

# FOOD FOR THOUGHT NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2025

## ISNA Board Nominations Open Now!

Are you passionate about opportunities to grow professionally, network with school nutrition professionals, and advocate for national issues? Do you know someone who values servant leadership and desires to actively participate in the Indiana School Nutrition Association? WE WANT YOU!

ISNA values servant leadership and strives for representation from districts across the state. The Nominating Committee is seeking nominations of passionate individuals with a heart for school nutrition and diverse experiences for the ISNA Board of Director and Region Representative positions below.

### Board of Directors:

- Vice President
- Secretary/Treasurer
- Regional Representative Chairperson
- Professional Development Chairperson
- Membership & Public Relations Chairperson
- Public Policy & Legislation Chairperson

### Region Representatives:

- Northwest\*
- Northeast
- Central\*
- Southwest
- Southeast\*



### Nomination Process:

Nominate yourself or someone you else for the open positions listed above.

Nominations will be accepted now until January 24th at 11:59 p.m. EST.  
[CLICK HERE TO APPLY.](#)

### Candidacy Requirements:

- ISNA Membership for at least the past (2) years
- Attended at least (1) Annual State Conference in the past (3) years
- Region Representative's primary place of employment shall be in his/her respective region (insert link to new region representative map)

### Additional requirements for candidacy of Vice President:

- Must have served on the ISNA Board of Directors for (2) of the past (10) years



# Representative Mrvan Meets with NWI Directors

On January 10, 2025, at 7895 Broadway in Merrillville, IN, the NWI Food Service Directors met with U.S. Representative Frank J. Mrvan to discuss "Healthy Meals for All," a critical initiative aimed at improving school nutrition programs.

Key discussion points included:

- **Tackling Meal Debt:** Tammy Watkins outlined strategies to address the financial burden of unpaid meal debts, advocating for policy changes to promote sustainability and equity.
- **Ending Meal Discrimination:** Cindy Vondra called for eliminating meal shaming by converting reduced-price students to free and adjusting Federal Poverty Guidelines to extend benefits to more families.
- **Enhancing Student Success:** Tiffany Ulman highlighted the positive impact of universal meal programs on academic performance, attendance, and long-term health.
- **Simplifying Administration:** Patrick Ryba-King detailed the administrative challenges tied to eligibility tracking, emphasizing how universal meals could streamline operations and allow for program enhancements.
- **Driving Economic Growth:** Angelica Claiborne discussed the economic advantages of USDA's "Buy American" provisions, showcasing the role of school meal programs in supporting local farmers and businesses.

The meeting underscored the critical need for universal access to healthy meals, fostering equity, academic success, and healthier communities across Indiana.





# Diners and Dives

Text and Photos by Shari Benyousky



“With this job, you never get bored!” Food Service Director Stacie Light greeted us at the Main Office at the Warsaw Community High School. Stacie had arranged for Diners and Dives to taste the food, particularly the legendary Smart Mouth Pizza offered daily at the High School. We showed our IDs to get guest approval before being swept up in the maze of students and hallways.

The Warsaw Community High School feels like a small city when you’re inside during a school day. With around 2,200 students, it must operate efficiently. “Warsaw Community Schools is actually the third largest employer in the county,” Director of Communications and Strategic Partnerships Krista Polston explained as we got in line with the Third Lunch crowd shortly after noon.

On any given day 900-1000 high school students choose to purchase a main entrée, a salad bar, or a Smart Mouth Pizza with sides. We brought a few Smart Mouth Optimist Regulars to give it a try.

There were other options too. Some students bring their own lunches, so the school provides microwaves for them. There’s also a vegetarian option usually including yogurt. A student pays only \$3 for lunch. Adults like us pay \$4.50 plus extras. “We keep the price right,” Stacie Light nodded at our gasps of delight.



## **The Rest Of The Cast Of Characters**

WCHS Principal Troy Akers welcomed us while keeping an eye on his walkie-talkie. "I'm still working on hiring a few key people today, so I can't join you for lunch," he told us between talking to students. "It's tough to hire science and math people these days. We also need people in our special needs area to support our outstanding teachers."

Principal Akers is in his 29th year. He gave cafeteria manager Brenda a side hug. "Brenda has been with me the whole time I've been here," he said with appreciation.

## **How To Get A Free Pizza For Lunch Every Day**

"I still need a few workers too," Brenda told us. Workers also get a free lunch every day. That means you too could get pizza every single day if you wanted.

