

## Meet The Member

**Trish McDonald**  
FOOD SERVICE MANAGER

**BURNSVILLE HIGH SCHOOL**  
**BURNSVILLE - EAGAN - SAVAGE**  
**ISD 191**

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### **Tell us about your role:**

I am in my 16th year in child nutrition after transitioning from a 19-year career in the corporate world. My background is in Interior Design, but I worked in restaurants throughout high school and college. I currently serve as the Food Service Manager at Burnsville High School in Minnesota (ISD 191)

### **How has MSNA membership contributed to your professional growth?**

I first got involved with MSNA when I realized how much I loved this career and wanted to grow into a leadership role. My membership has helped me gain valuable training, with the conferences playing a key role in that training.

### **What motivates you to work in school nutrition?**

What I enjoy most is the connections we make with students. We see so many students every day, and creating a fun, welcoming, and inclusive environment is important to our entire team. When students tell us, "We love you guys" or "You guys are the best," we know we're making a positive impact.

**What is one thing people often overlook or misunderstand about school nutrition programs?**

I think the amount of work we do is sometimes misunderstood. Every day, we manage schedule changes, unexpected emergencies, special dietary needs, staffing shortages, orders, deliveries, and point of sale challenges. Despite all of that, we continue to serve students on time. When you make it look easy, people don't always see everything happening behind the scenes.

**Staff morale is critical to a successful operation. How do you keep your team engaged, motivated, and feeling valued?**

We strive to create a positive environment in our kitchen. Each month, we recognize a "Rock Star of the Month" to celebrate team members who go above and beyond. We also try to plan a team-building activity each month, whether it's attending a student musical, playing bingo, or going out for dinner together.

Throughout the year, we like to wear fun headbands and glasses to celebrate occasions such as Halloween, Thanksgiving, Valentine's Day, and graduation. The students always comment on how fun we are, and our staff looks forward to it as well!

**What are some of the biggest challenges you face in your role?**

One of the biggest challenges is communication. At times, Food Service is left out of important communications that are necessary to keep operations running smoothly. This most often involves schedule changes related to school events.

**What do you look forward to most each day at work?**

Making connections with students is my favorite part of the job. Taking time to talk with students each morning is something I look forward to every day. When students start seeking you out to share something they're proud of or come to you for encouragement, it's amazing!!

**What's the most popular item on your menu?**

Orange Chicken, Honey Sriracha Chicken, and General Tso's Chicken are always favorites. Our Rice Bowl Day is also very popular, with students referring to it as "Chipotle Day."

**What accomplishment are you most proud of in your school nutrition career?**

I am most proud of advancing to manage the high school. I started as an Associate at the elementary level and later became a Manager. Eight years later, I moved into managing the high school. It has been a challenge that I truly enjoy, and my corporate experience has proven to be very valuable in the role.

**What advice would you give to someone new to school nutrition?**

Enjoy it! Get to know the students, and strive to make your smile one they look forward to seeing every day!