

Anoka High School adds food shelf for students; all Anoka-Hennepin high schools now offer service



With the addition this month of the "Tornado Take Out," Anoka High School's (AHS) food shelf, all Anoka-Hennepin School District high schools offer this service to their students. Coon Rapids Middle School (CRMS) also opened a food shelf this month, the first middle school in the district to do so.

This past summer, Holli Moseman, an AHS English teacher, was thinking about the stories she had heard from students about how difficult their lives are and reflecting how she could better them.

She thought about a conversation she had with Kathleen Pimlott, who helped start Blaine High School's food shelf, Tiger Take Out, and thought a food shelf would be a great way to help AHS students, too. Moseman contacted Principal Mike Farley with the idea, and he said others were having the same thought. Moseman said when the school year began, she met with Doug Orr, a business teacher, and Tara Larkin and Mark Sundberg, special education teachers, to discuss how they could get a food shelf up and running.

"They were interested in starting a food shelf for many of the same reasons I was," Moseman said.

"We are seeing a lot of need in our community.

"During the last few years, I felt like there are a lot more students who cannot afford to go on field trips. Then I saw students who couldn't afford new notebooks or folders. I thought, if they cannot afford those things, there's a chance they cannot afford the food they need, too."

Over a two-month time period, an area near the Integrated Language Arts Resource Center was cleared out to make room for Tornado Take Out. Moseman said there has been an overwhelming outpouring by staff members wanting to help and to get student groups involved.

Items for the food shelf began coming in Nov. 1, thanks to a collection done by members of the Student Venture organization on Halloween. Moseman said the business internship groups are sponsoring a food drive through the end of November. Moseman thinks so many people want to get involved because the cause hits close to home.

"Often times we do food collections for the community food shelf and that's fantastic," Moseman said, but now the school has its own food shelf. "We have a concept of the 'Anoka Family' at the high school. Knowing that the food they collect and donate is going to the Anoka Family and helping their classmates inspires students and motivates them to get involved."

Tornado Take Out is being advertised to students through flyers and announcements. Students who are interested in accessing the food shelf will speak with a staff person. Backpacks of food will be provided to students on Fridays.

Moseman said in the future she hopes Tornado Take Out will expand to include toiletries and other necessities that might be difficult to come by for students and their families. Anyone from the community interested in donating to the food shelf can drop off items at the school's main office. They are particularly interested in collecting high protein items, such as canned meats and peanut butter, and breakfast items. Donations of gift cards to grocery stores will be used to purchase items for the food shelf.

Moseman wants the community to know that the staff care a lot about the students they serve.

"We are hoping the food shelf is another way we can make a positive impact on people's lives," she said.