

IAB SPOTLIGHT: JERI THORNTON



I started in foodservice at 14, working at a tiny drive-in restaurant in

my home town of Montpelier, VA. When I was 18, I was working at King's Dominion in the office for retail which included the food service department. At 19, I went to work for Richmond Restaurant Service where I was in purchasing for 10 years. Part of my position was working with K12 bids for the districts in Virginia, and at the time, RRS was servicing the USDA donated food program for some regions and I became familiar with that side of K12.

In 2005 I went to work for the VDACS Food Distribution Program and assisted schools with their commodity ordering, entitlement spending, and doing reviews with them to make sure all regulations were being met. In 2018, I started a new journey in sales with Hadley Farms Bakery.

I'm loving my new career, and I feel my experience leading up to this point has really helped me understand all sides of the K12 segment. And the relationships I've been building for the past 28 years with K12 directors have been so rewarding; I can't imagine doing anything else.

I look forward to continuing my service on the Industry Advisory Board and doing what I can with SNA-VA.

Inside Industry

Vinny Giacinto
Industry Chair



INDUSTRY ADVISORY BOARD (IAB) and UPDATES

- **SNA-VA Industry Advisory Board** met again virtually in January. The meeting went smoothly and quickly, and many topics were discussed with the biggest topic, of course, being what to do in lieu of the canceled live food show in March. Other topics discussed were how the "From the Show Floor" video library was received by members and industry; upcoming participation in National SNA's SNIC and LAC; and the new website and industry page.
- **Industry Partnership Opportunities:** Industry Membership for 20-21 will expire on July 31, 2021. We will be offering some new and exciting leveled opportunities for 21-22.
- **NYSNA "From the Show Floor" and SNA-VA "1 Minute Videos and Ads":** Please support industry by viewing each of these on-demand libraries. Learn more about our wonderful industry partners and what they have to offer.

BEST PRACTICES FOR SUCCESSFUL PROCUREMENT IN YOUR SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAM

As we look to return to "normal" school practices and school days in August/September, we reflect on how the pandemic severely disrupted and broke the long-lasting and well followed processes that School Food Authority (SFA) have put in place. Basically, the procurement process play book was "thrown out the door" and SFAs scrambled to get food...any food...in the door to feed the children of our nation for free. Often, brand loyalty and items that were "won one bid" were not available and distribution was asked to send a like item or something in the same family of products.

Now, as we look ahead, schools across the nation will strive to provide nutritious, tasty, quality meals to students while being cost effective and returning to the time-honored procurement practices. The USDA is dedicated to ensuring successful procurement by looking at principles and practices at the state agency (SA) and School Food Authority (SFA). Procurement is a multi-step process for obtaining goods, products, and/or service at the best possible price.

Proper planning before procuring a good or service is essential to obtain the high-quality products and services needed at the most affordable price. Consider the following points when restarting the procurement process in your district next year:

- Determine your procurement procedures moving forward and if there is any room in your bid to add new items or "buy off bid" for the time being. Check with your SA and your district's board policy to determine appropriate procedures for your SFA.
- Become familiar with the different types of procurement and what methodology is best for you and consider a more "flexible" bid option for 21-22. The types of procurement include Invitation to Bid (IFB), Request for Proposal (RFP), Informal Competitive Purchase procedures, and Micro-Purchase. Note that more than one procurement method can be used in your organization (i.e., you may use an RFP for your grocery bid and an IFB may be used for your paper products).
- Talk with your neighboring SFAs and see what procurement processes and bids they are utilizing and what they are doing next year to loosen the buying process and getting items when they need it in the amount that is needed. Be the conduit between procurement departments in a surrounding area and have them share ideas. This will help loosen some restrictions in procurement.

Procurement is a process to make sure you are getting the best use of your federal dollars – treat it just as you would for shopping for yourself at home. Do not see it as a barrier – investigate your procurement procedures, figure out what is best for you and reach out to your colleagues!