

## **Program Impact Report**

2022—2023 School Year



# About Action for Healthy Kids

Founded in 2002 by Dr. David Satcher, 16th Surgeon General of the United States, Action for Healthy Kids is a national nonprofit committed to the belief that healthy kids create a better world. Twenty years ago, AFHK began partnering with schools and families to plan and implement improved school breakfast, physical activity, and nutrition education programs. Over the last fifteen years, AFHK has expanded its school health interventions to include social-emotional learning and focus on whole child health.

Our grassroots network of more than 150,000 volunteers and champions includes parents, caregivers, educators and community members working together to alleviate health disparities and improve the health and well-being of students nationwide.

AFHK has more than 20 years of experience fostering family-school partnerships. Our work has clearly shown that when a school has a parent or caregiver champion for kids' health, more families are involved in health activities and school improvement plans more often address health issues.

AFHK's Family-School Partnership (FSP) Model produces scalable impact through partnerships with districts, schools, and families to improve policies and systems at the district level. This implements best practices at the school level, and builds the capacity of parents, caregivers, and educators to form trusting, collaborative, and sustainable family-school partnerships that support kids' health.

## Our philosophy: Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child

To create healthy children, we must create healthy schools and healthy communities. Addressing one without the other will not create lasting change. This is about the whole ecosystem.



# Our **Challenge**

### We are facing a child health crisis.

It is wreaking havoc on our schools and the physical and mental health of our kids, especially in underserved communities.

## Most importantly, it is eminently preventable.

From depression to obesity to bullying to substance misuse to suicidism, our nation's children are experiencing challenges to their health and well-being that our country has never witnessed.

These physical and mental health challenges put this generation of children at great risk to live shorter, less fulfilling lives than their parents — a first in American history.

The result is that many kids are trapped in a cycle of disparity. A child who is hungry, sedentary, or emotionally distressed can't concentrate in the classroom, which can lead to lower educational attainment, and then results later in life to fewer job opportunities and lower income.

## WE MUST BREAK THE CYCLE

Children throughout the country live in underserved communities where challenges are exacerabated by limited resources:



### LIMITED ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOODS<sup>1</sup>

1 in 8 kids faced food insecurity in 2021



### LACK OF SAFE PLAYGROUNDS AND OPEN SPACES<sup>2</sup>

75% of kids ages 6 to 17 don't get the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity each day



### UNSTABLE ENVIRONMENTS LEADING TO EMOTIONAL TRAUMA<sup>3</sup>

Nearly 20% of young people ages 3–17 have a diagnosed emotional, developmental, or behavioral disorder



There are more than **13,000 school districts** in the U.S., serving
56 million students in grades PreK-12.

MORE THAN HALF ARE UNDER-RESOURCED

¹https://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/pub-details/?pubid=104655

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/physicalactivity/facts.htm

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/data.html

# Our Impact

## Action For Healthy Kids is at the center of supporting schools to create a healthy environment

We have the deep expertise and evidence-based models to equip school districts, educators, parents and caregivers with the tools and resources needed to improve children's health outcomes nationwide. Now, we are scaling that model to advance systemic change and ensure healthier kids, schools and communities. This report highlights the impact of AFHK's work during the 2022–23 school year to address the child health crisis and prepare kids to be healthy in body and mind.

#### WE ARE BUILDING A MOVEMENT TO ENSURE ALL KIDS:



















EAT HEALTHIER

INCREASE ACTIVITY

BUILD STRONGER RELATIONSHIPS

APPLY HEALTHY
COPING SKILLS

MAKE RESPONSIBLE DECISIONS

### 2022-2023 Impact Highlights

A majority of surveyed students reported feeling more confident in eating more nutritious meals (84%) and making healthier food choices (80%).

**84% of surveyed students** participated in more physical activity at school.

77% of surveyed students reported that, compared to last year, they are better at working together with other kids.

69% of surveyed students reported that, compared to last year, they are better at managing their emotions. 67% of surveyed students reported that, compared to last year, they are better at asking for help when they need it.

#### IMPACT OF OUR DISTRICT GRANT PROGRAM

During the 2022–23 school year, AFHK worked with district, school, and family partners to implement our Family-School Partnership model. FSP focuses on district policy, school-level best practices, authentic family-school partnerships, and ultimately students with the knowledge, opportunities, and capacity to make healthy choices. We saw tremendous strides at each of those four levels:

## District partners increased their ability to implement comprehensive and equitable school health policies.

» 90% of district partners improved knowledge and understanding of district policy related to social emotional health, nutrition, and/or physical activity.

