**Diane Golzynski, PhD, RD**

**Bringing Salad Bars to Michigan’s Schools**

**Diane** Golzynski, PhD, RD is passionate about fruits and vegetables — and about getting kids to eat more fruits and vegetables. In fact, that’s her job. As a consultant to the school nutrition programs with the Michigan Department of Education, one of Diane’s roles is to help school districts get their students to eat more fruits and vegetables.

In fall 2013, the Let’s Move Salad Bars to Schools initiative asked Diane to promote salad bars in Michigan’s schools. Diane reached out to school food service directors around the state. She talked with them about why salad bars are important, how they fit with federal meal regulations, and how to apply to receive a salad bar.

**Successes and Major Outcomes**

One of the school food service directors that Diane connected with was Sara Simmerman, with the Dexter Community Schools. With Diane’s help, Sara brought two new salad bars into her schools, one at an elementary school and one at a middle school. She previewed the new salad bars at a Farm to School Sampling Day. The salad bars featured local cherry tomatoes and other delicious local produce.

The salad bars are still too new for Sara to have measurable results, but she says that students are excited about the salad bar, and they are selecting more than one fruit or vegetable. Sara says, “The fruits and vegetables look so much better on the salad bar than what we had before — hotel pans, and not many choices. We are definitely ordering more fruits and vegetables than last year, and that is a good thing!”

Sara believes strongly in doing what is best for the kids in her schools, including encouraging them to eat healthy foods. Sara works directly with farmers to bring local foods to her salad bars. She puts on fun taste tests with the kids and also with parents. She has also gotten involved in

**About Diane**

Diane is a nutrition consultant with the Michigan Department of Education. Before joining the Education Department in 2011, she was the Fruit and Vegetable Coordinator at the Michigan Department of Health. She was in that position for eight years.

Diane has three children, ages 5, 9 and 14. She loves to eat fruits and vegetables with them and to cook all sorts of delicious meals!

“We are definitely ordering more fruits and vegetables than last year, and that is a good thing!”

— Sara Simmerman, Food Service Director
a food policy council, and she attended USDA’s week-long Produce Safety University.

Sara also mentors other food service directors on how to bring more produce into their schools. As Diane reaches out to more school districts, she often connects these food service directors with Sara. Sara shares her recipes with other directors along with her experience, know-how and can-do attitude.

**Challenges**

One of the challenges Diane is facing is convincing school food service directors that salad bars can work for them and for their schools — that they are safe, they fit with federal guidelines, and they are affordable. Even with inspiring ambassadors like Sara, many food service directors are still not open to pursuing salad bars.

Another barrier has been getting fresh, local produce into the schools. Finding interested farmers and other suppliers and then arranging to get the fruits and vegetables to schools has often been challenging. Michigan has been one of USDA’s fresh produce pilot states. Now in its third year, USDA is working to bring more produce into the state’s schools.