

VOLUME 7 • ISSUE 3 • SPRING 2025

CAFE CONNECTIONS

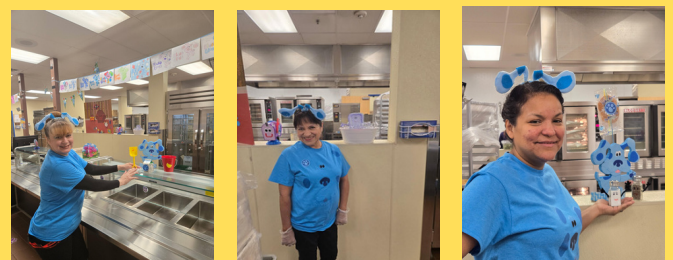
CHILD NUTRITION SERVICES QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

NATIONAL SCHOOL BREAKFAST WEEK – MARCH 3–7, 2025

Our students had a blast celebrating National School Breakfast Week (NSBW) with us. This year's theme was "Clue In to School Breakfast" and our staff did a great job coming up with decorations that made the cafeterias look mysterious and fun. Adriana (right) from Trailside Point Performing Arts Academy (TPPAA) always goes above and beyond with her creativity for occasions like this and the Blue's Clues decorations that the TPPAA café team created were no exception. Marcela (below) from M.C. Cash went undercover during NSBW. All week long students were given stickers to redeem for free 100% fruit juice slushes at lunch when they participated in breakfast. School breakfast participation increased by **34%** that week.

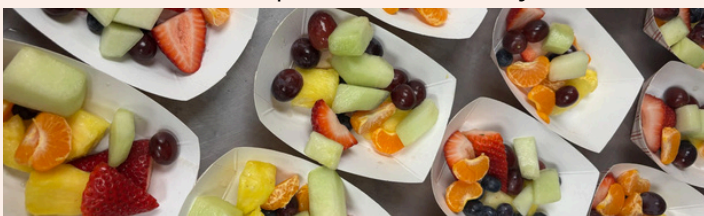


TRAILSIDE POINT'S BLUE'S CLUES DECORATIONS



NUTRITION LESSONS AT DESERT MEADOWS SCHOOL

Our Nutritionist, Ms. Christopher, had the opportunity to visit the Kindergarten classrooms at Desert Meadows, where she taught students about the five food groups, the MyPlate guide and the importance of fruit. The children had a great time creating colorful fruit kabobs and learning how "eating the rainbow" helps provide a variety of essential vitamins and minerals. It was a fruit-tastic experience for everyone!

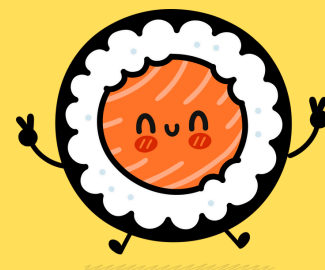


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SUSHI MAKING FOOD DEMONSTRATION



4th grade students at Laveen Elementary participated in a sushi-making demonstration and nutrition lesson organized by our ASU dietetic interns, Avaani and Elizabeth. The event stemmed from students' suggestions to include sushi on the school lunch menu. Although sushi is challenging to prepare for large groups, our Nutritionist decided to turn it into a learning experience. The interns designed a colorful, allergen-friendly "Rainbow Sushi" using fruits and vegetables. They also taught students about MyPlate and sushi history. Students practiced their kitchen skills and enjoyed tasting their creations, receiving positive feedback. Thank you to our ASU dietetic interns!



ASHLEY'S SPRINGTIME REFRESHING DILL DIP

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 2 tbsp dried dill weed
- 2 tbsp dried minced onion
- 1 tbsp dried parsley
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1/8 tsp salt

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Gather all ingredients.
2. Mix all ingredients together in a medium bowl.
3. Cover and chill for at least 30 minutes before serving.
4. Eat with your choice of carrots, celery, cucumbers, crackers, pita bread and more!

Spring



THIS IS DILL-ICIOUS!!



Shoutout to Ashley Miranda, Laveen's Executive Director of Finance, for providing us with this light & refreshing recipe -- perfect for Spring!

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LAVEEN CHILD NUTRITION – ADVOCACY FOR SCHOOL MEALS



Recently, some of our team members have been able to advocate on behalf of school meals at the national and state level. Our Child Nutrition Technician, Michelle Hall, attended the School Nutrition Association's Legislative Action Conference in Washington, D.C. where she joined school nutrition professionals from around the country to urge members of congress to preserve vital legislation that provides access to healthy school meals for all students. Our Child Nutrition Director, Jennifer Gordon, recently testified in support of House Bill (HB) 2213 at a House Appropriations Committee meeting. HB 2213 was modified to add the language from HB 2164, which bans ultra-processed foods from schools. She proudly boasted about Laveen's clean label initiative and successful

elimination of the ingredients listed in this bill with the support of our partner, the Life Time Foundation. She highlighted the healthfulness of school meals and shared that research indicates about 5% of foods found in the school meal programs contain these ingredients. She shared that implementation will take time and come at a cost to budgets.



