This year, MSNA Past President Cheryl Pick, Foley Public Schools, and MSNA President Michele Hawkinson, Tracy Area Schools, have launched a new mentor-mentee program available to current MSNA members. Cheryl and Michele have worked to pair new and seasoned directors, with the goal to provide guidance and encouragement to the new director as they step into their role. A few pairings have began since the program launched, and one of our mentees, Janine Teske, Clinton-Graceville-Beardsley Schools, let us know how the program has benefitted her.

Janine Teske, 2023 Mentee

Q: What school district are you a part of and when did you begin your role as director there?
A: *I started working in a dual role at the Clinton-Graceville-Beardsley Schools in February of 2023. My job is 1/2 time payroll and 1/2 time Food Service Director.*

Q: What currently are your biggest challenges as a school nutrition director?
A: *Mostly the lack of staffing, or people calling in sick has been my biggest challenge. Although I have over 18 years of working in a school system, Food Service was new to me.*

Q: What are you most excited to learn about through this mentoring program?
A: *Having someone available to ask a question to at any time and to run things by.*

Q: What are some of the lessons/knowledge you've gained since beginning the program?
A: *Becoming involved in SNA was a suggestion of my mentor and it was a great decision. I have learned a lot from this organization.*

Q: Would you recommend the program to others?
A: *Yes, having that person there if you need them helps you feel more comfortable. I know the program is new and my wish would be that there would be more outreach from the mentor to the mentee as I was not even sure where to begin to ask questions, etc.*

Looking to get involved? If you are at all interested in mentoring or being mentored, please let us know by emailing Michele (hawkinsonm@tracy.k12.mn.us) and Cheryl (cpick@apps.isd51.org). They will work to pair you with a director that will be suitable for you and your school size.