



Fontana Unified School District

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NEWS RELEASE

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Fontana Unified Food Services Director Recognized with CalPERS Spotlight on Excellence Award

FONTANA, CA – When the COVID-19 pandemic prompted school closures in March, Fontana Unified’s Food Services department, led by director Trieste Huey, immediately sprang into action, establishing a food distribution network that has served nearly six million free meals and provided a crucial lifeline of nourishment and support to the Fontana community.

Huey’s leadership skills, organizational acumen and ability to gather resources and bring diverse District departments together as a team has been recognized by the California Public Employees Retirement System (CalPERS), which has bestowed Huey with its 2020 Spotlight on Excellence Award.

Huey will be honored at the CalPERS virtual Educational Forum in October.

“This is a tremendous honor which recognizes the hard work and dedication of hundreds of Fontana Unified food services workers, who have not hesitated to assist our families and do it with love in their hearts,” Huey said. “I dedicate this award to all of my food services peers across California, who are working so hard for their districts and communities during this unprecedented time.”

The daunting task of providing “grab and go” meal service began on March 13, when school closures were announced. Huey quickly organized an emergency meeting with her team the next day, where they mapped out the service plan for the next week. The District served its first “grab and go” meals on March 16.

Huey and her team had to rapidly determine which school sites were suitable for drive-up service, procure the necessary equipment to ensure an orderly distribution process, provide logistics, estimate how many meals to make, integrate and employ District personnel, create menus, and work together while following safety protocols.

“There was so much to do, but I thrive on challenges, I enjoy it,” Huey said. “I have a great team and the silver lining in all this is that you get to see the good side of people. This has really given me a renewed appreciation for my staff, as well as other District personnel I don’t normally work with, the warehouse drivers, custodians and security officers, who were so eager to help out. It was a Districtwide effort.”

For the rest of the 2019-20 school year, Fontana provided up to 10,000 students with three meals a day, as well as weekend meals on Fridays. When summer arrived, the department transitioned to a weekly plan, providing seven days’ worth of meals – serving up to 16,000 students – that included frozen, refrigerated, and dry meals, along with produce and dairy products.

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Huey has also incorporated community support, including L.A.-based food bank Food Forward, which provided 20 pallets of produce a week for the first three months; the USDA Farmers to Families program, administered locally by Sunrise Produce, which has provided 6,000 25-pound boxes of produce every week; and Driftwood Dairy, which changed their service to provide half gallons of milk. The City of Fontana has provided its after-school staff to help with distribution.

For the fall semester, weekly meal services are being provided at 42 FUSD school sites.

CalPERS is an agency that manages pension and health benefits for California public employees, retirees and their families. Its Spotlight on Excellence Award focuses on the outstanding contributions of California's public-sector workforce.

"Congratulations to Trieste Huey, who has done an amazing job and is beloved by her staff and the community. She is truly deserving of this award," Fontana Unified Superintendent Randal S. Bassett said. "For our Food Services team to provide this level of support, serving millions of meals during a global pandemic, is nothing short of extraordinary, and it exemplifies the spirit and compassion prevalent throughout the District."

PHOTO CAPTION:

FUSD_HUEY: Fontana Unified Food Services Director Trieste Huey has been honored with a 2020 Spotlight on Excellence Award from the California Public Employees Retirement System (CalPERS).

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