

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**STUDENTS AT (NAME OF SCHOOL) CREATE A CULTURE OF BELONGING AS THEY CELEBRATE NATIONAL NO ONE EATS ALONE® DAY ON FEBRUARY 16 (OR ANOTHER DATE)**  
– *Lunchtime Initiative Helps Students Plant New Connections*

(CITY, STATE ABBREVIATED) -- Acceptance. Belonging. Connection. These ABCs make schools and communities stronger. That's why students at (NAME OF SCHOOL) are participating in [National No One Eats Alone® Day](#), a program created by the nonprofit [Beyond Differences](#) to combat social isolation and help students get to know one another and make everyone feel welcome and accepted for who they are. Sponsored by [Centene Foundation](#), [National No One Eats Alone Day](#) is February 16, 2024.

When schools sign up for No One Eats Alone, they receive a free Belonging Box with in-class lesson plans on social isolation and actionable steps to cultivate belonging. The Belonging Box also includes a student leadership guide, conversation starters for students to connect with someone new, and supplies to create an art project that helps students nurture connection with their classmates. All student-facing materials are available in both English and Spanish.

“This year’s **No One Eats Alone Day** theme was inspired by the U.S. Surgeon General’s Advisory on social connection where he spotlights the negative health effects of social isolation and emphasizes that connections need to be nurtured like a garden,” says Laura Talmus, co-founder and executive director of Beyond Differences. “Our curriculum dives deep into recognizing emotions, understanding social isolation, and gives students tools to be social isolation disruptors and ambassadors of belonging.”

“The Centene Foundation is proud to stand with Beyond Differences and support their mission to foster inclusion and empathy among students. The National No One Eats Alone Day initiative reflects our commitment to create compassionate communities where every individual feels valued and included,” stated Dr. Alice Hm Chen, Chief Health Officer (CHO) of Centene Corporation. “Together, we’re cultivating environments where no one sits alone at school, fostering friendships that transcend differences, and empowering a generation that embraces acceptance and connection.”

(more)

## NO ONE EATS ALONE CREATES CULTURE OF BELONGING.../2

Beyond Differences plans to send 2,500 Belonging Boxes to schools in all 50 states and reach more than a million students on **National No One Eats Alone Day**. All Belonging Boxes are provided at no charge to schools. For more information, visit [nooneeatsalone.org](http://nooneeatsalone.org).

### **About Beyond Differences**

Nonprofit Beyond Differences' mission is to inspire students to end social isolation in middle schools and create a culture of belonging for everyone. Founded in 2010, Beyond Differences has created year-round programs to tackle a wide range of issues that lead to social isolation. When educators register for National Programs -- No One Eats Alone, Know Your Classmates®, Be Kind Online® -- they also get access to Community-Inspired Curriculum written by Beyond Differences' National Teen Board. These include Queer Visibility, CIRV (Centering Immigrant and Refugee Voices), and Stand Up for AAPI Youth. All curriculum and activity kits are provided free for schools. Currently, more than 10,000 schools use Beyond Differences programs and materials. For more information, visit [nooneeatsalone.org](http://nooneeatsalone.org).

### **About Centene Foundation**

[The Centene Foundation](#) (the "Foundation"), a private nonprofit focused on investing in economically challenged communities, is the philanthropic arm of [Centene Corporation](#) ("Centene"). The Foundation supports projects and initiatives strategically aligned with Centene's mission-driven culture and enhances the work Centene is doing to remove the barriers to wellness underserved and low-income populations face. The Foundation is committed to addressing social determinants of health and improving health equity in three distinct areas of focus: healthcare access, social services and education. To learn more, visit the Centene Foundation's [website](#).

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**Editor's Note:** For questions about No One Eats Alone Day or Beyond Differences, contact Barbara Zamost at (415) 987-2810 or [barbara@zamostpr.com](mailto:barbara@zamostpr.com).