



The mission of the Food Bank of Lincoln is to alleviate hunger in Southeast Nebraska.

Filling empty bowls for 20 years

“Throwing” bowls is like making pancakes. It can take one or two to work out the kinks, but once you’re in the groove, the material evolves into something spectacular.

At least, that’s how artist and pottery professional Kathleen Grossman describes it.



Every year since 2003, Kathleen and her students at Down Under Pottery in Lincoln have crafted and donated unique stoneware bowls for the Food Bank of Lincoln’s signature Empty Bowls event—a total of more than 15,250 original pieces. Sometimes, she approaches the pottery wheel with a plan. Other times, she begins “throwing” and sees what happens.

“It’s a wonderful challenge to make the bowls unique. I initially thought families would want sets, but that wasn’t the case,” Kathleen explained. “Some are artsy. Some are simple. They stretch my creativity and allow me to experiment.”



Below: Some of Kathleen’s favorite bowls to make feature multicolored clay. When combining different colors, the appearance remains a mystery until the bowl is complete.



On May 31, Kathleen’s creativity—and another 1,000 bowls—will graciously be on display for the 20th annual Empty Bowls event. Each event attendee gets to select a bowl of their own; a keepsake that symbolizes the bowls that have been filled and the bowls that still need to be filled to help neighbors facing hunger in Southeast Nebraska. The event will also feature soups from Lincoln’s finest restaurants.

Above: Since 2003, Kathleen Grossman and her students at Down Under Pottery have thrown and donated more than 15,250 stoneware bowls for the Empty Bowls event.

“I love watching people pick out bowls. We can’t put them all out at once, so they’ll look, go eat and then come back, just buzzing around

the tables,” she said. “It’s the highlight of my year. I don’t have \$20,000 to donate, but I can donate 1,000 bowls. It fulfills me to do something to feed people in my community.”

When Kathleen was asked to share her artistry with the inaugural event two decades ago, the answer was an easy “yes.” She had hosted a soup and bowl dinner to benefit the Red Cross following 9/11, and

after seeing its success, had been looking for another similar opportunity. Not long after, former Food Bank Executive Director Scott Young called her. The timing was just right.

Twenty years later, Kathleen still expresses gratitude for the Empty Bowls event—a feeling that is certainly mutual.

“I’m so thankful to have this event. It’s my meditation, my joy. I’m just appreciative of the opportunity to create and help the community.”

Tickets for Empty Bowls 2022 are available for purchase at lincolnfoodbank.org.