

Meet the Member

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**WINONA AREA PUBLIC
SCHOOLS**

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Tell us about the summer lunch bus and how it's impacted community reach.

We started serving summer meals in the summer of 2015. Meals are served at our Summer School Key Kids program, and the YMCA summer program, and we work with the Winona Housing & Development Authority to reach community members.

When school is out for summer the bus is parked daily outside the library to serve the children. We also take it to the city's outdoor swimming pool and parks.

How did the idea of using a bus come about?

When we decided to start a summer meal program, I noticed that the public library was full of children because they have great summer reading and school-age programs. Since the library is a historical site in Winona, there was no place in the building to serve food.

That's when I went online to see what other summer programs were doing around the State and Country. I saw a bus being used to serve meals! I called our local bus company to see if they had a bus they could sell our district for a low price. After

purchasing the bus and our school district's maintenance department took the seats out and added tables so children could eat meals on the bus.

What tips do you have for successful staff retention?

I asked my staff to help me answer this question. They said that there is positive energy in our department. They don't feel judged when they have a problem or need help. We listen to issues and work together to come up with solutions. My favorite answer was MYOB or Mind Your Own Business. In other words, we don't condone negative gossip.

Why did you join MSNA and how has it helped your journey in school nutrition?

When I was a new director many years ago, another director reached out to me and asked me to join School Nutrition Association. When I moved to Minnesota, it was natural to join MSNA and I'm thankful to have made several connections. I became very involved in the association serving on different committees and chairing some committees. I appreciate the ability to ask questions on the group forum and get answers from others. I love getting together with other schools at Chapter meetings sharing ideas and learning about school nutrition programs.

What advice do you have for districts wanting to add more farm-to-school items to their menus?

Start small like local apples and promote Apple Crunch Day. Research places where you can purchase local products and have them delivered from a hub. Plan one menu a month where food is sourced from Minnesota. Get in touch with others who are promoting Farm to School programs. [Renewing the Countryside](#) is a great resource.

Describe the most popular meal on your lunch menu and your personal favorite.

Fajita Chicken Bowls are the most popular menu item for students. My personal favorite is Chicken Tikka Masala.

“Jennifer Walters is innovative, and student centered...she is also focused on her staff retention and education.”

-Emily Malone, MSNA President-elect

