH HUNGER.**

It should come as no surprise that children who have enough nutritious food to eat tend to be healthier and do better in school.



FOOD BANK DAY AT THE CAPITOL

On March 13, food bank staff, friends, and advocates got together for **FOOD BANK DAY AT THE ARIZONA CAPITOL**. They met with legislators from across the state and shared the importance of safety net programs. Legislators also recognized St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance, an AAFB member, to commemorate their 50th anniversary of serving Arizonans at risk of hunger.



In Arizona, **40,000** Arizona veterans participate in SNAP – more than enough to fill the Phoenix Suns stadium two times.

Nationwide, **1 in 5** veteran households rely on food banks.



Kids who participate in SNAP are **18 percent more likely to graduate from high school** than similar kids who do not participate in SNAP.



Left: Casey Dreher, Now and Then.

And despite popular perception, the overwhelming majority of SNAP recipients are either children, the elderly, people with disabilities, veterans like me, or adults who have jobs but still can't afford to make ends meet because of low wages. During an economic downturn or natural disasters, SNAP is flexible and can respond immediately. That means that even if people find themselves suddenly out of work, they don't have to worry about losing their only dependable source of food as well.

Just here in Arizona, **SNAP HELPED 1 IN 7 RESIDENTS PUT FOOD ON THE TABLE LAST YEAR.** It even boosted the state, **PUMPING ABOUT \$1.4 BILLION INTO ARIZONA'S ECONOMY.** Even more, every SNAP dollar spent generates \$1.70 in economic activity for the 4,200 Arizona businesses that accept the EBT card used by SNAP recipients.

If these programs are working, then why are they constantly being targeted for massive cuts or "restructuring"? Now more than ever, **WE MUST STAND UP AND FIGHT AGAINST ANY STRUCTURAL CHANGES** — such as so-called "block grants" — to effective anti-poverty programs that would undermine how well they work. If our representatives in Congress are actually serious about helping ordinary Arizonans, they should reject any proposals that will take our country backwards and make life even worse for the 225,000 Arizonans, including 118,000 children, that SNAP helped to pull out of poverty last year.

Join me and the Association of Arizona Food Banks — we must stand up for SNAP.





hunger relief license plate

Have you seen this license plate when driving around Arizona, or do you even have one yourself? The Hunger Relief license plate costs \$25 (plus postage and handling) and benefits AAFB. **Get yours when you renew your Arizona license plate** and help end hunger one “plate” at a time. A big thanks to everyone who has this special plate. See you on the road!

Program Updates

Children and Youth

ARIZONA RANKS NUMBER 29 ON THE ANNUAL SCHOOL BREAKFAST SCORECARD RELEASED in February by the Food Research & Action Center (FRAC, a national anti-hunger advocacy group). The Scorecard ranks all 50 states and the District of Columbia on the participation of low-income children in the School Breakfast Program, and finds that **267,331 LOW-INCOME CHILDREN IN ARIZONA PARTICIPATED IN SCHOOL BREAKFAST ON AN AVERAGE SCHOOL DAY** in 2015–2016.

The report finds that 54 low-income children in Arizona ate school breakfast for every 100 that received free or reduced-price school lunch during the 2015–2016 school year.

“We are committed to increasing school breakfast participation so that more children in Arizona are starting their day with the nutrition they need to learn and thrive,” said Angie Rodgers, President and CEO of AAFB, a statewide anti-hunger organization. **“SCHOOL BREAKFAST MEANS LESS HUNGER, BETTER HEALTH, AND IMPROVED EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR OUR CHILDREN.** We will continue to work with schools across the state to improve our school breakfast participation rate so even more children can focus on learning, and not on their growling stomachs.”

Transportation

New efforts in produce sourcing from the southern part of Arizona and Mexico are producing big windfalls of everything from watermelons and tomatoes to squash and peppers. **THE NOVEMBER TO MAY PRODUCE SEASON IS ON TRACK THIS YEAR TO REFLECT A 600% INCREASE IN FRESH PRODUCE OVER LAST YEAR IN THE FOOD BANK NETWORK!**



ABOUT AAFB Established in 1984, AAFB is a private, nonprofit organization serving five member food banks and a network of nearly 1,200 food pantries and agencies. AAFB partners with Feeding America and other hunger relief organizations nationwide to end food insecurity in our state and country. For more than 30 years, AAFB’s programs, including transportation, the hunger hotline and getting children meals in school, have helped alleviate hunger in Arizona. Our advocacy efforts target reducing the need for emergency food from the charitable system. For more information about our organization and work, visit our website at www.azfoodbanks.org.

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