70%
of districts
reported improved
collaboration with
families

## School partners implemented best practices to create healthy school environments.

- » AFHK provided 60,300 hours of technical assistance (TA) to districts. 100% of partner districts were provided guidance on improved Local Wellness Policy Language.
- » 91% of districts agreed that their AFHK Field Manager provided technical assistance that increased their ability to address their districts' needs.

## District, school, and family partners developed and improved authentic family-school partnerships.

- » 80% of district partners report family engagement is supported by the district and schools in a culturally responsive way.
- » 70% of parents/caregivers attending AFHK learning sessions feel more confident about contributing to the school health environment.

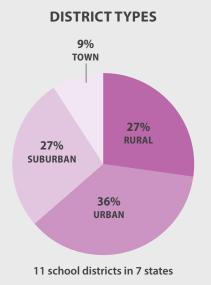
These changes have had a direct impact on kids' abilities to make healthier choices — students throughout our partner districts reported eating healthier, increasing physical activity, working better with other kids, and more effectively managing their emotions.

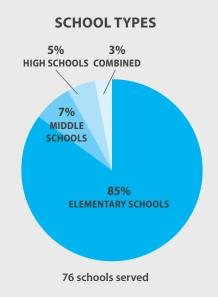
Together with our partners, Action for Healthy Kids is preparing kids to be healthy in body and mind.

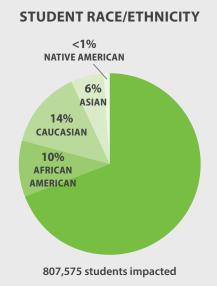
### We leverage the power of our community partners

Communities have unique expertise and knowledge of the strengths and challenges specific to their district. With the insight of these partners, we develop best practices to scale across the nation.









## NourishEd: Food Access and Nutrition Education

Partner schools, with the support of AFHK, served more healthy meals — and students responded, making healthier choices.

AFHK developed a comprehensive approach to nutrition education and nutrition insecurity with increased demand for healthy food among families, students and schools, while also improving the supply of healthy food by increasing the capacity of schools to serve as nutrition hubs.

**83% of surveyed students** reported that, compared to last year, they eat more fruits and vegetables. A majority of surveyed students reported feeling more confident in eating more nutritious meals (84%) and making healthier food choices (80%).

**90% of surveyed districts** reported increasing the average daily meals served to students

Nearly all surveyed schools reported meeting or exceeding the USDA's nutrition standards for most or all of the competitive foods (93%) and beverages (96%) sold to students.

**89% of surveyed school partners** started or expanded at least one federal meal program during the 22–23 school year Examples include: The Child and Adult Care Food Program (At-Risk Snack/ Dinner), Seamless Summer Option, The Summer Food Service Program, The National School Breakfast Program, The National School Lunch Program

AFHK supported school and district staff to increase their knowledge and attitudes on topics related to school meals and their benefits and optimal nutrition and its impact on student health and learning.

16.9 million meals provided by district and school partners

(includes free, reduced, and paid meals)

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My child likes the school meals, and is able to make healthy choices, even when away from school.

Parent/Caregiver, Buena Park School District



### Fruit Taste Test (Irving, TX)

We hosted a successful fruit taste test during the school's Open House event. Families were able to try four different fruits and choose a favorite. All family ballots were tallied and one ballot was chosen to receive a gift card for participating. Families also received information in English and Spanish about how to add more fruits and vegetables (AFHK resource). We had over 120 ballots returned and the staff and families appeared very engaged and excited to attend our event.

Bethlyn, AFHK Family Connector

I was so excited to see our students willing to taste test new or unusual fruits this year.

School Principal, Irving School District



### **Experiential Learning**

Experiential learning initiatives (ELI) are designed to promote "learning through reflection on doing" and to create opportunities for children to apply skills and knowledge learned within the context of their community, cultural background and own lived experiences.

Hands-on learning also contributes to creating safe and supportive learning environments at home and at school. Creating a safe and supportive learning environment encourages children to open up to try new things, make mistakes, learn and grow and begin to see beyond their own experiences and become more socially aware of those around them.

