Thanks to the generosity of University employees, a successful UA 4 Food campaign has pushed total monetary giving through this academic year's UA Cares initiatives[1] to nearly $270,000.

The latest initiative, UA 4 Food, which ran March 27-May 1, brought in 4,837 pounds of food and $1,802.50 in monetary donations for the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona and the University's Campus Pantry, which provides food to members of the campus community at no cost.

"I think this year's campaign went well for the same reason that all of our UA Cares initiatives experience any level of success. That's all due to the UA Cares ambassadors who champion our cause," said Nick Hilton, assistant director in the Office of Government and Community Relations and coordinator of UA Cares. "We had over 130 people raising awareness and more than 100 collection sites on campus and throughout the community."

The annual food drive capped off a year of UA Cares initiatives, which also included the annual fall workplace giving campaign and two blood drives in partnership with the Southern Arizona chapter of the American Red Cross.

The fall giving campaign raised a total of $268,727.58 in monetary donations[2] — a jump of more than 30% over the previous year. On top of that, University employees contributed 3,135 volunteer hours on 113 service projects through the United Way Days of Caring. The campaign raises funds for University programs through the University of Arizona Foundation and for nonprofit organizations through the United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona. The effort also supports another UA Cares initiative, the Employee Emergency Fund[3], which is a financial assistance program for employees who are facing temporary hardship because of unexpected emergency expenses. Joellen Russell, Distinguished Professor of geosciences, served as honorary chair of the workplace giving campaign.

The blood drives were successes as well, Hilton said, with the first on Oct. 22 bringing in 65 pints of blood from 38 donors, and the second on March 23 of this year bringing in 91 pints from 99 donors. According to estimates from the Red Cross, the blood collected from the drives is enough to save 436 lives.

Hilton said he continues to be inspired by the generosity of the University's employees.

"I'm proud to work alongside so many superstars who go above and beyond to make the world a better place," Hilton said. "Our employees donate time, money, food and more to be part of something larger than themselves. I'm grateful to see so many people take up the challenge to give back."

Julie Katsel, assistant vice president for community relations, says the success of all of the UA Cares initiatives is a testament to the hard work of their organizers.

"We are very excited about the results of the UA Cares program," Katsel said. "Nick, along with all the UA Cares ambassadors, have done incredible work finding ways to make giving easy for employees while ensuring their contributions are impactful for our community."

The effort's success also caught the attention of the United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona, which honored the University with a Cornerstone Award at its annual Circle of Excellence Awards[4]. The Cornerstone Award recognizes organizations that are leading the way in raising awareness for and supporting local community needs.

The University will hold a UA Cares culmination celebration, including a complimentary lunch and awards ceremony, on June 28 from 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. at the Arizona Sands Club in the Lowell-Stevens Football Facility at Arizona Stadium. You can RSVP and nominate a person or unit for recognition[5] online.

Bigger and better

Work on next year's initiatives is already underway.

"I think the best way to make it bigger and better is to bring in more people and raise awareness for the opportunity to give," Hilton said. "UA Cares is like a door that we open for the campus community so they can serve others. We find that once we open that door, people will go through it."

One way Hilton is hoping to do that is by creating planning committees for each UA Cares initiative so more people can have the opportunity to help drive the future of the campaign.

Another is to develop additional opportunities for service projects through partnerships with other units around campus. Hilton's team is working with the School Garden Workshop[6], housed in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, to identify four of its gardens in Tucson Unified School District schools that need attention. He is hoping to find people who are interested in helping to tend to the gardens and provide additional resources to the schools.
help work in the gardens and departments or units to sponsor the effort as part of this year's United Way Days of Caring, which is set for Oct. 21-22. That project also reflects a larger goal for UA Cares, which is to expand opportunities to help those beyond the campus community.

Hilton welcomes ideas for service projects that could help those in need or improve the community.

"There is so much potential here at the University and we shouldn't waste that," Hilton said. "We are a land-grant institution and we should be serving the community. All of us do that every day, but we can do a little more by giving an hour of our time, giving blood or donating $5 from our paycheck to build up our entire community."

If you have an idea for a UA Cares project or would like to be a UA Cares ambassador, you can email Hilton at hilton@arizona.edu. Hilton says the time commitment for ambassadors is low, with the main goal being to help raise awareness of UA Cares initiatives within their units. Those who want to do more can serve on committees to help plan the events.

Source URL: https://uaatwork.arizona.edu/lqp/ua-4-food-caps-successful-year-ua-cares-campaign

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