UA 4 Food is expanding its wish list to include hygiene products

University Communications
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The University's annual drive to battle hunger in Southern Arizona, which collects food items, is expanding to also collect shampoo, soap and other hygiene items this year.

"As a land-grant institution, we go out into every single county and we know the need is great," said Nick Hilton, director in the Office of Government and Community Relations and coordinator of UA Cares, a series of University initiatives enabling employees to donate their time and money to community causes. "We're grateful to be answering that call every year and this year especially, when inflation continues to be such a challenge. We're honored to be living our value of compassion."

The UA 4 Food drive runs March 11-April 8. Donations are being evenly divided between the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona and the University's Campus Pantry, which provides food staples at no cost to students, faculty and staff.

Members of the campus community can donate nonperishable food items and hygiene products – including shampoo, conditioner, detergent pods, body soap, hand soap, toothpaste, menstrual products, bars of soap and toothbrushes – by dropping them off at one of the more than 100 donation boxes on campus. A list of donation box locations is available on the UA 4 Food website.

Among the most needed food items are peanut butter, oatmeal, cereal, granola bars, canned tomato products, canned tuna, canned chicken, canned soups, canned vegetables, canned fruit, rice, pasta and packaged nuts and seeds.

UA 4 Food comes at a time of particular need for the Campus Pantry, Hilton said.

"The Campus Pantry has done a tremendous job at marketing itself, so more people are using those resources," Hilton said. "And they've also done a tremendous job at breaking down the stigma of using those resources, which has led to an increase. And this has all happened while prices are rising."

The Campus Pantry is currently seeing more than 2,200 visits each week, said Bridgette Riebe, assistant director for basic needs and services with the Campus Pantry.

"Year after year this drive has brought in thousands of pounds of food donations for us and the Community Food Bank," Riebe said. "As our program has continued to grow, we are excited for the continued support and expansion of donations to include hygiene items."

UA 4 Food will conclude with the popular Stuff the Cat Tran event on April 8 from 8 a.m.-6 p.m., when volunteers will load donations onto a 40-foot Cat Tran shuttle stationed between the Mall and Old Main. People can continue to donate that day through a drive-through collection spot at the traffic circle behind the Student Union Memorial Center. Once the Cat Tran is full, the shuttle will deliver the donations to the Campus Pantry and Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona.

Other ways to help

Those looking to make even more of a contribution can sign up to be a UA 4 Food ambassador to help promote the campaign within their office or unit.

"Our ambassadors are the people who really run our UA Cares programs," Hilton said. "It could not function without them."

Hilton said he hopes to match or expand an initiative from last year, when students volunteered their time over a weekend to collect donations in the Sam Hughes neighborhood, which is just east of campus. That effort brought in over 1,000 pounds of food last year.

Anyone interested in being an ambassador or volunteer can contact Hilton at hilton@arizona.edu.

The big picture

UA 4 Food is part of the overall UA Cares effort, which includes multiple initiatives throughout the academic year to benefit the campus and Tucson communities. The University's annual workplace giving campaign, which ran from Oct. 2-Nov. 10, brought in $191,000 in monetary donations for University programs through the University of Arizona Foundation and for nonprofit organizations through the United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona.
UA Cares will continue with a blood drive in partnership with the American Red Cross on March 21 from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. in the Student Union Memorial Center North Ballroom. Anyone interested can register to donate online.

This year's UA Cares campaign has two honorary co-chairs: Hope Noriega, enrollment counselor with Arizona International, and Brian Mayer, professor in the School of Sociology.

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