

SAUSD NUTRITION SERVICES

Nutrition NewsBites



Celebrating Our Retirees

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NUTRITION SERVICES - CELEBRATING OUR RETIREES

Welcome to the second edition of the SAUSD Nutrition Services newsletter. This issue is dedicated to an incredible group of people who have decided to hang up their aprons for retirement after faithfully serving our SAUSD families. We are thrilled you have joined us in celebrating their amazing legacy!

These 18 individuals have been dedicated to serving SAUSD for a combined total of **457 years!** Follow along for the ride as we recognize and honor these beloved members of our team.



JoAnn Kendall - 28 Years of Service

When anyone thinks of Nutrition Services, the first person they will likely think of is JoAnn Kendall, the department's administrative secretary for eight glorious years. JoAnn has been the face, soul, and foundation of the team. JoAnn started her career in SAUSD 28 years ago as a Purchasing Clerk. JoAnn recalls how tough the work was: "That was the hardest job I had in Facilities. We did a lot of the work back then." As the facilities tech, JoAnn even completed the paperwork for the new Central Kitchen some twenty years ago, not knowing then that this is where she would wrap up her career.

JoAnn talked about the encouragement she received early on from her first boss in the District, recalling, "I had a great boss. He pushed me to grow, helped me get into my facilities contract technician position." JoAnn worked in the Building Services Department, Educational Technology Department, and eventually became the Administrative Secretary for the Construction Department. JoAnn joined Nutrition Services in 2013 and has loved every minute of it: "I've really enjoyed working with the team in Nutrition Services. Everybody is just so nice."

We asked JoAnn to share some of her favorite memories of SAUSD: "I liked when we would do group activities, like we did the team run and scavenger hunt at Godinez. That type of activity was fun as a department. It brought the department together. Everybody enjoyed doing that." JoAnn's good nature and kind heart always shined at team gatherings, like the annual Nutrition Services picnics. "Getting to be with the whole department and their families was nice. You hear about everyone's family but rarely get to meet them. Dressing up for Halloween – the costume contests. I think the whole team enjoyed it too. Having the holiday luncheons where we all gathered in the kitchen was also nice."

Though very excited for the adventures awaiting her in retirement, JoAnn leaves SAUSD with a heavy heart: "I will miss a lot of the people. I have had some wonderful bosses over the years." Even though she may be somewhat nervous about what comes next, JoAnn seemed excited to speak of her plans for the future, saying, "After 28 years, it's going to be an adjustment. I'm going to travel to all the National Parks during the winter. Our dad used to take us when we were kids. Plan to do lots of traveling. The closer I get to retirement, the more relaxed I feel about it."

Saying goodbye is always bittersweet, especially when you bid farewell to wonderful people, but it is with the hope that in retirement your longtime colleague may experience and enjoy everything they have ever dreamt. JoAnn Kendall is a special individual, and we will miss her as much as we hope she enjoys her many long years of retirement. JoAnn says, "The friendships that I've made – there are some who have already left the District I still am in contact with. The friendships are still strong. We will be friends for life." And that is exactly how we will regard JoAnn: a friend for life.

Rita Mojica - 24 Years of Service

Rita started working for SAUSD In 1997. She started as a Food Service Substitute. Then she worked as a 2.5 hour permanent employee. She worked her way up, including filling in as a substitute covering for the SAUSD Food Service Elementary Supervisor position when needed. She has been working at Saddleback High School for 21 years.

Rita's favorite memories throughout working with SAUSD have been seeing the students coming by the speed line at lunchtime to get their meals. When asked what she will miss about working for SAUSD her response was, "Preparing the food for our students." Rita mentioned that she would take her memories and friendships that she made along the way while working for SAUSD Nutrition Services with her.

Rita will be missed, and we hope that she has a fun, relaxing retirement. She is an amazing, hard working team player and a great cook. We know she will do great enjoying her fun life.



Adelina Lara - 32 Years of Service



Los Bukis were a popular Mexican band I would listen to in the 80s while I cooked lunch for my growing family. Band members rocked poofy hair that was quintessential of that decade, so much so, that I had my own poofy hair except mine was due to gifted curls. Back then, I had four kids to feed while I learned English watching PBS in between cooking.

