



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HALLFORD NAMED SILVER SPIRIT AWARD WINNER

NEW ORLEANS, La. – Jan. 21, 2018 – Assistant Director, Karen Hallford, MS, RD, LD, of the Gwinnett County Public Schools, Gwinnett County, Ga, is the 2018 recipient of the National Foodservice Achievement Management Excellence’s (FAME) Silver Spirit Award. Hallford 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 Spirit Award is awarded to a person in a management position such as an assistant director or coordinator who shows commitment to the people and programs of school nutrition and distinguishes her/himself through innovative programs, marketing, training, customer service, and/or staff motivation.

“I am humbled to join a group of past winners whom I have long admired. Receiving this award is a testament to my passion for child nutrition and confirms that the Gwinnett School nutrition team is competitive among the best programs,” said Hallford.

After five years of clinical work with children, Hallford joined Gwinnett County Public Schools as the coordinator of nutrition support and procurement. Gwinnett County Public Schools is the largest school system in Georgia. Hallford pushed for the county to become an early adopter of the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act. In 2010, she developed and implemented the county’s Farm to School program that vastly expanded the use of local produce and ingredients in food preparation and menu creation. Today, local foods appear on school menus every day and 50 percent of the fruit and vegetables served are locally grown.

Building off the success of the Farm to School program, Hallford created the Nutrition Education and Training (NEAT) Project to educate children about good nutrition. Hallford trained a cadre of nutrition educators to teach students about the origins of food, leveraging 143 school gardens and the Farm to School produce to teach about the foods’ nutritional value, and inviting students into the kitchen to learn about food preparation. Hallford also created a stipend program for managers who undertake additional duties such as the NEAT Project.

Hallford prioritizes community outreach in her nutrition program management style. Her use of parent and student focus groups saw menu changes including a return to comfort food staples like grilled cheese sandwiches and tomato soup, the creation of new spice blends to reduce sodium consumption, and the introduction of authentic Mexican foods and flavor profiles into the menu.

To identify and implement best practices, Hallford and her team developed nine

Innovation, Development, Excellence, and Achievement (IDEA) Centers in the school district. These centers serve as incubators for testing out new ideas and practices and helped with the implementation of new products and processes as peers, rather than central office staff, introduced the changes.

Ken Yant, School Nutrition Program Director at Gwinnett County Public Schools said, "Karen's passion for child nutrition and boundless energy for bringing us to the next level of excellence is valued by our entire school community."

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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