

VOLUME 7 • ISSUE 2 • WINTER 2024

CAFE CONNECTIONS

CHILD NUTRITION SERVICES QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

MICHELLE HALL SCHOOL NUTRITION ASSOCIATION OF ARIZONA (SNAAZ) PRESIDENT



You might spot Michelle around Laveen, delivering food in our iconic Child Nutrition van, “Lucy,” or monitoring our kitchens and supporting staff at one of our schools. Wherever she is, Michelle’s contagious smile and tireless work ethic are sure to shine through. Currently Michelle is serving as the 24-25 President of the School Nutrition Association of Arizona (SNAAZ), a role that reflects her dedication and expertise. With almost 25 years of experience in school nutrition, we are proud to have Michelle representing Laveen.



MICHELLE PRESENTING AT THE SCHOOL NUTRITION ASSOC. OF ARIZONA CONFERENCE

INTERVIEW WITH OUR CHILD NUTRITION TECHNICIAN: MICHELLE HALL

We sat down with Michelle to hear more about her career along the way.

- What inspired you to pursue a career in school nutrition? *I have worked in child nutrition for nearly 25 years, and I have truly enjoyed my job. I began working in schools because the hours aligned perfectly with my children's school schedule, allowing me the opportunity to coach volleyball and track at the high school level.*
- What do you find most fulfilling about your work? *I love that my role ensures all students have access to healthy meals every day. Visiting the schools and chatting with the younger students brings me joy; their smiles brighten my day. It's satisfying to hear their thank you's.*
- What skills or values do you think are most important in your line of work? *This job requires patience and understanding. While there are challenges, the knowledge that students have access to three healthy meals a day motivates me to come to work every day.*

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LAVEEN CHILD NUTRITION – HOLIDAY PARTY RECAP



This holiday season, our team came together to celebrate with food, crafts, music, and lots of festive cheer! Everyone enjoyed creating cute Christmas trees using terracotta pots and seasonal decorations. It was a special time to reflect on the hard work we've done as a team, especially in our mission to care for and nourish students. As a child nutrition team, we're proud of the impact we make in supporting the well-being of kids and this celebration was a chance to appreciate the meaningful work we do together. Wishing you and your loved ones a joyful and beautiful holiday season!

ERIN'S – MAC AND "COTTAGE" CHEESE

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups dried pasta of choice
- 1 cup cottage cheese
- 1/3 cup milk
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese
- 2 tablespoons pasta water
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- spices of choice: garlic powder, salt, pepper, onion powder and paprika

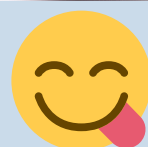
Why cottage cheese?



INSTRUCTIONS

1. Cook your pasta according to the package. Drain and set aside but do not forget to save some pasta water
2. In a blender, combine cottage cheese, shredded cheese, milk, and spices of choice and blend until smooth.
3. In a small bowl, whisk your reserved pasta water and cornstarch until combined.
4. Add your cheese sauce to a small pan over medium heat and bring it to a simmer. Add the cornstarch + water mixture to the sauce and continuously stir. Cook until the sauce begins to thicken- about 5 minutes.
5. Add pasta to the sauce, stir and enjoy!

(Add cooked vegetables on the side to boost the nutritional value of this meal)



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USING COTTAGE CHEESE IN YOUR RECIPE
WILL INCREASE THE PROTEIN WHILE
KEEPING IT CHEESY AND CREAMY!

NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH WEEK RECAP

SCHOOL LUNCH PIRATES: FIND YOUR TREASURE; OCTOBER 14–18, 2024



We had an amazing time as a school district celebrating National School Lunch Week! Every year, we join schools across the country in honoring the significance of school lunches. Our theme for the week was School Lunch Pirates: Find Your Treasure. It was a huge hit and our dedicated cafeteria staff did an outstanding job creating a fun and engaging atmosphere for our students by decorating and giving away prizes. It was a week filled with excitement and delicious meals! We served 31,319 lunches for the week.



LAVEEN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT – LOCAL WELLNESS COMMITTEE

Our District Wellness Committee has been meeting on a monthly basis, with four meetings on the books so far this year. These gatherings offer a valuable opportunity for collaboration across the district, bringing together teachers, district nurses, food service staff, counselors, administration and other key personnel to discuss wellness-related topics within the district. We also invite parents to participate, contributing their insights on the wellness of both students and staff. For more information, please visit our [School Wellness](#) webpage. If you are interested in joining our Wellness Committee, please contact Katie Christopher, RDN, at kchristopher@laveeneld.org.



SCHOOL NUTRITION ASSOCIATION OF ARIZONA – ANNUAL STATE CONFERENCE



Our Child Nutrition team attended the 68th Annual School Nutrition Association of Arizona (SNAAZ) State Conference in downtown Phoenix this past September. The theme, Through the Looking Glass: An Adventure in Child Nutrition, provided a unique backdrop for professional development and networking. Throughout the conference, our staff participated in valuable learning sessions and explored a food show featuring a variety of products that could potentially enhance our menu offerings. The experience was highly successful and our team left with new insights and ideas to bring back to our kitchens, further strengthening our commitment to excellence in child nutrition. Our very own Michelle Hall, presided over the conference as the 24-25 SNAAZ State President.



