

# ANFP Recognizes 2026 Award Recipients at Annual Conference & Expo (ACE)

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**St. Charles, IL** - The Association of Nutrition & Foodservice Professionals (ANFP) presented annual awards to recipients last month at the Annual Conference & Expo (ACE). Award recipients are individuals, companies, or industry partners that consistently demonstrate unwavering dedication to the association and to the foodservice industry as a whole. The ANFP Awards Program strives to celebrate foodservice industry innovators and applauds individuals who advance and support foodservice professionals and the Certified Dietary Manager, Certified Food Protection Professional (CDM®, CFPP®) credential.

Honorees are selected by the ANFP Awards & Recognition Committee after nomination. This year's recipients were recognized at the Honors Gala, which occurred at ACE on Monday, June 15, 2026. Their acceptance speeches are also available for viewing exclusively on [ANFPtv](#). The following recipients were honored this year:

## Ambassador Award

*The Ambassador Award is dedicated to an industry colleague, such as an administrator or dietitian, who demonstrates continuous commitment to the CDM, CFPP credential through mentoring and support of the nutrition and foodservice department leader within their facility. Congratulations, Christopher Connolly!*



Christopher Connolly is a culinary systems strategist, educator, and author focused on how foodservice operations perform under real-world pressure. With more than twenty years of progressive leadership expertise, he currently consults with Direct Supply Procurement Services, supporting culinary operations in senior living and healthcare organizations nationwide in multi-site operations, performance improvement, and system-level optimization.

## CDM, CFPP Spotlight Award

*The CDM, CFPP Spotlight Award honors a member who has received their chapter's CDM, CFPP of the Year award or was named as the CDM, CFPP of the Month in Nutrition & Foodservice Edge magazine. This member has proven to be devoted to their chapter as well as to ANFP. Congratulations, Dominick Patrevito, CDM, CFPP!*



Dominick Patrevito, CDM, CFPP, is an accomplished culinary and hospitality executive with extensive experience leading large-scale food service operations within the senior living industry. As the current Vice President of Culinary with Trilogy Health Services, he oversees culinary and dining services across 140 communities in seven states, with a steadfast commitment to delivering exceptional dining experiences that enhance the lives of our residents.

### Chapter Volunteer of the Year Award

*The Chapter Volunteer of the Year Award recognizes an outstanding chapter volunteer who serves as a positive example to others, and whose dedicated service, time, and efforts to the foodservice industry help to advance the mission of ANFP at the state level.*  
**Congratulations, Ariel Womack, CDM, CFPP!**



Ariel Womack, CDM, CFPP is a Dining and Nutrition Services Manager at Ethica in Milledgeville, Georgia, and a rising leader in ANFP.

Ariel sets herself apart through sustained excellence in both her professional career and volunteer leadership.

Her service extends beyond her facility through meaningful community outreach, including veteran support efforts, Ronald McDonald House donations, Meals on Wheels service, youth fundraising events, and food insecurity projects.

### Dining Distinction Award

*The Dining Distinction Award honors a member who has contributed significantly to the health and well-being of individuals while providing an optimal dining experience, including the nutritional value of food, presentation, the environment in which food is served, and interactions with clients.* **Congratulations, Georgia Georgacopulos-Lopez!**



Georgia Georgacopulos-Lopez, known as Gia, currently serves as a Child Nutrition Operations Specialist at YES Prep Public Schools, where she oversees cafeteria operations across multiple campuses, ensures compliance with USDA food program regulations, and provides training to staff.

Her ability to tailor programs to diverse student needs, think creatively to solve challenges, and foster a culture of belonging with measurable impacts position her as a model for school nutrition professionals nationwide.

## Distinguished Service Award - Corporate Partner

*The Distinguished Service Award recognizes a corporate partner that has demonstrated support for ANFP in pursuit of its mission. **Congratulations, Sysco!***



Sysco Corporation stands as one of ANFP's most dedicated and impactful corporate partners, with a remarkable legacy of support spanning more than 25 years. Throughout this quarter-century partnership, Sysco has consistently demonstrated an unwavering commitment to advancing the nutrition and foodservice profession and supporting the CDM, CFPP credential.

Notably, Sysco was the first major corporate supporter when the Foundation rebranded to NFEF in 2014, and continues to support the Foundation as a Visionary Level Sponsor.

## Horizon Award

*The Horizon Award recognizes members who are new to management, and who demonstrate a desire for future growth through initiatives within their facility or community, or local chapter, and display leadership in fostering equality, diversity, and inclusion in the workplace. **Congratulations, M. Almazan!***



M. Almazan, the Child Nutrition Coordinator at YES Prep Public Schools in Houston, Texas, has quickly distinguished herself through visionary leadership, innovation, and a deep commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion. M. has transformed school meal programs into inclusive, culturally relevant, and educational experiences that positively impact students, staff, and the broader community.