One day while dropping off my kids at Diamond Elementary School, I saw an ad that caught my immediate attention. SAUSD was hiring subs for their lunch service program. I have always been a go-getter, migrating from San Luis Potosí, México to go get the American dream and a better future for my *familia*. So with my Mexican cooking skills coupled with my PBS English, I applied in 1989 and was hired to help provide warm meals to the children of Santa Ana.

Donning my first hairnet over my poof, I started at Sierra Middle School and was quickly retained and promoted to Senior Food Service Worker. I guess my cooking was a hit because Lathrop stole me away a year later and for over three decades I have called this school my second home. I am proud to say I am retiring as a Spartan who achieved the role of Food Service Supervisor while raising a total of six kids and earning my GED – PBS English really paid off.

A lot has changed since the decade of Los Bukis. Reagan was President, while Dr. Rudy Castruita was Superintendent of the school district. Movie tickets were around \$4, but I never went because I preferred a night at home with my kids watching *Sabado Gigante*. Back then, it was all about dancing *El Bailongo* – a catchy dance craze – on a Saturday night while Don Francisco, the show's host, spurred guests to keep dancing while I danced at home with my kids. The movies just couldn't compete with that level of fun!

Retiring over three decades later is bittersweet. But I take with me heartfelt moments that reflect why I was so committed to my job. Here in the district, we like to say, "I am SAUSD" to reflect our community-oriented approach toward loving our children. In that spirit, I am SAUSD because of kids like Miguel, a spunky kid I advocated for several years ago. Miguel arrived hungry but late to the cafeteria. We had already stopped serving lunch, but after working so many years, I had developed a sixth sense about kids who were really hungry. I marched to the assistant principal's office to request approval for me to serve Miguel a meal beyond the official end time for the lunch line. The AP approved, I whipped up a meal, used my sixth sense to find Miguel amongst the hundreds of kids outside and BAM – fed kid, happy kid, and ready to learn kid.

I'll miss kids like Miguel when I retire. They kept me going for 32 years. That's 5,760 school days. Two meals a day for hundreds of kids per day translates into roughly 6 million warm meals over the course of my tenure as a SAUSD employee. I am ready though. All my kids are grown and I have cooked enough meals. It's time for me to enjoy Los Bukis, throw out my hairnet, and grow out my poofy hair again while cooking for me for a change. In my heart though, I will always be SAUSD.

Jenny Huyen - 14 Years of Service

“Every day when I come to work I can’t think of anything else but these special meals students—they give me a purpose and a meaningful life.” That was what Jenny Huyen shared when being asked what she loves the most when working for SAUSD Nutrition Services.

Jenny began her career as a substitute with Nutrition Services in 2007. In 2008, she advanced to become a permanent 3.5-hour nutrition assistant at Century High School cafeteria. After almost 5 years of working there, she moved to Central Kitchen as a 6.5-hour employee and has worked there ever since. When the special diet team was formed, Jenny quickly found her footing and not only became a valuable member of our team, but started to take over in areas that weren’t even in her job description. Working in the special diet area requires a lot of patience, stress, and skill. These pressures have never stopped her from doing her best for special diets students. Jenny shared that: “When I prepare meals for these students I always think them as my own children. I want them to have the best meals so they can concentrate on their study at school”.

We could always rely on Jenny when things got crazy. She is a multi-tasking lady who has always been there to lend a hand. She did it without a fuss to make sure things ran smoothly and no one was behind with their task. “I like to work as a team, I like to build a good relationship with my coworkers—these people are my family at work, I need to look after them,” Jenny said with a big and proud smile.

Jenny has planned to retire at the end of this school year. If this is the case she will be sorely missed by the whole team and those that had the joy of working alongside her all these years.





Scott Perkins - 24 Years of Service

Scott Perkins will be retiring this year after 24 years with SAUSD. He began his career on April 21, 1997. To put that into context, here are some facts about 1997:

- Titanic was released
- The first Harry Potter Book was published
- Bill Clinton was President
- Minimum wage was \$5.15
- Price for a movie ticket was \$4.59

Scott had been working for Nutrition Services at the Central Kitchen as our Baker. Who remembers buying or eating one of those delicious cookies/muffins back then?! As our Head Baker, he would bake bread, rolls, pastries and prepared desserts for all of our staff and students. At that time, around 10,000 servings of cookies were produced on a daily basis! In 2013, after 16 years as a Baker, Scott was promoted to a Cook. He has been assisting in the preparation and serving of other foods for special events ever since.