## THREE MOST COMMONLY UTILIZED EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING INITIATIVES:



36%

**HEALTHY FOOD TASTE TESTING** 



24%

**FARM TO SCHOOL** 



22%

**CLASSROOM CELEBRATIONS** 



Funding allowed us to train staff on nutrition programs for parents and food ingredients which allowed us to give parents and families experiential opportunities which expanded their taste pallets.

District Professional, Los Angeles United School District

## 90% of districts

districts increased
experiential learning
opportunities for students
that offer positive hands-on
experiences with
nutrition.



### School Breakfast and Social-Emotional Health

Parents whose children participate in breakfast programs described the sense of belonging that programs can create for students, which creates a more welcoming school community. Parents noted their kids' enhanced self-awareness and acceptance by peers and found that their kids were more adventurous with foods at breakfast programs than at home.

At Gilbert Elementary School in Irving, TX, AFHK Family Connector Bethlyn Fisher worked with the school to host an 'All Pro Dads' event, where staff met with male guardians and their children during breakfast. Fisher and the school's health and physical education teachers gave a presentation on the importance of healthy conflict resolution in relationships. They also gave a demo for the families on how to create an inexpensive, nutritious, and delicious breakfast of yogurt, granola, and in-season fruit.

Read more about the connection between school breakfast programs and social-emotional health, including the latest research from our partners at Kellogg Company Fund <a href="here">here</a>.

## **EnergizEd: Physical Activity and Active Play**

AFHK partner schools brought together staff, families, and students and implemented best practices to increase student physical activity.

AFHK's physical activity programs incorporate strategies to regulate emotions and increase family engagement to ensure kids have access to appropriate physical activity and play critical to developing lifelong healthy habits.

**84% of surveyed students** participated in more physical activity at school

**79% of surveyed students** report being physically active for at least 60 minutes per day (SRS)

**77% of surveyed parents/caregivers** said their child has learned about new ways to stay physically active

**68% of surveyed parents/caregivers** reported improvements in their child's attitude towards physical activity

**65% of surveyed parents/caregivers** report their child has increased their participation in physical activity at school

**Nearly all surveyed schools (96%)** reported using at least one strategy to support staff to model healthy eating and physical activity behaviors.

- Provide staff with information about the importance of engaging in physical activities with students
- Provide staff with information or strategies on how to incorporate physical activity into classrooms
- Encourage staff to use non-food items, activities, and opportunities for physical activity as recognition for achievements or good behavior

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I see a lot more students and teachers making healthy choices and better options provided at school

Classroom Teacher, Irving School District



### Swim with AFHK (Brush, CO)

Swim with AFHK was a success! I had a lot of people help with spreading the word about the event. We had 293 people in attendance. Those numbers included parents, grandparents, kids, and teachers. The lifeguards were not counted in this number; however, I spoiled them because they helped set up, clean up the event, and monitored the event. They even got into character with the Luau theme by dressing in grass skirts, wearing leis, and dancing the hula!

Amy, AFHK Family Connector



## **ConnectEd: Social-Emotional Health and Risk Behavior Prevention**

This year, with the help of AFHK, partner schools implemented mindfulness and restorative practices that promoted resilience and improved student social and emotional competencies.

AFHK's ConnectEd program is a comprehensive approach to social-emotional health and youth risk behavior prevention. We aim to improve and maximize the protective factors integral to a child's health and wellbeing to promote resilience among children and adolescents, help promote social and emotional competence, and minimize risk behaviors.



**77%** of surveyed students reported that, compared to last year, they are better at working together with other kids.



**69%** of surveyed students reported that, compared to last year, they are better at managing their emotions.



**67%** of surveyed students reported that, compared to last year, they are better at asking for help when they need it.



**46%** of surveyed parents/caregivers report that their child has improved their use of interpersonal skills to effectively communicate and collaborate with others and demonstrate empathy, compassion, and support.



**41%** of surveyed schools reported that students improved communication and management of emotions, thoughts, and needs



**52%** of surveyed parents/caregivers reported that their child learned new ways to take care of their own social-emotional health (such as being active outdoors, mindfulness practices, meditation).



### **Family-School Partnerships**

This year, with the support of AFHK, family-school partnerships increased supportive, inclusive, and equitable collaboration among educators and caregivers in support of child health and well-being.

Effective family-school partnerships bring together district leaders, school staff, and families to create healthier communities by identifying barriers to family engagement and specific child health needs, then developing and implementing effective and equitable solutions as a team. Our 6-step framework for healthier schools helps develop family-school partnerships to build safe and supportive learning environments where children can play, learn, and grow.

