

UW Oshkosh Titans volunteer to tackle hunger

by Mandy Potts - Wednesday, April 02, 2014

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Forrest Buck has spent the better part of his internship with the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh Athletics Department planning to stage a mobile food pantry on campus.

Buck, a senior who is majoring in human services, said working with the Athletics Department isn't exactly where he pictured his required, 120-hour internship being fulfilled, but he is certainly grateful for the opportunity.

"I always want to see a greater good come from any situation," Buck said. "As a human services major, that's main reason we got into this—to help people."

So, Buck's been behind the scenes coordinating, planning and marketing the upcoming [Feeding America Mobile Food Pantry](#), which comes to campus Friday, April 11. The large-scale food pantry event, held at Kolf Sports Center, will take place from 3 until 6 p.m. and is open to campus and the broader community. Kolf was chosen as the pantry location because of its central location in Oshkosh.

The event is put on by Feeding America Wisconsin and is supported by University departments including [Titan Athletics](#) and the Office of Academic Support of Inclusive Excellence; campus support comes in the form of monetary donations, which helps with the purchase of food for the mobile pantry event. Within the community, the event is supported by the Oshkosh Area Community Pantry.

On campus, the event is also made possible by volunteers, which includes everyone from faculty and staff to students, student-athletes and coaches.

"Our goal for our student-athletes is to have them be leaders in the community and in the workforce. Volunteering gives student-athletes an opportunity to give back to those people who support our programs in our community and develop a lifelong commitment to service," said Pat Cerroni, head football coach at UW Oshkosh, who encourages and expects his team to lend a helping hand at both the upcoming Feeding America event and for other causes with the community.

Sylvia Carey-Butler, assistant vice chancellor of academic support of inclusive excellence, agrees.

"It's important we demonstrate to students that we are part of a larger community," she said. "Civic engagement is part of our moral obligation."

In December, UW Oshkosh held [a similar Feeding America event](#) on campus, which attracted more than 275 households; more than 170 of those households were from the immediate area around campus.

"The mobile pantry is a cool idea," Buck said. "It gives people in this part of the community an opportunity for access. Sometimes college students might not want to admit they have this need, hopefully the event being on campus will make them a little more comfortable."

Inspired by the mobile food pantry idea on campus, Carey-Butler and others around campus are now beginning to assess whether food pantry services are needed on a more consistent basis on the UW Oshkosh campus.

“We’re acknowledging that we want to make a difference through outreach projects such as this one,” Carey-Butler said. “But hunger is hunger and there are students out there who maybe could benefit from a more permanent food pantry.”

Carey-Butler, along with Graciela Hernandez, a junior majoring in women and gender studies, is hopeful to learn whether there is a real need for a permanent pantry at UW Oshkosh. Discussions are currently underway with different programs and offices across campus to better understand hunger in Oshkosh, especially in the areas close to campus where many students live.

“It is common today for students to be struggling with financial realities of families and jobs in addition to the educational costs,” Hernandez said.

Following Friday's event, all leftover food items will be donated back to the Oshkosh Area Community Pantry, the local organization that addresses the food and nutritional needs of customers in the community. The Oshkosh Area Community Pantry is located at 2551 Jackson Drive and is open to all members of the community--including UW Oshkosh students.

In order for the Feeding America Mobile Food Pantry to go smoothly April 11, the Athletics Department is seeking additional volunteers. Volunteers are needed from 1 until 3 p.m. Friday to unload the semi truck of food and from 3 until 6 p.m. to help distribute food. Volunteers can help for any amount of time they have to offer?all help is appreciated! If you would like to volunteer or have any questions, please contact Cameron Wengrzyn at wengrzyc@uwosh.edu or by calling (920) 424-1226.

Learn more:

- [Feeding America](#)
- [Oshkosh Area Community Pantry](#)