Follow [@LaveenChildNutrition](#) for Child Nutrition Updates!



Check out [@LaveenChildNutrition](#) for updates on hiring opportunities, new menu items, upcoming events, and more!

MEET ERIN, OUR KING'S COLLEGE INTERN!



Hello all!

My name is Erin Clark and I had the privilege of working with Katie Christopher and the Child Nutrition Services team at Laveen Elementary School District for my foodservice rotation of my dietetic internship. I am finishing up my Masters degree in Nutrition and Dietetics at King's College. While

this school is located in Pennsylvania, I am able to be in Arizona to complete my field work and course work. During my time at Laveen Elementary School District I had the pleasure of working on nutrient analysis for certain breakfast items (in anticipation of future regulations that are changing), streamlining allergy pop-up notifications on the point of sale system and presenting on gluten-free food handling to cafeteria staff. I would also help in the kitchens at different schools in the district to see how the kitchen is managed and I learned just how hard everyone works to bring safe and nutritious foods to the students. I really gained an appreciation for everyone working at school sites because their role in these children's lives is so crucial but may go unnoticed (so always thank your workers!). While I am saddened that my rotation is ending here, I will be finishing my masters and my final rotation at a hospital in downtown Phoenix before sitting for the Registered Dietitian exam in the summer or fall of 2025. Thank you to everyone who welcomed me at Laveen. I hope our paths cross again soon! - Erin Clark



FREE SCHOOL BREAKFAST!

Did you know that all students can enjoy FREE meals, including breakfast? Start your child's day on the right note with a nutritious meal, so they're energized and ready to learn. It's a great way to set them up for success in the classroom! Don't miss out on this opportunity to give your child the best start to their school day.

Cafeteria Style Breakfast

- **Laveen:** 8:00 - 8:30 AM
- **MC Cash:** 7:00 - 7:25 AM
- **Vista del Sur:** 7:30 - 8:00 AM
- **Trailside Point:** 7:00 - 7:25 AM
- **Rogers Ranch:** 8:00 - 8:25 AM
- **Paseo Pointe:** 7:00 - 7:30 AM



Grab-and-Go Style Breakfast

- **Desert Meadows:** 7:30 - 8:00 AM
- **Estrella Foothills:** 7:30 - 8:10 AM
- **Cheatham:** 7:00 - 7:40 AM

Check out our online menu here!

www.ezschoollunch.com/p/Laveen-Schools/menu

FROM OUR DIRECTOR



Seasons Greetings,
Jennifer

As you read above, it's been an exciting quarter for our department; from attending the School Nutrition Association of Arizona (SNAAZ) annual state conference, to celebrating National School Lunch Week, to gathering for our annual holiday party. I am honored to work alongside Michelle Hall, both here in our district and also serving together on the Executive Committee of SNAAZ. I am so glad that we could highlight and celebrate her in this edition of our newsletter - believe me, she is fantastic. I would also like to thank Erin, our dietetic intern. Her contributions to our team have been invaluable. I am so happy that she shared her new appreciation for food service staff, because it is so true - our team works extremely hard to nourish the students of Laveen and so much is done behind the scenes to make it all happen. Speaking of staff, we are hiring part-time Cafeteria Workers. If you are interested in a fulfilling position with family-friendly hours, please consider applying on our website. I am looking forward to what's in store for the rest of the school year. We will be celebrating National School Breakfast Week the first week of March, working with our District Wellness Committee to apply for the America's Healthiest School Award at our schools, planning our menu for next school year and preparing for our SUN Meals program. I wish our team and the Laveen community a very happy holiday season and look forward to what's in store for 2025.

FREE LUNCHES SERVED DURING WINTER BREAK!

Laveen Elementary School District will be on Winter Break, starting Friday, December 20 with students returning on Monday, January 6. We will be serving FREE lunches to all kids 18 years and younger at Desert Meadows School *on select days* during the break from 11:30 am to 12:30 pm. Join us in the cafeteria to enjoy a delicious lunch for your children each day! Everyone is welcome, regardless of where you live or income. Adult meals will not be available.

Dates: Friday 12/20, Monday 12/23, Friday 12/27, Monday 12/30, & Friday 1/3

Location: Desert Meadows School Cafeteria
6855 W Meadows Loop East
Laveen, AZ 85339

Time: 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

CHECK OUT OUR MENU AT
EZSCHOOOLLUNCH.COM/P/LAVEEN-SCHOOLS/MENU

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WE ARE HIRING!

PART-TIME CAFETERIA WORKERS

APPLY NOW :

- ✓ Hourly rate starting at \$15.79*
- ✓ 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

APPLY NOW!

WWW.LAVEENSCHOOLS.ORG

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