THE PANTRY BULLETIN

OCTOBER 2020

THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

VOL. 1

1113 ELM STREET
NORMAN, OK 73069

Eliminating food insecurity for all

THE OU FOOD PANTRY

The University of Oklahoma Food Pantry's mission is to contribute to the overall health and wellness of the OU campus community by providing FREE supplemental food assistance to OU Norman Campus students, faculty and staff.

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ABOUT THE PANTRY

Hours of Operation:
Tuesdays & Wednesdays from 10 am-6 pm

West side of the dorm towers at 1113 Elm Street Norman, OK 73069

Register here!

BY SIDHVI REDDY

The University of Oklahoma Food Pantry serves to eliminate food insecurity for all on campus, serving OU students, faculty, and staff. We were created in 2016, when the OU SGA pushed for the establishment of a food pantry on campus to help the community. Our team at the food pantry is extremely excited to help serve our community, pushing for equal access for all who need aid. We love seeing new faces at the food pantry and are always taking new volunteers! Please feel free to contact us if you are interested in volunteering, donating, or hosting food drives.

We are open on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 10 am-6 pm for pick-ups. To utilize the Food Pantry, register online at our website and place an online order. We will have all of your items ready for you at your time of pickup, and the only thing you'll need to bring is your valid OU ID card.

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BY SIDHVI REDDY

During the pandemic, the OU Food Pantry pushed through, understanding that the impacts of COVID-19 would leave the community in greater need of help as the rest of the university closed down and jobs were lost. When the notification that the university would be shutting down, the pantry's operations team acted quickly, only allowing a certain number of people into the pantry at a time to reduce those in close contact. Going into May, the team made the transition into online and pickup orders, in which students, faculty, and staff could place online orders and pick up their food from the pantry. Their food was packed by staff members who worked more shifts to accommodate the needs of the community.

Recently, the pantry had the honor of welcoming Governor Kevin Stitt and President Harroz. Stitt and Harroz were both immensely impressed by the work the pantry has done in serving its community. We thank both Governor Stitt and President Harroz for taking the time out of their schedules to come visit the pantry and raise awareness for what the pantry has to offer to the university.

Looking forward, the pantry is gearing up for the Fall Food Drive, which is hosted by Leadership and Volunteerism every fall!

Looking Forward:
The OU Office of Leadership and Volunteerism will be hosting the OU Fall Food Drive from October 12-23. We are collecting donations throughout October to help stock our pantry through the holiday season! Please feel free to donate any non-perishables, toiletries, and feminine care products.

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

MEET THE EXEC

BY SIDHVI REDDY

Matt Marks, a native of Plano, Texas, loves working at the OU Food Pantry and has been involved in the OU community since he arrived in 2014. Marks, after obtaining a bachelor's in Broadcast Journalism and a Master's in Adult and Higher Education, began working full-time at the OU Food pantry. He began working for the Food Pantry back in 2016 when it was just an idea that became a reality after the SGA formed a task force to bring the pantry to the OU community.

After a year of dedication, the pantry opened and since then, Marks has not looked back. He loves meeting new people and creating a more sustainable change for the university, pushing for students, faculty, and staff alike to unite against hunger. For him, the most rewarding part of being a part of the pantry is getting to know those who come in every week. He loves serving a community that "lets us be a part of their family" every week, opening up to him and sharing their stories with the pantry.

Marks is always pushing for the OU Food Pantry to reach out to more of the community, allowing us to help everyone within the OU community. He loves working with the pantry's staff and would love to add more to the team, solidifying roles and tasks to accomplish in the process of touching more people's lives. He wants everyone to know that anyone who is part of the OU community is welcome to utilize the resources that the pantry has to offer!

> *I've loved seeing people come through the pantry and just being able to pick up the conversation from the week before, getting to know how their lives are going.*

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BY BREANNA MITCHELL

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For Audrey Williams, OU Food Pantry employee of the month, the pantry offers her a place of comfort and refuge during uncertain times. She hopes her work as an operations manager helps provide the same for the pantry's guests. "With the current environment we're in with COVID, a lot of things are just scary and stressful, and it's nice to have this place where you can see tangible good happening." Balancing a professional writing major and two minors in Spanish and Nonprofit Organizational Studies would be tough during a normal semester, but adding in the unique challenges of this year can leave Audrey's head spinning. "Especially during these stressful times, I can get really in my head and stuff gets stressful with classes. It's kind of nice to step away from that and just get in the zone and be in this space." Serving others has always played a role in Audrey's life, but starting at a new school in a new state last year left Audrey without a nonprofit community to call home. That is, until an OU Food Pantry email opportunely found its way into her inbox. "Right after my first shift, I knew that this was going to be a place where I spend a lot of my time. I just love the community and the ability to get involved and help people out."

Helping people is more than just a hobby for Audrey. Fitting with her second minor, Audrey is aiming to pursue a future career in nonprofit work. "It's been really valuable for me as an operations manager to start getting that inside look into the networking and outreach that the food pantry is doing, how they engage with the clients they serve, and also how they form those relationships with people who do donate." As an operations manager, Audrey spends her two-hour shifts making sure pantry guests receive the supplies and groceries they need while feeling safe and welcome. "I just wish everyone was able to take that step through the door, because this is such a valuable resource on our campus. I know myself and the rest of the staff all work so hard to keep it that way, and we really want everyone to be able to take advantage of it."

While Audrey acknowledges that food banks can be found in many cities, she says for students juggling school, work, and living on their own for the first time, having a pantry right on campus makes all the difference. "Just knowing that you can so easily get everything you need and that no matter what happens at college, there's a spot where we're going to make sure that you're not going hungry, I think it just serves as such a great comfort."

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EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH