

Helen Patterson Retires



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Helen Patterson is retiring. Kinda, sorta.

After 35 years with the Omaha Public Schools, dealing with thousands of students, parents, teachers and administrators, Patterson says it's time; that she's paid her dues.

Patterson began her career in 1958 as a substitute 4th grade teacher at Howard Kennedy. Things were different then.

She recalled one particular interview when seeking another position that is an indication of how things have changed.

"The man didn't look at me. He turned his back, looked out the window and filed his nails. Yet, he continued to ask me questions. That kind of thing would never happen today."

In fact, Patterson, a graduate of Prairie View A&M, notes that OPS recruits at all black colleges and also seeks to encourage local black students to enter the teaching profession in cooperation with UNO and UNL.

"During my 35 years, I saw many changes as far as educational and employment opportunities for blacks," she says.

Patterson also remembers in the early days that 90 percent of the black students in the district attended just a handful of elementary schools and that too has changed.

A native of Texas, Patterson knew from an early age that she wanted to be a teacher. Her influence--Mrs. Beale, her fifth grade teacher, who took her and some other students home with her for the weekend.

That same type of influence, Helen Patterson has provided to many who have passed through the OPS doors - from student to teacher.

She's also been active, very active in the community serving on numerous boards - mostly dealing with the family and serving in every capacity for the Urban League Guild, president, vice-president, treasurer, and secretary.

It's with the Guild and the Beautification that she says she's received some of her greatest joys -- working with positive young black men. For many years now the Guild has used the Beautification to match young men, with mentors in the community, a program Patterson talks about with pride.

Patterson, despite officially retiring, has been asked to come back at the beginning of the school year and "help out" and she says she plans to still volunteer some time.

"I see a dire need for someone to spend time with those students who need a lot of nurturing and assisting. I'd like to continue to be a part of the system."

Patterson also will be spending more time with a business she formed with a partner a year and a half ago -- "Kids-Go-Round," a consignment shop for children clothing from infant to size 14.

But whether she's in business or her chosen profession of 35 years, the link is clear, Helen Patterson is involved with children. Good wishes, Helen.

CITATION (APA STYLE)

(1993, July 1). *Omaha Star*, p. 2. Available from NewsBank: America's News -- Historical and Current: <https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=image/v2:1469E7D6123E0888@EANX-NB-146FCBA40DF608C4@2449170-146FCBA40E26E506@1-146FCBA40E26E506@>.