Scott is a genuinely kind, peaceful, funny and hardworking member of this team. Scott shared his thoughts about what he will miss most about working at the Central Kitchen: "I will miss the people. Over the years I've learned to be more patient with people. Right now, our production leads, supervisors and co-workers have been the best crew that I have worked with through-out the years. Everything is so clean and organized."

When not working on yummy desserts at the Central Kitchen, Scott enjoys listening to Rock N Roll from the 60's and 70's. His favorite song is "Get Back" from The Beatles. On his days off he enjoys working around the house, and he loves to eat Bacon Cheeseburgers.

He's really looking forward to retirement and plans on traveling around the world.

We wish you a happy and wonderful retirement Scott! You will be missed.... You have done so much for our department. Thank you! Thank you!

Martha Guillen - 27 Years of Service

Martha has been with SAUSD since 1996. She was first hired to work at Head Start, then as a bus aide, and finally a cook.

Martha always comes in ready for the day's tasks and approaches everything with a big smile. She has a big heart and has always been willing to help out her coworkers. The staff will miss the donuts she would bring to work. She carried on substantive conversations, and her coworkers appreciated it. Some of her favorite memories from SAUSD include working with the kids and her coworkers. When asked what will she take from her time with SAUSD, Martha answered, "Good memories."



Otilia Gutierrez - 22 Years of Service

Otilia started with SAUSD in 1998. She started as an activity supervisor at Roosevelt Elementary School. Oti loves to be organized and to keep her kitchen clean at Century High School. She is a kind and thoughtful person. Her coworkers will miss her laugh and her smile that lights up the room. She is a wonderful cook, and she is known for making a great salsa. One of the things she also loves to do is keep up with current events. Oti can fill you in on anything that is going on in the world.

She is outspoken and not afraid of what life will bring her in this next chapter. Otilia was asked, "What will you miss, and what will you take from SAUSD?" She replied, "I will miss my work family. I will take with me the fellowship and friendships that I have developed over the years."



Demetrio Barrera - 20 Years of Service

We recently chatted with the one, the only, Demetrio Barrera.

Demetrio began his career with SAUSD in 2001 at Lincoln Elementary School where he worked part-time handling food. Not long after, he moved to the Central Kitchen where he has been ever since. During his tenure, Demetrio has earned a reputation as a genuinely kind, hardworking member of the team. His colleagues have come to respect his knowledge and have a deep appreciation for his work. He has been recognized throughout multiple school years for perfect attendance. Demetrio is dependable, helpful, enthusiastic, and admired by his peers for making the time to teach others what he knows, and he knows A LOT.

Over the years, Demetrio has learned a great deal about food production and high-volume operations. He has developed a strong understanding of precise settings and processes for portioning and packaging strict amounts of food. When colleagues and supervisors want to know exact yields and servings, they always ask Demetrio first. He has become the expert operator of the Central Kitchen's packaging equipment.

Demetrio shared his thoughts on working at Central Kitchen, "The best thing about Nutrition Services is the people. I feel like a valuable team member. Each person is equally important to the general functions that are performed here. No person is insignificant or small in the process. We all need each other. There is a feeling we are all one big happy family, and that makes a big difference when it comes to getting up for work in the morning."

When not sharing his wisdom and work ethic at Central Kitchen, Demetrio enjoys ranchera music, Laberinto being his favorite group. He enjoys his coffee and donuts on the weekends, and has a special place in his heart for breaded shrimps. Demetrio has said that December is his favorite month because of the beautiful lights and decorations, and that Mondays are his best day of the week.

"My time here at Nutrition Services is almost over. This is not a goodbye... only 'hasta luego'," Demetrio said. "I leave the Nutrition Services Department very satisfied because what I do every day is part of the great puzzle that is put together every day 'complete the meals to serve the students'," stated Demetrio. "I will miss everyone and my daily routine." Demetrio reflected.

We will forever miss Demetrio for the incredible contributions he has made to SAUSD, Nutrition Services.

Delia Mojica - 21 Years of Service



Delia Mojica started her career with Nutrition Services as a substitute in 1999. Soon after, she was offered a 3.5-hour position at Santa Ana High School. She said that she enjoyed that opportunity and enjoyed serving students even more. She felt as though she was taking care of her own family by feeding and interacting with the students on a daily basis. There was a sense of pride and joy that she felt every day. The opportunity to work more hours and help support her family motivated Delia to take a full-time job at the Central Kitchen.

