



Operator Spotlight!

Showcasing the passion, talents, and hard work of Arizona child nutrition professionals.



April Willing

Wellness Coordinator, STAR School

Hometown: Flagstaff, Arizona

Current City of Residence: Flagstaff, Arizona

Favorite Childhood School Meal: Pepperoni Pizza

When I was a kid, I wanted to grow up to be an: Astronomer

What was your first job in child nutrition/food service?

My first job was at Burger King, and I waited tables all through high school and college.

What prompted you to start working to support child nutrition?

I love food, everything about preparing and cooking food. After my own health journey, I wanted to find a way to teach others about health and wellness. Combining cooking and teaching is the best of both worlds, although I transitioned out of the kitchen this year and into the role of Wellness Coordinator full time.

Tell us about a specific project or initiative you have championed that you are proud of.

I am so proud of the family gardening initiative we started 3 years ago, and expanding every year. We help set up home gardens and hoop houses for families of some of our students.

Assuming time and money were not barriers, what would be your top priority as far as changes you would like to see related to Child Nutrition Program operations at your organization?

I would LOVE to see us go 100% organic, local, and grown on site! We do better than most, but we could do so much more.

What are the top three skills a Child Nutrition Program operator should have?

Ability to quickly substitute ingredients if needed, ability to multitask (cook, serve, clean up, and finish your paperwork all in one day), and have a passion for experimenting with different recipes and foods

What advice would you give to a younger version of yourself just starting in the role of a Child Nutrition Program operator?

Don't be afraid of rules and regulations. Everyone is here to accomplish the same goal: feeding kids healthy food. Once you realize that everyone is here to help, it makes the requirements less daunting.