

Nothing Wasted, Plenty Gained

By KATIE BETH RYAN

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HANOVER — Faced with a dilemma that many a Dartmouth student has encountered at the end of the spring term—what to do with those unspent dollars remaining on their student dining plan, which are forfeited if not used —Lauren Sarner could have stocked up on Vitaminwater, Cheez-Its and applesauce for the trip home to Connecticut.

But as she completed her first year at Dartmouth, Sarner opted to use the leftover money on her dining plan to buy pasta and canned foods. The purchases will be donated to Upper Valley agencies that distribute food to individuals and families struggling to put food on the table.

“I just thought it would be a good thing to do,” she explained. “If you have extra money, why not use it for good?”

The end of this academic year found many Dartmouth students contributing, via their dining plans, food that will be donated to Willing Hands, which distributes fresh produce, bread and dairy products

Dartmouth Students Give to Food Banks

to clients across the Upper Valley, as well as the Upper Valley Haven. Last month, a dinner event that raised awareness about hunger in the region yielded \$5,110 in donations for Willing Hands from Dartmouth students, via their dining plans.

The movement to direct surplus campus dining money to those in need started with Dartmouth sophomore Sarah-Marie Hopf, who donated the money remaining on her account at the end of last year to Willing Hands. “There’s a lot of people in need in the community,” she said. “I think when you’re here at Dartmouth, you don’t really see that.”

During the past academic year, Hopf sought out administrators and worked with Dartmouth Dining Services to see if there was a way for students to divert at least some of their remaining meal plan balances to Willing Hands. She conducted a cam-

pus survey, and found that many students did have some remaining money on their accounts at the end of the year. Dining plans currently start at \$800 per year for off-campus Dartmouth students, with four additional plans ranging in cost from \$1,225 to \$1,975. All but the most expensive meal plan allow for students to carry their balances into successive terms.

When students are pressed at the end of the spring term to use up the balance of their accounts, “there’s this large push to buy whatever, or eat large meals,” Hopf said. “I really wanted to cut down on food waste as well.”

Administrators also saw the advantages of having students contribute food at the end of the term. “It may be beneficial for them to spend it this way, rather than lugging it home with them,” said Don Reed, associate director of Dartmouth Dining Services.

The fundraising dinner held last month, where students could contribute up to \$20 from their accounts to Willing Hands, encouraged students to

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Food Banks Benefit From Leftover Meal-Plan Money

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consider local hunger issues, which gave rise to the end-of-term food drive. Boxes set up outside of Collis Cafe and Topside Convenience Store were brimming with boxes of pasta and Cheerios, and cans of Chef Boyardee and Spaghetti-O's, in addition to case upon case of Vitaminwater and Honest Tea.

Donating the roughly \$200 remaining in her dining account at the end of the year was an easy decision for Adenugbe Adenugbe Vormawor, who just finished her first year at Dartmouth.

"I had so much left over," she said, "and some people don't have any."

Late yesterday afternoon, Willing Hands volunteer Chuck Egner parked the organization's van behind the Class of 1953 Commons for the organization's first pickup at Dartmouth. Waiting for him and sorting through the food donations that had accumulated over the last days of the term were Hopf, fellow Dartmouth



Heather Bagley, executive director of Willing Hands, closes the door on the van with donated food from Dartmouth in Hanover yesterday.

Valley News — Jenna Schoenefeld

sophomore Kate Burns, Heather Bagley, the executive director of Willing Hands, and Reed.

Even in the midst of the finals period the past few days, Dartmouth stu-

dents were paying heed to the ongoing community service project in the campus' dining spots. "A lot of people took the time to come up to me, and said, 'What do you need the

most?" said Burns.

The collection of produce and other fresh foods loaded into the Willing Hands van represented a significantly expanded effort compared to last year, when Bagley first heard from Hopf about her desire to donate fresh produce and other staple items to the organization.

"I thought, 'Sure, why not?'" Bagley recalled. "We don't usually make stops for individuals, but I was impressed with her idea and her generous spirit, so we stopped by and got a few boxes of food."

One year later, Hopf's ingenious idea has caught on with her contemporaries, and could give rise to a continued collaboration with Willing Hands.

"She took a hold of the opportunity," Bagley said admiringly, "and ran with it."

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