In the beginning, Delia was in awe of everything that went on in the kitchen. The machines, people, and all this food that went out every day. Delia thinks the Central Kitchen produces more food now than when she first started here. She remembers scooping cereal, and now the cereal comes in colorful containers. She has seen many faces and developed friendships with her co-workers. A lot of good times have been shared, and challenging times have fortified those friendships.

Delia recommends to any new hire in the Central Kitchen that they, "Pay attention to what the supervisor is saying. Ask

questions, follow directions, pay more attention, and always do your best. Be good to your co-workers and support the new hires because I remember being new and having to learn a lot."

Delia was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2013. She worked every day that she could until the day of her surgery. Returning to work was not easy, but she credits her ability to return to work to her coworkers and the supervisor at the time. She said she will always be grateful for the support, and it is one of those memories that still moves her to this day. "I wanted to come back to work, but I was worried if I could still do the job. I returned to work and now I am getting ready to retire. I didn't know if I was ever going to see that day," she reflected.

Delia expressed, "My next big decision involves me moving to Oklahoma. I want to be closer to my family. My son and his family live in Oklahoma. I look forward to spending time with my grandkids, staying active, and traveling to see other family members. I want to be active, move, and grow old gracefully."



Thao Nguyen - 24 Years of Service

Thao began working with SAUSD in September of 1996 as a Cafeteria Worker. When asked about her favorite memories while working with the District Thao responded, "I will miss some of my favorite co-workers, joking, cooking, having fun and learning some words in Spanish."

She also stated that she will miss, "What I have been doing, a routine of work every day."

Thao reflected, "I think working as a cafeteria worker is a good job for me to interact with children, teachers, other school personnel and more, more... That's why I have been with the district over 20 years !!!"

Messages for Thao:

"Ms. Thao: What can I say about Ms. Thao, the most caring person I've met. Working with her and the rest of the Lorin Griset team was more like working with family.

Thao is very helpful and really knows what she is doing lol. Whenever I needed help with entering my mileage she was more than helpful.

Thao has a huge heart for our kids. How every time she would see me she always asks for my 'chubby boy' lol.

Anyone who ever meets Ms. Thao falls in love with her personality and how comfortable she makes you feel. I'm going to miss you Thao. Best wishes always...."

- Emma Martinez, Villa

"Thao, what can i say. I met her at Griset a few years back, can't remember the exact date haha. What can i say about her, she is part of team Griset. Wait, not just a team, we are family - always looking out for each other, always helping each other in every way possible.

Happy to come to work, always making us laugh.

She's my kids' grandma; they love her to death. This is very hard for me to write. I really don't want our Thao to leave us. I wish she could stay with us forever. I am being selfish. I want her to stay.

I Love Thao. She's the best person to work with. She is always there for help or just for support always with a smile on her face.

Always asking about my kids, telling me how she wished that she had her own grandchildren lol. I would tell her, 'Take my kids, you can have them.'

I love that fact that I went to her site and she had the Christmas picture of my babies. That's when you know that we are family.

Thao, happy retirement- wish you the best, and you know me I will call you to see how you are doing. Always and forever team Griset. "

- Lobelia Martinez

"As I read these coming in I get choked up.... But, they all said such similar things about Thao.

If I told Taylor to say something, I'm sure it would be similar. If I call Phil, over at Orange HS, he would say the same. A lot of people never knew her because she worked alone for so long. But, those of us that do, love her. She knows that too lol..."

- Shanee Cregut-Gonzalez

Virginia Figueroa - 30 Years of Service

The happiest and most optimistic Nutrition Services employee with a wealth of knowledge in all things food service will be retiring in a few months, after 30 years of service.

Virginia Figueroa works as a Nutrition Services Assistant at Central Kitchen and is known for her positive attitude, witty humor, and friendly demeanor.



"It doesn't seem like I've been here that long," Virginia said.

She entered the Food Service Department as a new employee on July 2, 1991 as a Food Service Worker. Soon after, she was roving around and assisted many sites including: Edison, Washington, Sepulveda, Garfield, Roosevelt and more.

Virginia has served the schools and the Central Kitchen throughout her career, building and nurturing countless friendships and professional relationships along the way.

In the 30 years that she has served the department, Virginia has witnessed changes in the way the department carries out its mission. She remembers having to manually report free and reduced meals and making those lunch tickets for students. She also remembers the many administrators and managers who have come and gone.