CLASSIFIED EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE AWARD WINNER – MARCELA CAZARES

Congratulations to our M.C. Cash Cafeteria Manager, Marcela Cazares! Marcela was presented with the 2025 Exceptional Service Award, which is the highest award given to a classified employee in Laveen School District, for her extraordinary work ethic and efficient managerial skills. She has been the Cafeteria Manager at Cash for almost 9 years and has worked in Child Nutrition for over 20 years. We are incredibly proud to have Marcela as a part of our Laveen Child Nutrition team and we extend our heartfelt congratulations on this well-deserved recognition!



PROFESSIONAL GROWTH PRESENTATION



Katie Christopher, our Nutritionist, along with Cafeteria Managers Marcela Cazares (M.C. Cash) and Christopher Madrid (Laveen El), collaborated to create an engaging presentation on managing special diets and allergies in the school cafeteria. Titled "Cultivando Tu Comprensión - Alergia Alimentarias, Dietas, Especiales, y Mas," the presentation was delivered in Spanish at the School Nutrition Association of Arizona's Professional Growth Conference in Prescott, Arizona on March 1st. The speakers discussed how they adapt meals to meet the needs of students with special dietary requirements, ensuring that their meals resemble those of their peers to foster inclusivity. They also shared inspiring stories about how they have built positive relationships with students and their families through their dedicated care. Katie, Marcela, and Christopher highlighted various strategies for effectively managing food allergies, including cross-contact prevention measures and the importance of clear communication with all stakeholders, including students, parents and school staff.



Follow **@LaveenChildNutrition** for **Child Nutrition Updates!**



Check out @LaveenChildNutrition for updates on hiring opportunities, new menu items, upcoming events, and more!



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24TH ANNUAL LAVEEN PARADE



Several of our staff members had the joy of participating in the 24th Annual Laveen Community Parade. Along with their families, they proudly walked the parade route, handing out snacks and showcasing the Child Nutrition banner. Meanwhile, our Child Nutrition Technician, Michelle Hall and our delivery vehicle, 'Lucy' took a leisurely drive down Dobbins Road, blasting music and waving to the community.

GRAB AND GO MEALS FOR STUDENTS FASTING DURING RAMADAN

Laveen has opted into a waiver provided by the Arizona Department of Education to provide free, to-go meals to enrolled students fasting in observance of Ramadan through March 28th. These meal bundles are intended to be consumed at home and include breakfast, lunch and a super snack.

FROM OUR DIRECTOR



In Good Health,
Jennifer

This warmer weather welcomes in the last quarter of the school year. It's been a fantastic year (so far) and we plan to end it on a high note. We had an exciting third quarter, which was closed out with a successful National School Breakfast Week and serving free lunches at Desert Meadows School during Spring Break. We are wrapping up National Nutrition Month, which is always a great way to highlight our healthy school meals and celebrate our nutrition professionals and interns. We will also be celebrating our #LaveenLunchHeroes on Friday, May 2nd with School Lunch Hero Day. Join us in thanking our dedicated and hardworking staff for their role in serving nutritious and delicious school meals each day. We are in the process of planning our summer meal program and look forward to sharing our plans soon. I would like to personally invite our Laveen families to beat the heat and join us for free summer meals at various locations throughout the community all summer long. Finally, there are a lot of conversations at the federal and state levels surrounding legislation that would have a direct impact on our programs, specifically the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), which we currently participate in districtwide and allows us to serve all students meals at no cost. I encourage our community to contact their members of Congress and urge them to protect school meal programs and share stories about the benefits of CEP for Laveen schools.

THANK YOU TO OUR DIETETIC INTERNS, AVAANI & ELIZABETH!



A special shoutout to our incredible Arizona State University dietetic interns, Avaani and Elizabeth! They spent five weeks with us, working both in the district office and in the cafeterias. Avaani and Elizabeth provided excellent customer service in the cafeterias while also showcasing their creativity by designing marketing materials for our taste tests and developing a mindful eating activity. They also played a key role in preparing the sushi lesson for Laveen students. Dietetic interns are required to complete a foodservice rotation as part of their program in preparation of becoming Registered Dietitians. We recognize that the dietetic internship is a demanding program that requires immense dedication and is done on a volunteer basis, so we are truly grateful for the time and effort they put into helping us enhance our program.



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- ✓ Holidays, nights and weekends off
- ✓ Work while your kids attend school
- ✓ Opportunities for professional growth and advancement

*Relevant work experience and/or Food Safety Manager certification may increase hourly rate

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