

USU Students Provide Food to Aid Area Food Pantries

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Food pantry collections

As individuals and families come to Utah State University's Student Nutrition Access Center (SNAC) to meet their food needs in the coming weeks, they will get to enjoy the fruits of the labors of other USU students and community volunteers.

The student-led project was supported by USU Extension, the Department of Nutrition, Dietetics and Food Sciences (NDFS) and USU's Center for Community Engagement (CCE) and came about as a way to use the fruit that would otherwise go to waste because homeowners or farmers were unable to harvest it.

Last fall, 294 project volunteers gathered apples and other fruit in cooperation with 89 local fruit tree owners. By the end of October, over 15,000 pounds of fruit were harvested for donation. The fruit that wasn't high enough quality to donate for fresh eating was made into 259 pints of applesauce made by student volunteers and USU dietetic interns. The applesauce was then donated to SNAC—at a time when many food resources are in short supply at area food pantries.

The project was coordinated by Kara Bachman and Amria Farnsworth, both USU NDFS students.

"I really like the fact that the fruit goes toward training students in new food production and preservation skills

through NDFS, and also that the food benefits students and community members in need," said Bachman.

Carrie Durward, USU Extension nutrition specialist, developed the fruit preservation project aimed to reduce food waste and increase donations to area hunger relief organizations. The program has also been implemented in Utah, Salt Lake and Davis counties.

"The ultimate goal is to be able to provide other groups interested in reducing hunger and food waste with instructions on how to preserve fruit that would otherwise be wasted, and do it in a way that helps those in need," said Durward.

James Wirth, the AmeriCorps VISTA who supports SNAC, said the food comes at a good time for the community.

"We have really been able to decrease our draw on the Cache Community Food Pantry, which is helpful to them since special events and other resource-producing activities have been reduced for food banks during these difficult times," he said.

Nonprofits and volunteer groups interested in implementing the program in their communities can contact Durward at carrie.durward@usu.edu.

SNAC and the Gleaning Team are programs within USU's CCE, a Student Affairs department formed in 2013 with a mission to develop active citizens through community engagement and scholarship. More information on CCE can be found at <https://www.usu.edu/communityengagement/>.

For further information about SNAC, see the video at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0QKSnkmcNCK>

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