#### **DISTRICT HEALTH TEAMS**

- » 50% of surveyed districts have parents/ caregivers represented on their DHAC.
- » Most commonly represented positions on DHT:
  - Counseling and/or social and emotional health professional (90%)
  - Healthcare professional (80%)
  - Physical activity professional (80%)
  - Nutrition education professional (60%)
  - School administrator (60%)
  - · Community partners (60%)
- » 13% increase in districts with a District Health Advisory Council (DHAC).

#### **FAMILY ENGAGEMENT**

- » 67% of partner districts reported opportunities to engage with the district on health and wellbeing initiatives are proactively communicated to families in a variety of ways (including social media, emails and messaging apps) and in a variety of languages.
- » 60% of surveyed districts improved integration of family engagement best practices in schools or districts.
- » 60% of surveyed districts increased resources (including both financial and/or staff) dedicated to family engagement practices in the district's health and well-being initiatives.

AFHK FAMILY CONNECTORS ORGANIZED 24 LEARNING EVENTS, INCLUDING A FRUIT TASTE TEST, MOVIE NIGHT WITH HEALTHY SNACKS, AND COLOR RUN.

### **LEARNING EVENTS**

AFHK Family Connectors organized 24 learning events to funded schools related to facilitating Family-School Partnerships (FSPs) at the school and district levels for staff and parents/caregivers. AFHK engaged 4661 parents/caregivers, 8084 students and 1217 district professionals. Overall, attendees reported gaining new knowledge or skills and shared their intention to apply learnings in schools/districts and/or at home.

#### **FSP LEARNING EVENTS**

Found the AFHK learning events enjoyable
Will use resources provided with their school and children
More confident to contribute to school health environment
Learned something new during the session
Will use the knowledge gained with their school and children
Improved knowledge or skills on the topic



## **Better** Together

We are accelerating impact for kids by joining forces to expand our expertise and reach

In November 2022, AFHK and the Rocky Mountain Center for Health Promotion and Education (RMC Health) signed a merger agreement. Two established nonprofit organizations with decades of experience serving education and public health at the local, state and national levels, have joined forces to tackle the child health and well-being of America's youth.

Focusing on a whole child approach, the organizations employ complementary programs and services. AFHK brings together and mobilizes educators, families and key stakeholders through its Family-School Partnership model. RMC Health facilitates professional development and capacity building for education and public health professionals using best-in-class adult learning techniques. Together, the organizations will provide a wide range of resources to schools to meet the urgent needs of America's youth and families.

The merger will result in the availability of more robust programs and services, enhanced subject matter expertise, new partnerships, improved efficiency, and a greater capacity to serve the communities most in need.











**Both RMC Health and Action for** Healthy Kids have a long history of serving students, families and school communities. Together, we are poised to increase our reach and impact exponentially.

Jay McHale, Jr., Action for Healthy Kids Board Chair

Now, more than ever, we must join forces to better serve kids and families. I can't think of a better partner than RMC Health, a leader in training and professional development, to advance this important work.

Rob Bisceglie, President & CEO, Action for Healthy Kids

This partnership will be a game changer. Combining the complementary programs and services of our two organizations will allow us to serve the entire education ecosystem, from students and schools to state and federal organizations and government.

Shellie Pfohl, President & CEO of RMC Health Chief Growth Officer of Action for Healthy Kids

### **Active Schools**

Action For Healthy Kids is the organizational home of Active School, a national initiative, supported by almost 100 organizations. Its' mission is to integrate evidence based physical activity programs into every student's PK-12 education so that all youth are educated in an active school to enhance learning, health, and well-being.

With the University of Northern Colorado Active Schools Institute as a strategic partner, and in collaboration with the Iowa State University and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Healthy School Team, Active Schools has defined an active school culture. This culture of school-based physical activity promotion is based on the social ecological model's spheres of influence on physical activity behavior and acknowledges the need for the whole school community to be involved for effective and sustainable physical activity programming, as presented in the graphic below.





Schools at www.activeschoolsus.org.

#### **NATIONAL SUMMIT**

Active Schools hosted the first-ever in-person Active Schools National Summit at the University of Northern Colorado (Greeley) for nearly 100 participants. The theme was "A Mountain Worth Climbing." Active Schools provided Champions with the tools, resources, and connections needed to conquer the mountainous task of providing more physical activity opportunities for children.