Ben Barkey, the principal of the Warsaw Area Career Center (the north part of the building) had lunch duty on this particular Friday. "I asked them to make my favorite pizza, the Hot Wings Flavor," he grinned. "I also love hot dog entrees. Anyone who knows me from my days at Madison Elementary knows that hot dogs and dried apricots were always the happiest days."

The pizzas come in regular flavors like cheese, pepperoni, or sausage, but students also find rotating interesting flavors like Hawaiian, hot wings, chicken BBQ ranch, and Texas. "That one comes with jalapenos," Brenda frowned. "I thought it would be more popular than it was."

## **Lunch Dreams Do Come True**

Brenda Martinez has been with Principal Troy Akers for his entire tenure. Cafeteria Manager Brenda Martinez, who has worked at the high school for 30 years, always arrives at the high school at 6 a.m. to get breakfast ready for the 7:25 a.m. start time and begin the pizza process.

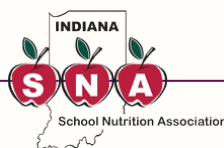
Each day the pizzas are handmade from the dough to the sauce, to the toppings, to the cheese. She gestured around at her team of 19 working at the cafeteria. "We have a lot of good teamwork to make this happen every day," she said proudly. The team creates 450-500 fresh pizzas daily. Leftover pizzas can be purchased by students for breakfast the next day. "They love it!" Brenda smiled.

Students can purchase pizzas a la carte, but the school encourages them to add fresh veggies and fruits by making it cheaper to purchase a meal than alone. Fruit and veggie options the day we visited were cut up carrots or celery, fresh strawberries, dried cherries, or a little container of something orange. "Is the orange stuff apricot sauce?" Realtor Jeff Owens asked.

Brenda explained that sometimes they mix applesauce with various colors of Jello to change things up. Today the containers of applesauce were orange to celebrate an evening Tigers football game. "Why not add some black, maybe black licorice, too?" Jeff inquired to multiple grimaces around the table.

## **Diners And Dives Starts A Food Fight**

Ben Barkey calls Jeff Owens to the podium to have a serious discussion. 1st Source Banker Paul Finley, who probably contemplated this move all week, decided to liven lunch up. He tossed a dried cherry with a direct hit on my forehead. "Food Fight!" called out Jeff Owens. There was a bit of a pause and some side glances from the students at the surrounding tables. They noticed Ben Barkey with us. "It's a joke," laughed Krista Polston.





# ISNA Award Nominations Open Now!

Nominate colleagues for a job well done.

ISNA values the opportunity to honor its members who have gone "above and beyond" in different aspects of their career but may not have met the criteria set forth for the State SNA Awards. Members are encouraged to nominate for the awards listed below. Click the boxes below for criteria information and to nominate. Awards will be presented at the Annual Conference in November 2025. Nominations are due March 1, 2025.

**DIRECTOR, MANAGER, OR  
EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR**

**OFFICE ASSISTANT OF THE  
YEAR**

**ASSISTANT  
DIRECTOR/SUPERVISOR OF THE  
YEAR**

**SUPER STAR SERVICE AWARD**



# Mark your 2025 Calendars

## ISNA Director Workshop

When: April 14-15, 2025  
Where: Indianapolis, IN  
Cost: \$195 for Director Level Members

## ISNA Annual Conference

When: November 5-7, 2025  
Where: French Lick, IN

## ISNA/IDOE Certificate Courses

When: January 22, 12:30 p.m.  
What: USDA Foods: Background, Utilization, and Strategy  
Where: Virtual  
Cost: \$90 for members, \$130 for non-members

When: February 12, 12:30 p.m.  
What: School Nutrition Policies & Procedures  
Where: Virtual  
Cost: \$90 for members, \$130 for non-members

When: February 19, 12:30 p.m.  
What: Marketing Your School Nutrition Program  
Where: Virtual  
Cost: \$90 for members, \$130 for non-members

[Click Here to View All Courses](#)

## Thank You Partners!

Keurig Dr. Pepper  
KeyImpact Sales & Systems  
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LINQ  
Los Cabos Mexican Foods  
Nardone Bros Pizza  
PaySchools  
PepsiCo Foodservice  
Pilgrim's (Gold Kist)  
Premier Marketing Group  
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McCain Foods USA  
Michael Foods, Inc.  
No Kid Hungry Indiana  
Phoenix Marketing  
Professional Reps

