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OGS BEST PRACTICES AWARD PRESENTED TO LONG ISLAND FOOD SERVICE COOPERATIVE

The New York State Office of General Services (OGS) and US Department Agriculture today presented the Long Island School Food Service Directors Association (LISFSDA) Cooperative Committee an OGS/USDA Best Practices Award. The award, one of two presented statewide, recognizes the Co-op's innovative practices regarding purchasing, which includes the processing of USDA commodities.

When the Co-op was established in 1989 there were seven member districts. It has grown to its current membership of 36 districts from Nassau and Suffolk Counties. The Co-op was created to help address the rising operational costs that the district's school lunch programs were experiencing. The Co-op currently bids out approximately \$20 million in food (including processed commodities) and supplies. "Direct Diversion" bidding of USDA commodities began in 2005. The Co-op's diversion and processing practices are so successful that it has become a model that other districts around New York State are seeking to duplicate.

The Co-op's innovation has led to cost reduction, the standardization of products used, and adherence to municipal bidding laws. The Co-op also made a tremendous stride forward, by hosting its First Annual Product Evaluation Seminar in January 2007 at Sachem High School. This was an extremely successful event which attracted 30 manufacturers who displayed over 300 items which encompassed all USDA commodities. There were in excess of 80 attendees including representatives from OGS.

The Co-op's \$5,000 award is to be used for the purchase of new food service equipment.

"Since 1989 the LISFSDA has recognized that by working together these districts can save the taxpayers millions of dollars while remaining committed to serving nutritious and innovative school lunches to their students," said OGS Commissioner Egan. "New York's Government Commodity Food Program distributes approximately \$60 million worth of food each year to this school district and others in the state. This enables them to serve nutritious lunches to 1.7 million school children each day."

Maureen Rankin, Acting Director of the USDA's Special Nutrition Programs said: "The USDA Family Nutrition Program serves two purposes: it provides support to our farmers and gives schools the opportunity to reduce their school lunch costs by using USDA commodities at virtually no charge. New

York continues to be one of the nation's strongest supporters of these goals. In the end, it is the customer who benefits from these efforts because we have school and state officials who want our children to get the best nutritional value for their dollar."

Shelley Howe of the LISFSDA said: "It is a great honor to be accepting the OGS Best Practices award 2007 on behalf of the Long Island School Food Service Director's Association's Cooperative Purchasing group. Thirty five districts work hard together for the benefit of the individual districts and have managed to accomplish much financial and other advantages. The benefits to the districts of the Commodity Foods program directed by Tom Osterhout are immeasurable."

New York is the only state in the nation to give Best Practices Awards in recognition of innovation and creativity in using government commodity foods as part of a successful school lunch program.

OGS, which administers the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food Distribution Program in New York State, began offering the Best Practices Awards in 2001, as a way to identify and acknowledge schools and School Food Authorities that have successfully implemented innovative ideas and best practices utilizing government commodity foods, as part of their school lunch programs.

Each year, OGS solicits applications from schools across New York that participate in the Federal Food Distribution Program and awards of \$5,000 are given to those schools that have exhibited best practices in the areas of "Creative Commodity Practices" or "Innovative Operational Procedures." The grant applications are judged based on six criteria that include: innovative procedures, increased quality of services, collaboration, commitment to program excellence, cost effectiveness, and presentation. The award winning ideas are then shared with other schools across New York State.

The OGS Division of Food Distribution & Warehousing receives, warehouses, and distributes federally provided government commodity food for use by school districts, food banks, and child & adult care facilities. More than \$90 million worth of food is distributed annually to over 3,500 recipient agencies throughout New York State. The National School Lunch Program accounts for \$60 million or 67% of this total, with approximately 1,050 New York school districts participating.

In 1935, Congress authorized the creation of the Federal Food Distribution Program to distribute unused crops to the needy through state and local agencies. In 1946, the National School Lunch Act was passed, creating the subsidized lunch program that comprises the largest component of the USDA's food distribution program.

The USDA Food and Consumer Services purchases foods through direct appropriations from Congress, under surplus-removal and price support activities. The foods are distributed through each State for use by eligible local outlets, including schools. Participants in these food distribution programs may receive USDA government commodity meats, poultry, vegetables, fruits, grains, and dairy products. For more information on the OGS Division of Food Distribution & Warehousing Program please visit the OGS website at <http://www.ogs.state.ny.us>.

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