"The evolution of the menu has been one of the most significant changes I have been fortunate to witness," said Virginia. "Students are now more health conscious, so we have a greater variety of menu items available to them."

Among her favorite memories that occurred during her career, Virginia participated in the department's bakery making thousands of cookies every day. "This was like a sweet dream," Virginia reflected. Her favorite cookie was the monster cookie.

"I am proud to have had the opportunity to work under the leadership of Josefina and her team (Ana, Lily, Ceci and Luis). They are enthusiastic and confident leaders who are passionate about their work," Virginia stated.

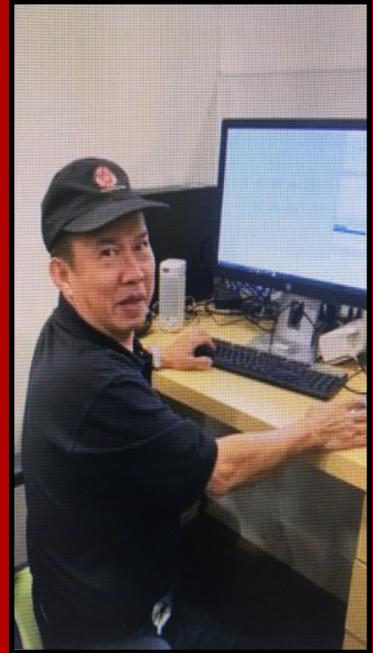
"Here at Central Kitchen we are a great family. We share each other's accomplishments, we support each other in times of pain and sadness, and we celebrate each other in joyful and happy times," said Virginia.

With the end of the school year approaching, Virginia is getting ready to hang up that apron and put it away for the last time on June 30, her last day.

Nam Dang- 22 Years of Service

One of our team members that is always working behind the scenes is Nam Dang, our beloved Network Technician. As he sets to embark on a new chapter in his life, we had the pleasure to interview him and get his thoughts before his departure. Through the interview, we learned more about his dedication to his job and his experience working for educational institutions. Before working for Santa Ana Unified School District, Nam worked for San Diego Community College for 14 years as a Network Specialist. His family decided to move to Orange County, and that is how he became a member of the Santa Ana team.

Nam says that he enjoys what he does and his attendance demonstrates his character and dependability. Nam is rarely out and is always ready to lend a hand. When asked what his favorite time was while working with Santa Ana Unified, he said, "The time that I worked with Nutrition Services was my favorite time." Nam also shared that he enjoyed providing support for the school sites and not only helping others fix their technology issues but teaching them as well. When asked what he would miss the most, he shared that he would miss all of the people that he has come to know over the years. He really loves what he does. Nam will be greatly missed by everyone. We wish him the best of luck on his retirement.



Alicia Rojas - 38 Years of Service

Alicia Rojas started her wonderful career with the Santa Ana Unified School District back in 1982 when times were much simpler: cell phones were the size of a briefcase, a gallon of gasoline was just over \$1.00, and the average price of a brand-new car was \$9,370. Alicia was first hired on with the District's Food Service Department as a substitute, and her very first assignment was at McFadden Intermediate where she was given a long-term assignment. Alicia was assisting McFadden Intermediate School's baker and would help with the production of the school's meal service. Alicia was soon hired on as a "Food Service Worker" and slowly worked and moved her way through the ranks to become the kitchen's "Food Service Supervisor".

Alicia's favorite memories include being able to cook from scratch, making teachers breakfast and lunch, and making her famous salsa that everyone would ask for. The one thing that Alicia will take with her is the satisfaction of having done her job very well and being able to make thousands of children very happy during breakfast and lunch time.



Gaspar Moreno - 22 Years of Service



Gaspar Moreno, Central Kitchen Cook, got his start working in a kitchen by chance. He was originally hired as a dishwasher in a local restaurant. It wasn't Gaspar's intention to become a cook; he was just looking for a job. After getting hired he soon became a busboy, and then the job landed him in the kitchen doing prep work for the cooks and the head chef. Gaspar saw the cooks at work and knew he could become a cook and he did. He didn't grow tired of the kitchen and found it to be rewarding. Before arriving at the Central Kitchen Gaspar worked in other kitchens.

As his knowledge in the kitchen grew so did his personal life by marrying and having a child. His son went on to attend school in the Santa Ana Unified School District. Gaspar always felt pride in what he produced in the Central Kitchen, especially knowing his child was eating what was being produced.

