



Long and Auburn team committed to helping meet the need

Gina Long has been part of the Auburn Backpack Program from the beginning and has been a loyal and dedicated ambassador for the Food Bank for more than a decade, along with many kind-hearted allies in Nemaha County.

Our rural friends don't come any better than Gina.

"The invitation to learn about organizing the Auburn Backpack Program seems like it was yesterday," Long said, "but that was 10 years of yesterdays ago. The Auburn Elementary Principal assured us there was a need in our district, and the Food Bank of Lincoln committed to helping us fill that need. I am honored to work beside the other all-volunteer committee members, like-minded in the belief that no child should be hungry. The staff and administration of Auburn Public Schools pay close attention to identify hungry children and then go above and beyond to get food to them."



Gina Long (center) and the Auburn Backpack team at their 2019 Empty Bowls event.

The partnership has included great friends at Peru State College, which is home to a monthly food distribution called Feeding 44 – in honor of County 44 – Nemaha.

"Our mission is wholeheartedly supported by our caring community and those who pack the weekly bags and fund the program with their generous donations," Long added, "along with nearby Peru State College student athletes who handle the food truck deliveries. In 2012 we began providing 18 weekly food bags with a budget of \$5,000 that has grown to 53 weekly food bags with a \$16,000 budget for 2022.

"The ability to provide for the children in our district is only accomplished through our partnership with the Food Bank. Our program benefits through their low-cost food sourcing that allows us to purchase food for an increasing number of children every year. The Food Bank of Lincoln is valued for much more than a food source. They have provided guidance, leadership, friendship and inspiration throughout our 10-year partnership.

"So, we say, 'Congratulations and Thank You for 40 years of caring for children!'"

The gratitude is mutual, Gina. We couldn't do it without you and your Auburn team. Thank you.