



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SPERO NAMED SILVER SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD WINNER

NEW ORLEANS, La. – Jan. 21, 2018 – Director of Nutrition, Sally Spero, of the Lakeside Union School District (LUSD), Lakeside, Calif., is the 2018 recipient of the National Foodservice Achievement Management Excellence’s (FAME) Silver Special Achievement Award. Spero received her award at the FAME award ceremony at the Roosevelt Hotel in New Orleans during the School Nutrition Association’s 2018 School Nutrition Industry Conference. The Silver Special Achievement Award is awarded to a director who demonstrates an exceptional ability to recognize and solve problems unique to small districts.

Spero, who joined LUSD in 2012, transformed the District’s nine-school central kitchen from a clearinghouse for frozen precooked foods with no full-time staff into a tightly run professional operation with an executive chef, professional baker, and several full-time staff. Frozen pizzas, cheeseburgers and chicken sandwiches gave way to fresh, healthy food, prepared on site, to support a meal program serving 5,100 students.

Spero worked with her staff to develop recipes and menus that expanded daily offerings, including a salad bar with eight different offerings. She also redesigned the kitchen to improve workflow and added new equipment to allow for more “from scratch” cooking. In addition to hiring more professional, full-time staff, Spero developed a high-energy training program that can include dancing and games for existing employees which focuses on topics such as “offer versus serve” and how to prepare for an audit. She also mandated the ServSafe program for all employees to improve their professional skills.

Underfunding, a familiar challenge for many foodservice programs, is another issue Spero addressed aggressively upon assuming her role as Director. Faced with annual revenue of \$1.2 million, Spero knew she had to do something. She pursued increased meal certification by modernizing what had been a largely handwritten and lengthy process into one with online meal applications, scanning software, and automatic envelope processing. Spero also began monthly direct certification to include more qualified students, increasing the District’s certification rate from 40% to 47%. She expanded the Second Chance breakfast program at three schools, and fed over 500 students daily who had not previously eaten breakfast. These changes, plus her keen fiscal management increased revenues to \$2 million, and food costs have decreased from 51% to 42%.

Among her achievements, Spero initiated a supper program that, in addition to expanding meal options for students, generated revenue that allowed five workers additional hours that made them eligible for benefits. Spero’s summer feeding program, run in conjunction with the District’s summer camp program offers breakfast and lunch options that can draw

up to 100 community members daily. The summer program has been recognized with two Western Region Summer Sunshine Awards and one Gold Level Turnip the Beet award.

Colleagues describe Spero as a risk-taker who is eager to try out new ideas, many of which she acquired during her 13 years on the California School Nutrition Association Board, and as editor of the state magazine. With fifteen years of experience as a director, Spero oversees 32 employees who provide over 3000 daily meals to the 5100 students of the Lakeside Union School District.

“When I won the 2009 Silver Spirit Award, I had no idea I would ever be nominated again. But since that time FAME helped give me the confidence to take a new career challenge in 2012 that lead to this second opportunity. Thank you FAME for being there for me,” said Spero.

For 29 years the FAME Awards have been honoring school nutrition professionals who raise the industry standards by tackling challenges within their school districts and communities. FAME event tickets can be obtained by visiting www.fameawards.net. For event updates throughout the year, visit www.fameawards.net or www.facebook.com/fameawards.

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