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Food pantry combats hunger on campus

Across the country, schools are partnering with local restaurants, supermarkets and food banks to battle hunger. That growing list now includes Los Medanos College. The LMC Food Pantry officially opened Monday, Feb. 6 and is fully stocked thanks to fundraising efforts, donations and grants.

The goal of the pantry is to assist students who may not have the income to afford both the expensive books needed to pass classes and the day-to-day necessity of fueling oneself for those classes.

Student Life Coordinator John Nguyen said even though the Office of Student Life now runs it, it wasn't their original idea to establish a source of food for students.

"The Food Pantry idea was originally started as the student run Cuisine Club whose members were concerned about food insecurity that LMC students experienced. After much thought and consideration between the student club and the Office of Student Life, the student club felt it was best to have it housed under the Office of Student Life," he said.

Students and the Student Life Office now staff it. Adrian Montemayor, LMC student and employee of the food pantry, has enjoyed working at the pantry so far.

"It's been very calm and positive," said Montemayor. "People who I usually see go a day without a meal come in here and they finally can get some food and actually feed themselves."

On average, the pantry only serves five to six students a day. Yet even with it not being the busiest, Montemayor still praises the resource for students.

"I don't see any real bad things about it," said Montemayor, "The main reason it should stay is to give back to the community. A lot of students go [to LMC] because they can afford it, and even though they can afford an education, some of them struggle to buy food. So most definitely I think this is a good thing to have for years to come."

Rubbaka Irshad, LMC student and employee of the food pantry, also strongly believed this food pantry was the right thing for LMC to have for their students. "I feel happy," said Irshad. "A lot of students that can't afford the meals in the cafeteria come to us and ask for food. Some are shy; some are like, 'tell me what the food pantry is', but most of them actually feel good about what they receive. I feel this pantry is really important."

The pantry has partnered with the Food Bank of Contra Costa County and Solano to provide a steady supply of food each week. But a student can't simply walk in and grab a can of soup when they are

hungry. You must be a currently registered LMC student and have an LMC student I.D. card. Then there is a process in which students fill out an intake form in order to be verified as a student and the form must be approved. Once the student has been approved, Nguyen will notify them that they may access the pantry.

Students may then collect up to five items a day but that amount may change in the future with the growth of the pantry. Although the pantry just opened, students have already begun using its services.

The Food Pantry is open Mondays from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. to 7 p.m., Thursdays from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. and Fridays 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. It is located in SS3-817 by the cafeteria and Veteran's Resource Center. For more information visit losmedanos.edu/foodpantry or email Nguyen at knguyen@losmedanos.edu.