Some of his best memories in the CK involve cooking from scratch such items as soups, pasta dishes, and items that were served at the District Office as well as Head Start. He has noticed changes in the food prepared and sent from the Central Kitchen. He remembers more scratch cooking for students and staff. He also thinks students are being offered a greater variety of foods, and more food, than ever before. He has noticed other changes as well through the years here at the CK. Gaspar remembers his first uniform being a white work shirt and not as nice as the uniforms currently being issued. His advice to the younger staff today is to learn as much as they can and challenge themselves by applying for other positions and advancing.

When Gaspar came to the U.S. his intention was to work and study. He did more work than studying, but he has no regrets when it comes to working. He has made many friends along the way as well as learned plenty from the many opportunities the kitchen has offered him. Gaspar expressed that he has seen and experienced many things in his life. He has also seen and experienced just as much in his personal life. His best advice to all is to keep on learning. He would like the younger workforce to take more chances.

Gaspar looks forward to working his part-time job just a little longer before he takes retirement seriously. His immediate plans involve visiting family and friends in Mexico at the start of summer. He plans to eventually move south to Baja California to enjoy life and family. He doesn't think he will ever leave the kitchen. He will take a break from the kitchen, but he thinks the kitchen will always call to him.



Juanita Almanza - 18 Years of Service

For some people, there is no "magic" number for retirement. "I like my job. I like the people I work with and I'm healthy enough to keep doing it, but I want to spend a lot of time with my granddaughter," Juanita said.

After working at Sepulveda for 18 years it is time to say goodbye. In 2002 Juanita was very excited to start a part-time job at Sepulveda. "One of the things I enjoyed the most about my job was counting and offering the fruit to the students," said Juanita.

"During this time, my children were very young and now all three have graduated from school, two are married, and I already have a granddaughter and another on the way. I love 'outdoor gardening'. Being outdoors makes me feel the connections with plants and the garden itself. I also love traveling to Mexico to see my sisters and my family," said Juanita.

When asked what she will miss the most, she replied that, "They are the people I have had the opportunity to meet and connect with along the way. I will miss the kindergarteners and their growth, the "back to school" meetings, because we have fun and they are always done with a lot of enthusiasm. I will miss the teachers who passed by the cafeteria all the time. I will miss my lead who made me laugh and helped me a lot during all these years. She helped me by telling me exactly what to do to be successful in my daily assignments. I will also miss my former Field Supervisor who was there for us, for her great compassion, kindness and understanding."

"I will always have a special place in my heart for this job. Even when I was signing my exit papers, I did it with a lot of emotions and feelings. I want to thank the School District and the Nutrition Services Department for the opportunity to be here all these years. I will always carry my beautiful memories with me," Juanita stated.

Juanita your contributions to Nutrition Services have been immense and tremendous. You have personally contributed to this department and have inspired others to make a difference. Nutrition Services will always remember you as a great employee!

Thanks for everything and all the best!





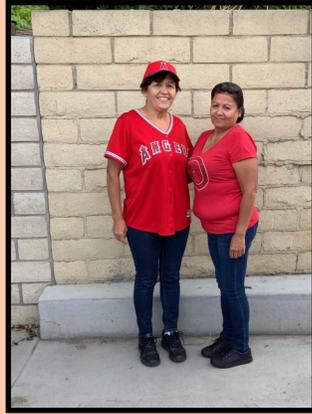
Lisa Gaxiola - 39 Years of Service

If you are searching for a person who embodies the meaning of commitment, look no further than Lisa Gaxiola, a 39-year member of the Santa Ana Unified family. Lisa began her career in SAUSD in September of 1983. Her first position was substitute food service worker earning \$4.23 an hour, working five hours a day. Lisa recalls, "I liked the hours, and I liked the time off." By November of that year, she found a permanent food service worker position at McFadden Intermediate School. While at McFadden, Lisa met Alicia Rojas, a fellow food service worker who is also retiring this year alongside her longtime colleague and friend. Lisa states, "I'm really happy for my friends and fellow retirees like Alicia Rojas and Ana Balladares."

Lisa joined SAUSD after having worked in retail for some time. She found work in the kitchen different and challenging. "There was no formal training – not like today. Now we take the time to train our employees. My training when I started was my supervisor showing me the oven, the fridge, telling me the number of kids, and saying, 'call me if you need anything'. Back then, we made our own food from scratch. There were these massive pots and they'd say, 'you have to wash this.' I told them, 'I don't like washing pots. I don't think I am going to work here.'" The people were one of the main reasons she stayed. She spoke of how much she has enjoyed the people she worked with at McFadden: "The employees were so great. We all got along. The only reason I left McFadden is I got a rover opportunity."

