

# School cooks' work begins



**KALA BOSE**, head cook at the Oberlin Elementary School, took food from the oven to be served for the noon meal.

— Herald staff photo by Kimberly Davis

By **MARY LOU OLSON**

*ml.olson@nwkansas.com*

When students and staff line up in the cafeterias at the two Oberlin schools to enjoy a nutritious breakfast, little do they realize the time and effort that has gone into the preparation by the cooks at both schools.

Linda Weber, head cook at the high school, said that she and Kala Bose, head cook at the elementary school, start their day at 6 a.m. Mrs. Bose first goes to the high school to get dishes used the previous day, then returns to the grade school to prepare breakfast for students, from Head Start through sixth grade, as well as the staff.

Maureen Anderson helps Mrs. Bose serve breakfast at 7:50 a.m. Besides the hot breakfast menu, cereal is always available. After helping with the clean-up, Mrs. Anderson drives to the high school cafeteria to help with preparations for the noon meal for both schools.

The other cooks, Donna Sauvage, Chris Hardy and Vicky Taylor, help Mrs. Weber serve breakfast at the high school from 7:50 to 8:15 a.m. After breakfast is over, each cook pitches in to begin preparing food for the noon meal.

Mrs. Weber said she cooks all of the meat, which can include 80 pounds of hamburger if the menu includes sloppy joes, tacos or chili, while the others prepare salads for the salad bar, vegetables and other foods. She said when she prepares soup, it takes 60 gallons for the two schools.

"It is very important that we serve a nutritious meal that includes all of the food requirements set by the federal government," Mrs. Weber said. "It is part of my job to make sure this is done, as well as documenting all of the information each day. I have to break down every meal to meet the required regulations.

"This information must be up-to-date and available at all times when the auditor comes to check. I also recently completed a course called Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point, which is used for record keeping," she said.

Around 10 a.m., she said, Mrs. Anderson loads up a school van to haul the noon meal to the elementary school. Before this can be done, however, they have to check the food to be sure

it is at a safe temperature. After it arrives at the grade school cafeteria, the food is placed in ovens or a steam table to keep it hot.

Mrs. Anderson helps Mrs. Bose with some of the food preparation that can be done at the elementary school, which can include tater tots, French fries and vegetables. She then helps serve the lunch and clean up, then takes the dirty dishes back to the high school cafeteria, where they are washed in an electric dishwasher.

From 55 to 80 noon meals are served each day at the elementary school, said Mrs. Weber, while the junior and senior high students and staff average from 380 to 400. There are two shifts at the grade school and three at the high school. The schools have three suppliers that make deliveries one or two times a week, Mrs. Weber said.

"Each cook is required to take a three-hour food safety training course every five years and this can usually be done in Colby," she said.

Though Mrs. Weber took over the job as head cook in August 2006, the position was not new to her. She said that she worked for nine years as head cook in the schools in Casper, Wyo., and they delivered meals to eight other schools in that district every day.

"Working with the students is very rewarding and some never fail to say, 'Thank you,'" she said. "We have been complimented by our auditors on the wonderful salad bar we offer at the high school, and it is available every day along with other entrees."

Money for the food at both schools comes from the federal government, school district and meal tickets bought by students and staff, she said.

The staff usually finishes up their work around 1:30 to 2 p.m., but Mrs. Weber stays until she finishes all of the paperwork.

"I have a wonderful group of ladies, the best I have worked with," Mrs. Weber added.



*"Some of the ladies of 'The Dresser'"*



152 S. Penn  
Oberlin  
785-475-3407

## Trader Horn

*Steve & Marilyn*

**785-475-2626**  
1004 W. Frontier Pkwy.  
Oberlin, KS 67749

