

Rummels: Still cooking after all these years

By Dawn Neuses, dneuses@gconline.com

ROCK ISLAND - The smells of a traditional Thanksgiving feast wafted through the room as workers and friends of Skip-A-Long Child Development Services lunched at cloth-covered tables.

For 34 years, food coordinator Theresa Rummels has run the kitchen at Skip-A-Long Child Development Services' Rock Island Campus. Over the years, she's made sure thousands of children have full stomachs, cooking them breakfast, lunch, and making them an afternoon snack.

Tuesday, she cooked a Thanksgiving meal for the 188 children at the center and for another 200 friends of Skip-A-Long, including staff, board members and people from various businesses and community organizations that support the center.

But, Pat Allison, director of the Rock Island campus, said Ms. Rummels has always done more than cook.

She greets parents at 6 a.m., guiding those who may be new and unsure of where to go with a smile and a "good morning," Ms. Allison said. "She is there for the parents. She knows everything and anything about the center."

Ms. Rummels also is the party planner, handling all the details for everything from decorating to heading up a bake sale.

Ms. Rummels, 73, said she's kept the job for so long because she enjoys cooking and being around kids. She recently went part-time.

"I enjoy seeing my children," she said. "I enjoy the fact that they get to try things they have not tried before at home. I like that they get a nutritious meal and watching them enjoy their food.

"I just really enjoy this job. I wouldn't have been here this long if I didn't," she said. "This is really a great place for our children to come, not only for the good food, but for good lessons, too."



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Photo: Todd Mizener

Theresa Rummels said she doesn't smile when she gets her picture taken but she puts plenty of smiles on people's faces with her cooking. Ms. Rummels, the food coordinator for Skip-A-Long Child Development Center in Rock Island, and her assistant Lola Nimmers prepared a Thanksgiving dinner at the day care center for more than 200 people Tuesday morning. Ms. Rummels has been cooking at the center for 34-years. Tuesday's special meal was for children, parents, staff and other special guests.

During her time at the Rock Island campus, Ms. Rummels has watched children grow up, then reconnected with them when they've brought their children to Skip-A-Long. "You get to know a lot of people when you are in daycare."

Ms. Rummels began cooking when she was 12, standing next to her mother and grandmother in the kitchen. She was one of 14 children and said she was the only one who liked to cook.

As for retirement, she said it's not in the near future. "I'm not ready to quit. To slow down, yes, but not to quit."