Lisa was asked to share some of her memories after her four decades in the District, and recalled an incident long ago when she accidentally threw a bucket of soapy water on a coworker whom she failed to see. "Poor Debbie," Lisa recalled, "I remember thinking everything was funny back in those days. Debbie didn't think it was funny." Lisa worked as a supervisor at Hoover Elementary School, Villa Fundamental, and Saddleback High School. She knew she wanted to grow into a larger leadership role, and so pursued a leadership position at a high school. "That was a large team. Twenty-two people. I remember being nervous and having a hard time helping the staff to get along." Lisa became a field supervisor in 2005, her role for the last 16 years. As a field supervisor, Lisa has been vital to the overall success of the District's child nutrition programs, leading teams across more than 30 sites at times. She's seen just about everything there is to see. Lisa recalls 2010 was a challenge, navigating through the sweeping changes to child nutrition: "We were all nervous. There were so many changes to our work."

When asked what she will miss most about SAUSD, Lisa responded, "The friendships. I have very much enjoyed going to the sites and getting to know the staff. The Central Kitchen office staff have always been supportive and amazing. Though challenging, my last year has been great. Even in the rough years, we've kept each other going. It's been a good ending for my career here. Santa Ana Unified has been a good place to be." Life in retirement means change for Lisa and her family. They've decided to move to Muskogee, Oklahoma where Lisa's daughter and her family have lived for nearly ten years. We wish nothing but good health, happiness, and a sense of fulfillment for Lisa and her family. We are forever indebted to Lisa for her decades of leadership, passion, and kindness. She leaves behind a legacy to be proud of.



Ana Balladares - 27 Years of Service

Ana Balladares began her career with SAUSD in 1974. She started out as an Activity Monitor. At the time that she was hired, the President of the USA was Richard Nixon.

When asked about her favorite memories while working with the District Ana replied, "One of my favorite memories I have about working in SAUSD is watching students arrive every morning and having a nice warm breakfast ready for our students."

In speaking about what she will miss about working for SAUSD she stated, " There are many things that I will miss about working in SAUSD. I will miss all of my students, teachers, parents, food service staff, and my helper Maria. I am sad that this will be my last year with all of you. It has been a long journey and I am grateful to have had the opportunity to work with such wonderful people. I would like to thank everyone from the bottom of my heart for your kindness and generosity you have all shown me."

Ana said, "One of the things that I will take from my time here at SAUSD will be a lot of the wonderful memories we have created together. I have spent 34 years of my life working for SAUSD and it has been very rewarding. I enjoy waking up every morning and feeling excited about starting my day at Hoover and doing what I love."

Messages for Ana:

" All these years that I coexisted with Ana were experiences. Ana showed me a lot about her life, and I did too during these years.

We formed a great friendship that I know it will not end with her retirement. Our friendship will go on forever."

-Maria Soto

"Ana was my, at the time, Food Service Worker when I worked as an Elementary Supervisor at Hoover. She was amazing. She learned her responsibilities right away and made sure everything was ready for lunch service.

She was a hard worker and easy to get along with. We got along so well that it made work fun. I am so happy for her; now that she is retiring she can enjoy her grandchildren."

-Lisa Gaxiola



Martha Pantoja- 25 Years of Service

Martha Pantoja started her career with the Santa Ana School District "Food Service" back in 1987 (before the department was named Nutrition Services). She began her career as a noon supervisor at Jackson Elementary School. After working as a noon supervisor for about 3 months, Martha soon realized she wanted to work for Food Service and was shortly thereafter hired on as a substitute Food Service Worker. Martha worked as a substitute for about 3 months before she was given the opportunity to become a permanent 3.5-hour employee at Valley High School. Martha worked in this position for about 6 months until she was given the wonderful opportunity to work as "Senior" Food Service Worker at Saddleback High School. Martha worked in this position for more than 6 years. She later went on to become the Food Service Elementary "Supervisor" at Carl Harvey Elementary School where she is now currently the Nutrition Services Satellite Kitchen Lead.

In the last 34 years Martha has served thousands of children, and her favorite memory of working for the District is, "Seeing all the little students. They would come running through the lunch line and hug, and love me like I was their very own mother."

