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Gateway Middle School lunchroom wins *Excellence Award*

Lurlene Grannan, Wendy Mayer, Jan Whitcomb and Patsy Mezzulo, Gateway's beloved lunch ladies were surprised this week by the announcement that they are the recipients of the Snohomish Health District's *Food Program Annual Excellence Award*. They will be officially honored with the award in February at a health district board meeting. But the school's celebration and congratulation began immediately with the health district's call.

As the district's Food and Nutrition Services Manager Debbie Webber notes, "It's wonderful to see that the Snohomish Health District is acknowledging the good work happening in our kitchens. This is the third time one of our schools has been honored with this award, and is all the more impressive because only one school in the entire county is recognized each year. We all know every school kitchen is worthy of recognition for the work they do to build strong brains and bodies, and we will celebrate collectively with the Gateway team."

To illustrate just how efficient the lunchroom team is, Assistant Principal Elizabeth Nunes explains that each day about 250 hungry and energetic seventh-graders enter the cafeteria at 11:34 a.m. Each day, by 11:42 a.m., those 250 are greeted, served and happily eating. The system works five days a week for grades six, seven and eight. "These ladies are amazing! "

Principal Peter Scott added, "We recognize Lurlene, Wendy, Jan and Patsy for their consistent, friendly professionalism and contribution to our school culture. Using technology, these ladies check students in for lunch every day *greeting each by name* — a small but very powerful and inclusive strategy to create a sense of belonging and a 'home away from home.' In many ways, the rest of us at Gateway can learn from this type of hospitality."

