



## Vallejo High, Food Bank launch campus pantry

**By** *Lanz Christian Bañes/Times-Herald staff writer/*

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Vallejo High School teacher Hollie Campos stacks cans Tuesday at the new on-campus food pantry designed to help hungry students and their families. (Lanz Christian Banes/Times-Herald) (Lanz Christian Banes)

Hungry families at Vallejo High School will have a new option for relief with next week's opening of an on-campus food pantry.

"We've had 1,000 pounds of food that was delivered (by the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano)," said Hollie Campos, a pantry organizer and a lead teacher for the high school's Hospitality Academy.

The school pantry is part of a new pilot program for the food bank, which has opened pantries at five schools in Solano and Contra Costa counties, including Vallejo High.

"We've typically chosen high schools to work with because teenagers can pick up food for their families. But there's often this stigma about getting food, so we brought the food pantry to them so it can be a discreet program," said Lisa Sherill, community relations manager for the food bank.

The pantry will operate as a referral program, with adults on campus referring students who might need the service to a counselor. Vallejo High School and food bank officials have been planning the pantry since last year, Campos said.

However, the pantry fits in neatly with the Vallejo City Unified School District's latest experiment, the full-service community schools, Campos said.

Loma Vista Environmental Science Academy, Elsa Widenmann Elementary School, Solano Middle School and Vallejo and Jesse Bethel high schools are piloting the program, which seeks to remove barriers to a child's education -- such as hunger.

"The need is there, and it's not just a need for food. It's a needed program to help families in our community," Sherill said.

The first 1,000 pounds of food will help between 20 to 35 families, Sherill said. In one school in Contra Costa County, the food bank doubled its monthly delivery to 2,000 pounds because the need was so great, she added.

Because discretion is important, few students will be involved. Teachers like Campos, Vivet Beckford-Nelson and Roze McAllister are volunteering their prep periods to run the pantry in Vallejo.

The high school pantry is also adding a clothing component to its pantry, with students and their families able to receive donated coats and other garments while they pick up food. The Vallejo pantry is seeking donations of clothing, clothing racks and shelves, while food can be donated directly to the food bank.

For now, the pantry will be open by appointment and is limited to Vallejo High families, though Campos hopes to have stable hours as the program moves forward.

For more information, including how to donate or get a referral, call Campos at (707) 556-1700 ext. 50621. For information about the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano, visit [www.foodbankccs.org](http://www.foodbankccs.org) or call (855) 309-FOOD (3663).

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