



Frank Harris received the Gertrude Applebaum Lifetime Achievement Award

San Antonio, Texas (Press Release) - Jan. 14, 2013 - Frank Harris, retired child nutrition director (Norwalk Public Schools) of Somers, N.Y. was presented the Gertrude Applebaum Lifetime Achievement Award for his long history of contributions to child nutrition at the National Foodservice Achievement Management Excellence (FAME) award ceremony on Jan. 13, 2013. This year's ceremony was held at the Westin Riverwalk in San Antonio during the School Nutrition Association's (SNA) Child Nutrition Industry Conference (CNIC).

Harris was born in Fürth-Bavaria, Germany and attended public schools until he was forced to leave and attend Jewish school due to the Nazi politics directed at Jewish communities in the 1930s. Harris was able to escape during the war into Holland via a children's transport. He later met up with his family in London and they immigrated to the United States in 1940. Following his father's death, Harris was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1943. After his basic training in Fort Bragg, N.C. he served as a cook/baker and Mess Sergeant in the European theater. After the war, Harris held various jobs in foodservice including the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. He later found his calling in child nutrition when he began his career at Norwalk Public Schools in Connecticut.

Harris was a pioneer in child nutrition when he began his career at Norwalk Public Schools in 1967. When he was hired after what is described as a grueling 3-hour interview, the assistant director and department secretary at the time thought he would never last, the Assistant Director Beri later became his wife of almost 40 years only six years later.

When Harris began his career at Norwalk Public Schools only six out of eighteen schools had a lunch program. Harris determined that each student should have access to school lunch. Based on advice he received from Gertrude Applebaum, Dean Rhoads and others told him he should propose a central kitchen that would serve all the elementary students. The project was to be primarily funded by state and federal funds. After a five-year struggle, the project was approved.

Harris started a breakfast program at Norwalk Public Schools although the idea at the time was contested and unpopular. He had to go to the school board for the program to be implemented at each school. On eighteen occasions he went to the board and received approval all of the schools.

During his career, Frank served as president of the Connecticut School Food Service Association and was the Legislative Chair for the Connecticut SNA up until 2006. He still attends (at the age of 90) the Legislative Action Conference (LAC) in Washington, D.C. each year to work toward making sure more students are nourished so they can continue to learn in schools across the U.S. Harris is described as a man of principle and was willing to take on a long battle when the end result meant more students received meals. He felt that denying hungry children a meal only meant that they could not learn and that is something that should never happen in the U.S. Harris has had the support of then Congressman Christopher Shays for many years. Universal Feeding was initiated and a flag was flown in honor of the initiation on Feb. 21, 2002, as promised by the former congressman.

In 2011, Harris proposed cost-saving steps at the Legislative Action Conference to achieve Universal Free Meals for all students in the U.S. This included nutrition education, playtime that precedes lunch time and exercise periods to eliminate school drop-outs, reduce crime rates and drug use. His proposal also cited graduating students would become working, tax-paying citizens that would continue to restore the American position as a country leading the free world. This proposal was made to over 900 attendees.

For 24 years the FAME Awards have been honoring school nutrition professionals who raise industry standards by tackling challenges within their school districts and communities. This prestigious program is sponsored by Basic American Foods, Schwan's Food Service, Inc. and Tyson Foods, Inc.

Mr. Harris' thanksgiving speech

How can I even begin to thank everyone for this great honor. When someone wins an Academy or Tony Award they always thank their directors, their producers, their make-up artists. I don't need a make-up artist - my wife Beri will see to it that I am properly dressed and made up. But I do want to thank Tony Roberts, the entire Fame Committee and my friend Gertrude Applebaum for receiving this award.

Above all I want to thank God for allowing me to escape as a young boy from Nazi Germany and come to this beautiful country and repay a debt to this nation & this nation's children.

No one is singly responsible for one's success. My gratitude goes to all, who have helped me in my 39 years as F.S.D. from Norwalk. It was Tom O'Hearn from Ma., whose foresight was

instrumental in proposing universal free meals for all students in the U.S. After Tom's early demise I took over his struggle for universal feeding.

I have never led up in my determination to succeed in reaching this goal. I have resisted all arguments mostly that there is no \$. It is never a question of \$ but of priority. There is no greater priority than the education and health of our children - the future of our country.

Being retired for 7 years is no excuse to stop caring. I still care and I still attend L.A.C. annually and have proposed the following five part steps:

- #1 Teach Nutrition Education in all schools at all age levels.
- #2 Food Service Workers should do what they know and do best prepare and serve nutritious meals and be surrogate parents not teachers to all students.
- #3 Playtime before lunchtime to allow students to get rid of all aggressive behavior - to be able afterwards to enjoy their nutritious meals and perform and learn much better in their classrooms.
- #4 Extend lunch periods and provide a more congenial atmosphere in the lunch rooms or cafeterias.
- #5 By staying in school drug-use-crime rates will decrease and health costs will dramatically be reduced.

To follow these five steps is not only morally right but educationally sound and nutritionally wise.

In summary: By staying in school - ultimately graduating - as productive students they will become tax-paying citizens and contribute in restoring the U.S. becoming once again the number #1 country in the world.

As we go through life we suffer many disappointments - severe hardships but also experience many rewards. This Gertrude Appelbaum award for me is the greatest.

You have made my day - you have made my week - my month my year and from the bottom of my heart I want to thank you for this great honor.

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