The survey results were extremely positive. 100% of respondents believed that the speakers were knowledgeable & engaging, the summit was well organized, and they would recommend the summit to their colleagues.



### A FEW HIGHLIGHTS FROM SCHOOL YEAR 2022-23:

- » Active Schools in Action: launched a pilot program and an online graduate-level course from UNC.
- » Active Family Challenge: partnered with OPEN (https://openphysed.org/) to provide teachers and schools with various tools and resources. Families could discover creative ways to incorporate PE at home as a family.
- » Active Classrooms Month: engaged with hundreds of teachers nationwide to celebrate throughout the month of February.
- » **Play All May Campaign:** encouraged individuals nationwide to participate in more physical activity opportunities throughout the month.
- » Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program Questionaire (CSPAP-Q): Officially launched the CSPAP Policies and Practices Questionnaire on our website. The CSPAP-Q is a needs assessment designed to help schools selfevaluate how their physical activity policies and practices align with best practices in the field.



### **National School District Wellness Coalition**

AFHK convenes the National School District Wellness Coalition, with leaders from 39 school districts representing approximately 7,500 schools and 5 million students. The coalition's goal is to translate the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child model into actionable policy, programs, and practices nationwide. The coalition catalyzes district leaders to engage in a community of practice and informs AFHK on how best to support districts, schools, and families across the country.

To reach these goals, the National School District Wellness Coalition focuses on three strategic areas:

1 Infrastructure

Supporting strong district and school-level infrastructure to design strong school environments that support progressive policies and programming.

2 Policy

Ensuring strong Local School Wellness Policies that align with United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) requirements and the Whole School, Whole Child, Whole Community (WSCC) model.\*

3 Programming

Implementing best practice, evidence based programs on various WSCC model components.

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Through this partnership we have been able to strengthen our District's Wellness Promotion Policy and our efforts around the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child model. We appreciate the strong support and insight we have received on the past two WellSAT reviews.

The School District of Palm Beach County (FL)



### THE COALITION'S IMPACT ON MEMBER DISTRICTS

In the annual National School District Wellness Coalition survey, several of the 150 members shared how the coalition has been supportive of their districts' work around the WSCC model and student wellness and the overall impact on their districts:

» We used resources, ideas, relationships and mechanisms learned at the coalition in our own district. Spark BTS training "Leading with Empathy," provided confidence in having conversations with peers and in council meetings.

New York City Public Schools

» Bring new ideas, information, and funding opportunities back to support our district wellness work.

Los Angeles Unified School District

» Our membership in the NSDWC allows us to better understand the inner-workings of similar-sized districts.

*Jefferson County Public Schools (CO)* 

» The positive programs that are highlighted during our monthly coalition meeting are great. The information is always valuable and shared with district health leaders.

Milwaukee Public Schools

» The coalition members are very willing to help and share ideas that will benefit all students from all districts. The in-person convening is incredibly beneficial.

Des Moines Public Schools

» Collaboration, sharing of practices and programs, sharing of free national resources and supports.
Pittsburgh Public Schools

# National Conference on Child Health

### AFHK hosted it's first National Conference on Child Health and Well-Being: Real Talk. Real Solutions!

Action for Healthy Kids convened over 300 school and district leaders, educators, parents, caregivers and stakeholders for its first ever National Conference on Child Health and Well-Being: Real Talk. Real Solutions! at Loews Chicago Hotel from November 2–4, 2022.

The three-day conference was designed to mobilize individuals to use the knowledge they gain to strengthen family-school partnerships in their communities and implement sustainable solutions that directly impact children.

"We were excited to bring people together to empower them to identify solutions and take action in their communities," said Rob Bisceglie, CEO of Action for Healthy Kids. "The conference further demonstrated our transformative commitment to decreasing disparities and improving health outcomes for children."



The sessions included concrete knowledge and tips to improve the school health environment. I left with a lot of ideas for my work moving forward.

