How did you end up working for Child Nutrition?
I had been working in the restaurant business for a number of years when my restaurant was sold. I knew I still wanted to work in food service, but no longer wanted to work nights or weekends. I took a job at a grocery store and was there for about two weeks when the State called me for an interview. I've been with the Department of Education Child Nutrition for over 35 years!

In your 35 years with Child Nutrition what have been the highlights of your career?
Building the Culinary Kitchen and seeing the free meals for all program become a reality have been amazing; but the best part is the strong team that we have here at the state office.

What advice would you give to those in the field working in child nutrition programs?
Don't get stuck in the box! Always be thinking of ways you can promote and improve your program.

What are your top tips for School Nutrition Directors in running a successful child nutrition program?
1. Develop a good team
2. Eliminate the word "can't" from your vocabulary
3. Stay in touch with your Administration
4. Stay current and keep in touch with trends

What are you most looking forward to in your retirement?
Not getting up early! Time to relax and accomplish the projects on my to do list, camping, and spend time with my family.
Rhonda Tyler - Foxcroft Academy

Ms. Rhonda Tyler is retiring this June after spending the last 17 years as the Director of Food Services at Foxcroft Academy. Rhonda is no stranger to the food service industry as she owned Angie’s Restaurant in Milo for years before coming to FA. She quickly became a significant member of the Foxcroft family, ordering, preparing, cooking, and serving food right alongside her staff. She will be sorely missed next year. In retirement, Rhonda plans on moving south to be closer to her grandchildren in Maryland. We wish her the best!

Paula Rouillard- Auburn Schools

Paula Rouillard, the longtime Food Service Director for the Auburn Schools will be retiring this September. In her time overseeing the food service operations for the city Paula was integral in starting numerous programs to help combat child hunger in Auburn. Paula oversaw the beginning and expansion of FFVP, SFSP, afternoon snack programs, incorporating CEP into the district and offering universal breakfast to help improve students' access to meals outside of the typical school day. She will be missed by her staff and co-workers as a long time fixture in the school department but we all wish her the best in her retirement adventures!
Mary Ellen Gillies- Portland Public Schools

Mary Ellen Gillies started as a substitute at Reiche Elementary School in 1993. She worked there for nearly a year before she was hired on permanently in December 1994. Mary Ellen worked at four different schools and participated in our Summer Meal program. She is retiring after 28 years as a Team Leader from Talbot Elementary.

Lynn Douglas- Herman Schools

You've worked hard for so many years here at Hermon (as Kitchen Manager)! Even to this day, you run laps around everyone! Your contagious laugh, your caring heart for the kids, and your spicy side for when those days are long and rough. We have enjoyed having you a part of our team and the district! You have been such an asset to all schools as well as for me, you make my job a lot easier everyday! You deserve to relax and take it easy with Randy for a change! Make those memories as life is too short and remember we will miss you alot! Honoring your 35 Years of excellent service to our team and celebrating the legacy of hard work and commitment you leave behind, will surely be hard to fill your shoes!

Thank you!

From: Jessica
Joni Jay Bevis- Harmony Elementary

Joni Jay Bevis retired as Food Service Director at Harmony Elementary School at the end of the 2020/2021 school year after 21 years of service. Jay had been in service for 9 years as Food Service Director and for 12 years as a Food Service Assistant. Jay loved her school children and took great pride in feeding them. She always had an extra second for a hug or to listen to a story from them. Since retiring, Jay is enjoying spending time with her husband Steve, son George, her friends, family, and her many Bull Mastiff dogs. Your coworkers miss you Jay and we wish you a very happy and healthy retirement!!

Debbie Higgins- Hermon Schools

16 Years wow! where has time gone? Thank you so much for being such a wonderful Employee to our district! Whatever comes next for you, may it bring you the same joy and fulfillment as you brought to us! your hard work, dedication, and achievements may never be matched. Thank you for everything you have contributed to the Hermon School Department. Take the time for yourself, make those memories, and finally relax with what the world has to offer!

Thank you so much!!

From: Jessica
Deborah Parks- MSAD 46

Debbie has worked for our program for 21 years. She started serving ala carte then she added serving on the serving line. She started helping the head cook and is finishing her career as the head cook at Dexter Regional High School. Debbie is well liked and respected in her position. This year she has been working with several co-workers showing them what she does and they all speak highly of her.

Brenda Landry- MSAD 46

Brenda began working in food service when her children started school. She wanted to have the same vacation time as her children. She has worked in our program for 35 years. She started as a sub doing many jobs wherever and whenever she was needed. She was then hired as a server and moved on to being head cook. Brenda is finishing her career as a baker and kitchen manager. Brenda is a wonderful baker and has spent time this year teaching others to make bread and rolls so that we can carry on the tradition of homemade bread. Brenda says she has enjoyed working around children of all ages from Pre-K up to grade 12 students. It has been an enjoyable career.
Colleen Barney - RSU 23

Colleen has been working in RSU 23's Food Service Department since 2008. Colleen has been a wonderful Cook at our elementary school, after spending time in other schools in the department (and in Saco when RSU 23 was part of that district). Colleen can do anything at all in the kitchen- including making the world's best stuffing at Thanksgiving! We are happy for her as she retires and hope we'll see her here and there subbing for us!

Lucille Libby - RSU 57

After 28 years in the RSU57 school district, Lucille Libby is retiring in June, 2022. Lucille began her career as a substitute, moving onto Food Service Assistant, then in 1995, became the Kitchen Manager at Line Elementary School. She has cooked, baked and served her way into the hearts of many children over the years and is now seeing some 2nd generation children come through the serving line! Lucille’s favorite part of working in the kitchen has been seeing and interacting with the kids each and every day. She plans to do some traveling out west and maybe even start a small farm! Congratulations and thank you for your years of dedicated service!
Bev Fossett - RSU 57

Bev Fossett is leaving the Massabesic Middle School kitchen after 33 years of hard work and commitment. Bev started at Massabesic High School in 1989, went on to work at Alfred Elementary and then Massabesic Junior High School. In 2007, she became the Kitchen Manager at Massabesic Middle School where she has been ever since. She said her favorite part of the job was being able to talk to the kids, but thoroughly enjoyed the fast paced environment the middle school always kept. Bev’s love for decorating was obvious and is hopeful the new manager will carry on her cheerful holiday traditions! She is looking forward to spending time at camp relaxing and “taking it easy” for a bit. Best of luck to you, Bev. You will be missed!

Ideas for Maine Light? Want to submit an article? Email ctrinder@rsu23.org