



BRITTANY GORA

Campus food bank turns 20

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The University of Alberta's Campus Food Bank helped a record 2,500 students over the past year, making a strong case that in the organization's 20th year of service, it is still as necessary as ever.

Food Bank chairperson and secretary Jason Wong explained that the Food Bank was initially set up as a food hamper event intended to aid international students, but instead brought awareness to the broader issue of student hunger.

"Our initial offices were in the old Power Plant, in the little closets in the GSA offices, and now 20 years later, we are a fully registered non-profit society and charity. This internal growth signifies that there is a growing need to help hungry students," Wong said.

The organization has been committed over the years to bringing awareness to the increasing trend of hunger experienced by university students, and in the past month has registered 40 new clients.

"The challenge has been trying to bring that message out there that hunger is a critical issue on campus," Wong said. "It's an issue that needs to be addressed because we believe that campus should be a place where people hunger for knowledge, not for food. A well-fed student is a well-performing student."

The Campus Food Bank distributes "holistic hampers" of food items and toiletries to various members of the university community: students, alumni, staff and their families.

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FOOD BANK CHAIRPERSON AND SECRETARY

Wong said a holistic approach is a core tenant of the services provided by the Campus Food Bank.

"We do not just provide food to satisfy hunger," Wong said. "We also actively refer our clients to other services as Student Financial Access Information Centre and student counselling to ensure that other aspects of what might be causing their hunger are addressed."

The provision of these well-rounded services has, in part, been due to the Food Bank's meaningful partnerships with local businesses such as Aramark Food Services, which recently raised over \$3,000 in a golf tournament for the Food Bank.

"I believe that when people realize that there are hungry students on campus, there is an instinct to help," Wong said.

For Wong, the aim for the next 20 years is to continue building the Campus Food Bank's network of contributors.

"We hope to not be around for another 20 years. We want to see hunger eliminated on campus," Wong added. "I believe we do a great job of providing. Now, it's time to start eliminating."