Conference Attendee





### THE CONFERENCE FEATURED GENERAL SESSION SPEAKERS INCLUDING:

**David Satcher, MD, PhD** 16th Surgeon General of the United States

### Alex Sheen

Founder, because I said I would

### Robert Murray, MD Pediatrician and Profess

Pediatrician and Professor of Human Nutrition

#### Mike Kuczala

Author, The Kinesthetic Classroom and The Peak Performing Teacher

#### Meena Srinivasan, NBCT

Founding Executive Director of Transformative Educational Leadership

#### Eyal Bergman, EdLD

Co-author of Dual Capacity Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships

## Healthy Meals Incentives Initiative

## PARTNERING WITH THE USDA TO IMPROVE NUTRITION FOR STUDENTS

In February 2023, Action for Healthy Kids signed a cooperative agreement with the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service to develop and implement the Healthy Meals Incentives Initiative. The initiative includes an allocation of \$47 million for identifying and recognizing school districts that excel in providing healthy meals and for supporting small and rural schools in adopting best practices and innovative approaches.

Action for Healthy Kids will lead the overall implementation and management of the cooperative agreement. In partnership, RMC Health will design, lead and manage the overall training and technical assistance strategy. In addition, Action for Healthy Kids will partner with Chef Ann Foundation to provide in-depth individualized technical assistance to support and guide the school food authorities in implementing key strategies to improve school meal quality, meet the Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Award, and mitigate any potential roadblocks to success.

### **Healthy Meals Incentives Grantees**

As part of a cooperative agreement to develop and implement the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Healthy Meals Incentives Initiative, Action For Healthy Kids announced that it has awarded nearly \$30 million in subgrants to 264 school districts across 44 states and the District of Columbia, reaching students in some of our nation's highest need schools. These funds are being provided by USDA's Food and Nutrition Service.



Each small and/or rural school district will receive up to \$150,000 to support them in improving the nutritional quality of their meals and modernizing their operations, through efforts which could include: innovative staff training programs; kitchen updates and renovations; redesigning food preparation and service spaces; other school-district led efforts to support school meals and school nutrition professionals.



Every child deserves access to nutritious meals. RMC Health is thrilled to join our partners in this important work to remove barriers and provide resources to rural and small school districts in support of healthy young people.

Shellie Pfohl, RMC Health President and AFHK Chief Growth Officer

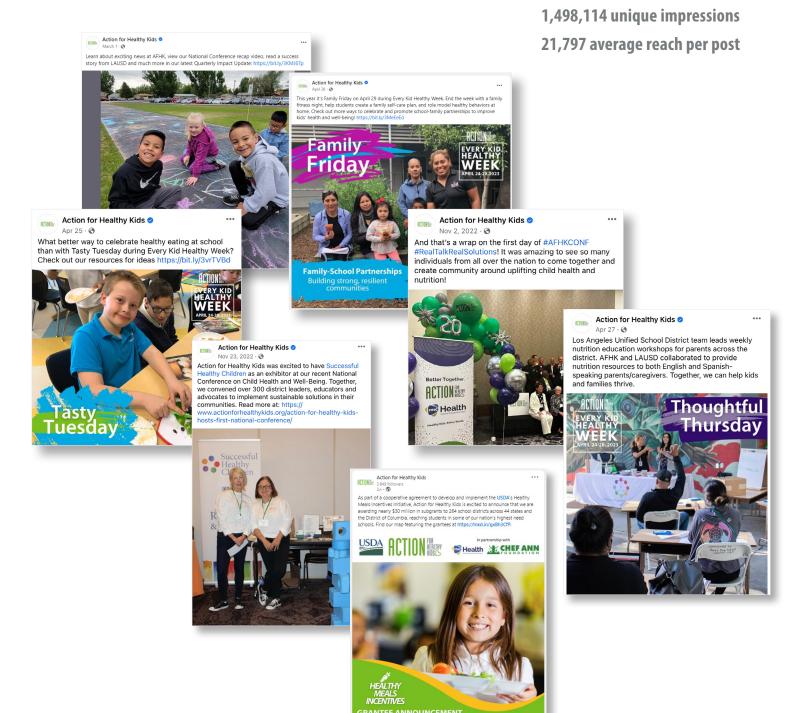
The Chef Ann Foundation is very excited to be a partner in this initiative, in particular to be able to support small and rural districts in our country that have struggled through the pandemic and are eager for support to improve their food program.

Mara Fleishman, CEO of the Chef Ann Foundation

USDA is excited about the collaboration with Action for Healthy Kids to support and share innovative practices that will empower schools to continue serving delicious, healthy meals, and give students a healthy start. We look forward to this partnership and lifting up the great work being done by nutrition professionals throughout the country.

FNS Administrator Cindy Long, USDA Food and Nutrition Service

## Social Media Snapshot



CCO Alyson Foote and 53 others

f 0 % in

50,880 total followers

Healthy Kids. Better World.

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