*Please personalize/localize the following information and distribute to local media.*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Contact: *[Insert SFA communication’s contact name, email, phone]***

***[Insert SFA/District Name] Wins Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Award from USDA and Action for Healthy Kids***

**[Insert CITY, STATE, Month Day, Year]** -- **[*Insert SFA/District Name]*** received a Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Award for making significant improvements to the nutritional quality of their school meals.

Awarded by Action for Healthy Kids (AFHK) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), ***[Insert SFA/District Name]*** received the ***[Category/Award]*** *from* for work in ***[share a 2-3 sentence summary of the work that earned you the recognition award, including any measurable outcomes***. ***Example: ABC School District hosted student focus groups to help the school nutrition team develop new, healthier lunch menu items. The team introduced several new pizza menu items that use a whole grain crust, offering a delicious lunch makeover with lower sodium.]***

***[Choose ONE of the following descriptions, based on your applicable award.]***

**Lunch Trailblazer Award** winners improved the nutrition quality of school lunches by meeting weekly sodium guidelines and implementing student engagement and/or nutrition education.

**Breakfast Trailblazer Award** winners improved the nutritional quality of their school breakfast menus by meeting specific criteria including limiting added sugars and implementing student engagement and/or nutrition education.

**Innovative School Lunch Makeover Award** winners have given a makeover to a popular school lunch meal that meets all meal pattern requirements, specific dietary specifications, and has incorporated student engagement.

**Innovation in the Cultural Diversity of School Meals Award** winners offered nutritious school menu options that reflect the different cultures of students, facilitated student/community menu collaboration, and provided culturally appropriate nutrition education.

**Innovation in the Preparation of School Meals Award** winners incorporated new menu items that are prepared from scratch using a local agricultural product or USDA food in accordance with the USDA recipe standardization process and incorporated student engagement.

**Innovation in Nutrition Education Award** winners implemented nutrition education activities that made classroom, cafeteria, community, and home connections for students and parents/guardians.

“We are thrilled to be recognized for our efforts to enhance and elevate school nutrition,” said [***School Spokesperson.] [Add what this award means to your staff and students].***

“We congratulate ***[District name]*** on this important achievement,” said Rob Bisceglie, Executive Officer & President for Action for Healthy Kids. “The HMI Recognition Awards are an opportunity to showcase innovative school nutrition practices that provide children with access to nutritious school meals,” he added.

As an award recipient, ***[SFA/District]*** will receive national and local recognition and travel stipends to attend a national Healthy Meals Summit in Las Vegas. Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Award Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis until July 2025. The HMI Recognition Awards are open to all SFAs, and more information can be found at [www.healthymealsincentives.org/recognition-awards/](http://www.healthymealsincentives.org/recognition-awards/).

As part of a cooperative agreement to develop and implement the USDA FNS’s Healthy Meals Incentives Initiative, AFHK is recognizing school food authorities that have made significant improvements to the nutritional quality of their school meals. The Recognition Awards spotlight innovative practices, student and community engagement activities, and strategies schools have used to provide meals that are consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

**About USDA Healthy Meals Incentives Initiative**  
USDA’s Healthy Meals Incentives Initiative is part of the Biden-Harris Administration’s National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition and Health. The National Strategy provides a roadmap of actions the federal government will take to end hunger and reduce diet-related diseases by 2030 – all while reducing disparities.

**About Action for Healthy Kids**

Action for Healthy Kids is dedicated to improving children’s health and well-being by bringing together and mobilizing educators, families, and other key stakeholders to help children lead healthy lives. Through its core programming and family-school partnerships, Action for Healthy Kids has impacted more than 20 million children in 55,000 schools nationwide to address systemic challenges in underserved communities. In 2023, AFHK joined in a cooperative agreement with USDA Food and Nutrition to help implement the Healthy Meals Incentives Initiative, designed to improve the nutritional quality of school meals through food systems transformation, school food authority recognition, and technical assistance. To learn more about its growing network of volunteers and champions, visit: [actionforhealthykids.org.](https://www.actionforhealthykids.org/)

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