



Simpson-Kirkland a longtime star in helping Lincoln students

Dr. Dolores Simpson-Kirkland recently visited one of the Food Bank's monthly school food markets at Park Middle School, and it was a meaningful Thursday afternoon in many ways.

Now retired from Lincoln Public Schools, Dolores was a counselor at Park for eight years. She also worked at North Star and Southwest high schools.



"I did not really think that food insecurity was an issue in the Lincoln community, particularly since Nebraska's motto was 'The Good Life' and many of the people with whom I interacted appeared to be financially secure," said Dolores, who grew up in the Bronx, New York. "I learned about food insecurity when I became a counselor at Park. I observed that students would line up every morning to eat breakfast regardless of the weather. I became more aware that a good portion of students received free or reduced breakfast and lunch during the week. This meant that some students would miss having four meals on Saturday and Sunday."

Dr. Simpson-Kirkland was a leader in the effort to start a food market at Lincoln Southwest when she was a counselor there. She now volunteers regularly at the LPS

Emergency Pantry at Bryan Community School (300 S. 48th Street). The pantry is open Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays during the school year to help families struggling with hunger.

This work and this need? She gets it.

"I had no way of knowing whether students received dinner during the week or on the weekends. I then began to see that winter, spring and summer breaks were very challenging because school was not in session and food options were limited.

"My biggest eye opener came when I was a counselor at Southwest High School, a place where there was an assumption that food insecurity didn't exist. One day, a young woman came into the Counseling Center and said that she was hungry. This experience sparked a partnership between Southwest and the Food Bank. If one student was hungry, it was certain that others were. We hosted a food market that provided food for students and staff during each quarter and in emergencies.

"Thank you, Food Bank!"

No, Dolores. Thank you