



12-3-2009

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Recommended Citation

Hinterlong '11, Jessica, "Project Peanut Butter" (2009). *News and Events*. 431.
<https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/news/431>

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Dec. 3, 2009

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Project Peanut Butter

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – For many students at Illinois Wesleyan University as well as on campuses across the nation, peanut butter and jelly has become its own food group. This staple is known to be cheap and long lasting. Visiting Associate Professor of Environmental Studies and Health Laurine Brown and the students in her Health 280: Perspectives in International Health class also know the benefits of peanut butter and as a result have chosen to support an organization called Project Peanut Butter (www.ProjectPeanutButter.org). Project Peanut Butter has a campaign to bring food to malnourished children, particularly in Africa.

Around holiday time each year Brown and her students select a Make a Difference with a Dollar (MADD) educational campaign to raise funds for a global health cause.

The class is attempting to raise \$1,000 for Project Peanut Butter by Dec. 10. If the students achieve their goal, it would be enough money to rehabilitate an entire village of malnourished children. From Dec. 2-4 students will try to raise money through various bake sales and tabling.

The bake sale will be held from 1-3 p.m. in the commons of the Center for Natural Science and tabling will be at Sodexo Steps from 11:30 a.m.- 12:45 p.m. Fundraising will continue through the beginning of next week if needed. The class also created an informational display on the east side of the Memorial Center to provide potential donors with information about hunger, malnutrition and the Peanut Butter Project.

“After studying an overwhelming number of pressing health issues around the globe for the semester, this is one way students can ‘give back’ and be a part of the solution,” said Brown. “They become actively involved in contributing to efforts to improve global health. Plus, they learn essential, life long skills of research and decision-making, as well as organizing an educational campaign and fundraiser.”

The not-for-profit organization, Project Peanut Butter, has developed a peanut-based superfood to rehabilitate malnourished children. The program enables rural families to re-nourish their ill children at home instead of hospitals miles away from their villages. Brown’s class was

first introduced to Project Peanut Butter after Illinois Wesleyan Associate Professor of English Alison Sainsbury spoke to the group about the peanut-based cause.

“We felt this organization would be most cost effective and help the most people,” said sophomore and project co-coordinator Emily Gumm. “We know peanut butter has a long shelf life and has the nutrients to really help these children. And we know peanut butter is something most children enjoy eating.”

“The students in my class have been phenomenal and within a very short period of time, they have operated their ideas,” Brown said. “This is a ‘process’ and a participatory one, where the class researches, decides, develops the campaign, implements it and evaluates it. We have three coordinators who oversee the activities and tasks, treasurers who manage the donations, and the rest of the class is involved in different aspects of the campaign, depending on their skills and time. This is their campaign and they are doing an amazing job supporting each other.”

While Brown praises her class for their organization of this fundraiser, Gumm reminds us that the students at IWU are really making the difference by supporting the cause. “So far the student body has been extremely supportive,” said Gumm. “The students have been willing to listen and donate any spare change they have. We are hoping we will be able to reach our goal and see how effective this campaign can be.”

Students aren’t the only one’s lending support for the cause- faculty and community members as well have donated to the organization. On Thursday, Dec. 10, the class will gather to finalize the campaign and determine the final amount they have raised.