

Heather Faulkner of Abundant Life Childcare Led Local CACFP Community During Pandemic

Abundant Life Childcare, Led by Heather Faulkner, Negotiated Critical Partnerships for Child Nutrition During the Pandemic

ROUND ROCK, TX, UNITED STATES, October 12, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Heather Faulkner of Abundant Life Childcare and Preschool exhibits leadership that has become the industry standard in her community. Abundant Life has operated the CACFP with excellence for over 20 years. At no time was this experience and skill more evident than during the pandemic.



When the pandemic shutdown began, the state health and education official for Abundant Life was unavailable to provide support. Thus, there was little to no direction for area childcare providers on how to respond. Heather quickly connected with a local health officer and was commissioned to create an operating process for childcare providers in the area in response to COVID-19. She created a Facebook group to connect all providers, disseminate up-to-date information from community leaders, and collaborate on resources.

Beyond that, Heather tackled local purchase limits, supply chain shortages and other challenges for providers in her community. She contacted local grocery stores and negotiated to make it possible for local providers to get more than the limited number. Heather also invited smaller operators to add their cleaning and supply orders to Abundant Life's larger order through food suppliers. When Starbucks closed in her community, Heather arranged milk donations and distributed them equitably to area centers. She even spearheaded a collaboration with a brewery to supply childcare operators with hand sanitizer when many sanitizers were difficult to procure.

Heather's focus wasn't only directed toward the community during the shutdown. When many places of business closed for health and safety, including childcare centers, Abundant Life never

even had the option. At the time the pandemic hit, 87% of their parents and caregivers were essential workers, 62% of those were first responders, and 31% of those homes had both caregivers employed as first responders. The awareness that maintaining operations so that first responders and essential businesses' remained open in her community was an evident weight that Heather took seriously. She spent hours away from her family to ensure Abundant Life was able to provide that critical care.

All the while doing this, Heather's care for her own staff was a top priority. She ensured they received extra paid breaks, bought foods proven to help with anxiety and depression to combat their collective stress, and more. During this time, the Abundant Life cook was diagnosed with stage 4 lung cancer, began treatment, and unfortunately lost her battle to cancer all within 6 months of diagnosis. Despite this devastating loss, Heather stepped in and ran the kitchen on top of her other responsibilities.

Not only does Heather care for her community, she inspires and leads others to do the same. The result is a staff of wonderful people at Abundant Life who genuinely care for the children, parents, coworkers, and the community in which they serve.

Since 1986, National CACFP Sponsors Association has served as a national platform for the Child and Adult Care Food Program Community. The mission of [NCA](#) is to bring members information on legislation, regulation and advocacy issues, share resources among the entire CACFP community, and provide an engaging, informative annual conference offering the largest CACFP networking and training opportunities in the nation. CACFP is an indicator of quality care. When children and adults are cared for by providers who participate in the CACFP, they are receiving the best nutrition available.

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