

Karen Williams Food Service Director

*Champion for Change
Thermalito Union School District
Oroville, CA*



“I didn’t really consider myself to be a champion, but everyone needs to be a Champion for Change, for the health and well-being of our children and our community.”

Karen Williams is the Food Service Director for the Thermalito Elementary School District. Starting in 2006 with a skeleton crew, Karen has grown the food service program to include 16/or staff who provide breakfast, lunch, snacks, and suppers at 15 school sites in three school districts.

“There are a lot of hungry children in our community”, said Karen. “Expanding the food program was a win-win. Not only are the children being fed nutritious food, we are also creating jobs in our community.”

Karen’s goals for the school meal program were to improve the quality and variety of the food served, and also to provide more fresh options. Her school site leads put together a fresh fruit and veggie bar daily, and actively encourage students to serve

themselves. In addition to providing fresh produce at regular meals, food program staff also provide tastings of different fruits and vegetables during recess at one of the schools, under a special grant. “The staff person in charge of that program is really good,” said Karen. “She gets creative with the different types of fruits and vegetables for the kids to try, and they really like it.”

Karen credits the success of her school meals program to her staff. Over the years, when she has been asked to expand the program to provide meals at schools outside her district, Karen has asked her staff what they thought. The answer has always been a resounding “We can do that!”

It’s that “can do” attitude that makes Karen Williams, and all of the school meals staff at Thermalito Union School District, true Champions for Change.



This material was produced by the California Department of Public Health’s Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Branch with funding from USDA SNAP-Ed, known in California as CalFresh. These institutions are equal opportunity providers and employers. CalFresh provides assistance to low-income households and can help buy nutritious food for better health. For CalFresh information, call 1-877-847-3663. For important nutrition information, visit www.CaChampionsForChange.net.