Food pantries aid struggling students

UNCG, Guilford College assist those who find themselves homeless and hungry.

By JONNIE DAVIS
Staff Writer

GREENSBORO — UNCG junior Lindsey McCoun was having financial problems last year and couldn't turn to her parents, who are homeless and live in a shelter.

So McCoun turned to her campus family for help.

McCoun found out about the campus food pantry, where she got two boxes of food that last her a month.

"I know the Lord would have provided for me, but I have no idea how," McCoun said.

The UNCG food pantry, operated by Wesley-Luther Campus Ministries, provides food for struggling students.

Some, like McCoun, have parents who are homeless. Other students are homeless themselves. Still others might have fallen short of money because of unforeseen circumstances.

"We have everything from freshmen to older students to wives of veterans to single mothers with kids to traditional students that just budgeted really badly," said Andrew Malls, director of Wesley-Luther, part of UNCG's Associated Campus Ministries.

For about three years, Malls operated the pantry informally using a closet in his office.

"We needed a home," Malls said. "We didn't have enough space, and there was no way to really do distributions from there."

But this semester, Malls partnered with College Place United Methodist Church on Tate Street, which offered the stage of its fellowship hall as pantry space. The church also donated money for racks to store the food.

"It wasn't really, 'Can we do this?'" said Jason Harvey, pastor of College Place. "It was, 'How are we going to do this?'

Faculty and staff members donate much of the food. They hold weekly food drives. Malls and volunteers pick up, sort and restock the pantry.

On a recent Thursday afternoon, they carried boxes of goods into the fellowship hall, where they loaded them onto the appropriate shelves: pastas and soups, canned meats, fruits and beans.

Food pantries are another example of how colleges are stepping up to help students during times of lingering economic uncertainty.

Students and their families.

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THE SEASON BEGINS

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Nanotech meeting is coming to Triad

WINSTON-SALEM — For the first time, the Nanotech Commercialization Conference will be held in Winston-Salem.

The conference, which is in its fifth year, is aimed at spurring more research and business collaboration. It will be held April 9-10 at Wake Forest BioTech Place.

It is expected to attract more than 250 people and more than 50 speakers, of which there will be a significant Triad representation.

Nanobiotechnology is the science of developing materials at the atomic and molecular level and then using them to develop products and devices.

Hosting the conference “gives us the opportunity to again spotlight the opportunities in advanced manufacturing, coupled with advanced technology development that our community offers,” said David Carroll, director of the Center for Nanotechnology Molecular Materials at Wake Forest University.

Carroll defined advanced functional materials as “the foundation of new technologies that are manufacturing-based.”

"Unlike software, or even advanced technology at large, the development of these materials must be done hand-in-hand with the materials themselves," he said.

The conference will include a number of keynotes and panel discussions.

Food

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ries in recent years have grappled with rising tuition costs and dwindling financial aid dollars, making it harder for students to achieve their educational goals.

"It's tough right now on everybody," Mailis said.

Guilford College opened a food pantry in September after hearing similar tales of struggles from its adult students. The pantry has received donations from faculty and staff members and local farmers, said Chelsey Wilson, a senior at Guilford College who works with the pantry. She said pantry volunteers try to provide students a week's worth of food.

"These are our fellow classmates that we're sitting beside," Wilson said. "Why not help them out?"

At UNCG, the pantry is just one part of what the university is doing to address the personal needs of its students. The dean of students office has always worked with students in this way but is taking the job a step further, said Laura Andrews, assistant dean of students.

There is a coordinated effort on campus to identify homeless students and others who might be falling through the cracks because of personal issues.

"The students who are, maybe, living out of their cars, who are sleeping at night in their cars, somewhere around campus," Andrews said. "They have nowhere else to go."

Others, Andrews said, are barely getting by and need food. Her office refers students to Mailis and the pantry.

For those students reluctant to ask for help, Andrews said the dean's office has an online referral form that faculty members and others can alert the office about students they think need help.

McConnell said she didn't hesitate to visit the pantry for food when she needed it.

"They have it to bless others," said McConnell, who has donated food to the pantry twice this semester.

Mailis said he hopes the pantry will outlast the economy's troubles.

"Even when the economy is good, things still happen and people still hurt," he said. "So I hope this is something that good economy, bad economy, people still take ownership of and make sure is available."

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