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**RECOGNITION AWARD TOOLKIT: PRESS RELEASE TEMPLATE**

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

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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

***[Insert SFA/District Name] Wins First 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 improving the nutritional quality of their school meals. Awarded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) in collaboration with Action for Healthy Kids (AFHK), ***[Insert SFA/District Name]*** received the ***[Category/Award\*]***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 to use as part of your summary in the above paragraph:***

**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 congratulate ***[SFA/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.

***[Personalize this quote and add what this award means to your staff and students].***

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, NV. The HMI Recognition Awards are open to all school districts, and more information can be found at [www.healthymealsincentives.org/recognition-awards/](http://www.healthymealsincentives.org/recognition-awards/).

AFHK is recognizing school districts that have made improvements to the nutritional quality of their school meals as part of a cooperative agreement to develop and implement the USDA FNS’s Healthy Meals Incentives Initiative. Healthy school meals are an essential part of the school environment and a proven tool for improving a child’s health, growth, development, and educational outcomes. AFHK and USDA are committed to working together to strengthen school meals and investment in a bright future for our children.

**ABOUT USDA’S FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE**

USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service works to end hunger and improve food and [nutrition security](https://www.usda.gov/nutrition-security) through a suite of 16 nutrition assistance programs, such as the school breakfast and lunch programs, WIC and SNAP. Together, these programs serve 1 in 4 Americans over the course of a year, promoting consistent and equitable access to healthy, safe, and affordable food essential to optimal health and well-being. FNS also provides science-based nutrition recommendations through the co-development of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. To learn more about FNS, visit [www.fns.usda.gov](https://www.fns.usda.gov/) and follow [@USDANutrition](https://twitter.com/usdanutrition).

**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. To learn more about its growing network of volunteers and champions, visit: [actionforhealthykids.org](https://www.actionforhealthykids.org/)

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