Her vision, dedication, and ability to inspire others position her as a model for school nutrition professionals nationwide.

## Innovation Award

*The Innovation Award recognizes an individual who has enhanced their nutrition and foodservice operations through technology, program development, nutrition, and operations. **Congratulations, Thom Pastor, FACHE, CDM, CFPP!***



Thom Pastor, FACHE, CDM, CFPP is the Director of Food and Nutrition Services at the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) in Anchorage, Alaska, where he oversees retail, inpatient hospital feeding, and clinical nutrition operations.

Since joining ANTHC, he began restructuring the team to address operational instability. He brought in a nationally recognized interim Executive Chef to model professional kitchen standards and embedded pay equity into every hiring decision to reduce turnover and build trust among staff.

## Partnership Award

*The Partnership Award recognizes a company or facility that exhibits a strong commitment to the credential and supports the nutrition and foodservice department leaders as well as staff. Congratulations, Kym Marie Brenneman, RD, LD!*



Kym Marie Brenneman, RD, LD is Vice President of Food & Nutrition Services for Saber Healthcare Group, where she leads system-wide operations across more than 160 communities. A strong advocate for professional advancement in food and nutrition services, she has partnered closely with ANFP to promote and elevate the credential. Through her support, individuals were able to pursue formal training, complete required coursework, and achieve professional credentialing, strengthening both their confidence and competence in foodservice and nutrition management.

## Public Policy Leadership Award

*The Public Policy Leadership Award recognizes a member or congressperson that exhibits strong support for efforts to change/strengthen public policy in the areas of nutrition, food, health care, and public health. Congratulations, Congresswoman Jen Kiggans!*



Congresswoman Jen Kiggans represents Virginia's Second Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives, bringing to public service a rare blend of military, clinical, and legislative experience.

In Congress, she has championed legislation to expand access to medical nutrition therapy and improve care delivery in skilled nursing facilities. She has also recognized National CDM, CFPP Day in the Congressional Record for three consecutive years, underscoring her support for CDM, CFPPs and their contributions to nutrition, food safety, and public health.

## Legacy Award

*The Legacy Award recognizes an ANFP member who has been a member for at least 15 years and served three or more years on a national committee/board, and attended at least three ANFP regional and/or annual meetings within the last five years. Congratulations, Deb Dawson, CDM, CFPP!*

Deb Dawson, CDM, CFPP built a distinguished career defined by service, leadership, and a deep commitment to advancing the nutrition and foodservice profession. She is a dedicated and long-standing member of ANFP. Her leadership spans nearly every level of the organization including chapter roles such as Treasurer, Secretary, Chair, and Spokesperson, as well as national positions including Director at Large, Treasurer, and National Chair from 2003–2004. She has also served as the CDBM and Foundation Chair, and coordinates projects for Past Chairs, helping shape the organization's strategic direction and strengthen leadership continuity.



Beyond her formal leadership roles, Deb is widely respected as a mentor, educator, and advocate for professional excellence. She has taught CDM, CFPP exam preparation classes, served as a preceptor for students in dietary management programs, and consistently invested in developing future leaders in the field. Her efforts have strengthened workforce readiness, supported credentialing, and elevated the visibility of the CDM, CFPP credential across the profession.

Her influence extends well beyond the workplace. She is deeply committed to her community, teaching food safety, mentoring students, supporting church events, and encouraging youth education through music and food safety initiatives. She is known for her warmth, integrity, and ability to make others feel welcome, and leads with humility and purpose. Her career reflects not only remarkable achievements, but also a sustained dedication to serving others and strengthening the profession she has helped to shape, making her a truly deserving recipient of the Legacy Award.

### **Diamond Award**

*The coveted Diamond Award recognizes one ANFP state chapter per year that exemplifies dedication to members through chapter initiatives and enthusiastic leadership.*

### **Congratulations, Georgia ANFP!**



This year's Diamond Award winner, Georgia (GA) ANFP, focused on giving back to their neighbors and the surrounding communities by partnering with local and national charities.

The chapter provided snacks, paper goods, and hygiene products for the Ronald McDonald House that provides support to families and parents of sick children who want to stay by their child's side that do not have the time or cannot afford to purchase the bare necessities.

They also partnered with a local organization, Uplifting Our Girls of Atlanta, run by women in government leadership, including State House Representative, Kim Schofield. The organization fulfills various needs including helping young ladies with bra fittings, providing education to embrace puberty, and providing group meetings as a means of support. The chapter donated funds to help support this organization and purchase personal hygiene products.

Additionally, the chapter was able to provide support to Hand to Hand in Glynn County GA, an organization that provides housing for the homeless, including a community of 51 tiny homes.

You may read more about our 2026 award recipients [here](#).