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PRESS RELEASE

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Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) recently announced the retirement of Penny McConnell, Director of Food and Nutrition Services (FNS). McConnell has been with the school system for 50 years. “We are very grateful to Ms. McConnell for her commitment over several decades to serve students in Fairfax County. We thank her and wish her the best,” says Co-founder and Chairman JoAnne Hammermaster of Real Food For Kids, a parent-led school-food non-profit.

FCPS is conducting a national search for McConnell’s replacement to serve the nation’s 10th largest school district, comprising a culturally diverse school population of over 186,000 students.

After a countywide assessment of the school food program was completed in 2013 due to the advocacy of Real Food For Kids, FNS made several improvements in the quality of the food served to students. They include offering fresh fruit and vegetable zones at all school levels; removing student access to regular soda before during, and after the school day; supplying more complete nutritional information about school meals for parents and students; and sourcing foods that have very limited artificial additives.

“We have made excellent progress working with Ms. McConnell and FNS over the past four years to bring more fresh ingredients to the school lunch menu and minimize the processed foods served. Real Food For Kids strongly encourages the school board to continue their emphasis on delicious and healthy school lunches by focusing this very important search on a creative leader who believes in community engagement and has a demonstrated history of finding innovative solutions,” continued Hammermaster.

Founded in 2011, Real Food For Kids also works with the school system and community stakeholders to support programs that educate students and their families on making healthier food choices. More information about Real Food For Kids is available at www.realfoodforkids.org.