

Baking her mark for 44 years

FDCSD baker Bev (Coughlon) Axness hangs up her apron

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Bev (Coughlon) Axness at the register at FDSH

A simple adage carried a beloved member of the Fort Dodge Community School District staff through more than four decades of excellence.

"I've always told myself that if I respect people they'll reciprocate," Bev Axness, recently retired baker for the FDCSD after 44 years, said. *"My husband and our family are small town folks and have always lived by this rule."*

A native of Badger, she and Terry Axness, a retired trucker of approximately 45 years, Matt Axness, Julie Kruger, Brenda Shadravan, and Annie Jorgensen built their lives in a

perfect location for her work in the beginning. Their home was right across the street from the old Badger school building.

“I started by subbing in kitchen duty for three years at all district schools,” she said. “It was a good opportunity, as we had little kids at home and the job collaborated well with school hours.”

Soon thereafter, another chance presented itself.



Bev Axness with Chef Nick Sells

“A friend asked me if I’d be interested in a full-time job (at Badger),” she said. “I was overjoyed. It was such a wonderful place to be even though we only had two staff and student help to serve over 100 students. We had a lot of fun, though.”

Changes to her routine came several years later as the Badger school closed due to enrollment issues. Axness had heard about an opening at the high school in Fort Dodge, but was a little uncertain.

“I wasn’t sure in the beginning ... it seemed a little too big,” she remembered about the high school kitchen. “However, I wound up fitting in well with everyone.”

Jackie Tussing, the previous baker, took Axness under her wing. She taught her some baking rudiments which Axness took to quickly.

“Jackie deserves so much of the credit for where I wound up,” she said. “She was a wonderful baker, and I learned a great deal from her.”

It did not take long for Axness’ prowess to grow on the students. Her chocolate chip cookies were a delight along with other desserts, but none grew to the stature of Bev’s Bars.

“They were a simple recipe,” she said with a wide smile. “Just peanut butter, oatmeal, and chocolate. The students just loved them though.”

After a while, it was commonplace for them to ask, ‘When are you making them again?’,” she added.

Axness, whose final day at work occurred at the end of January, has not lost touch with the students or the staff.

“I always told the manager that I’d sub when needed,” she said. “The students keep asking for those bars, so the recipe has been handed down to the new worker who I am training.

“A part of me will always want to be there and seeing the students,” she added. “However, it was time to retire. Terry and I want to spend time together seeing our grandchildren and great-grandchildren among other things.”

Less than two months since being away from full-time work, Axness is still a hit with current and former students.

“I had a former student see me when I was out and about a couple of weeks ago,” she said. “He asked if I remembered him, and I said I sure did. We talked for quite a while. They continue to be and always have been so nice to me and my family.”

A sign of shared respect and a love for Bev’s Bars.