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Students Establish Donation Program for Local Homeless Shelters

April 18, 2019

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. — Rather than letting leftover student meal swipes go to waste at the end of the semester, Macey Grant '20 and Lakshmi (Sravya) Jayam '22 organized a meal swipe donation program to benefit Bloomington's Salvation Army and Home Sweet Home Ministries.

From April 15 through April 19, Illinois Wesleyan University students may pledge up to 10 meal swipes toward this initiative by emailing David Nicholson, general manager of residential dining, at: dnichol1@iwu.edu.

Jayam – a first-year biology major – decided to take action regarding her concern about wasted food. “I soon realized that if I want something to change I cannot just complain about the problem, but actually make a plan to make the situation better,” she said.

Grant and Jayam took the initiative to find a solution for students who end their semesters with excess meal swipes from their prepaid dining packages. The process involved several months of discussion with professors, the Dean of Students Office, Sodexo Campus Services staff, the mayor of Bloomington and other officials.

Grant and Jayam were working independently until Tripper Phipps, Sodexo's general manager of operations at Illinois Wesleyan, put the two students in contact with each other and with Manish Pathuri '22, another student who shared their concern about food waste.

“I feel very strongly that we at this university are very privileged, and it breaks my heart to know that there are people all over the world who are hungry on a regular basis when we have so much extra food,” said Grant, a junior art major.

In order to address this disparity in food distribution, Grant and Jayam decided to donate the meal swipe proceeds to Salvation Army Safe Harbor and Home Sweet Home Ministries, which are two homeless shelters in Bloomington responsible for feeding hundreds of local residents daily.

Hundreds of students have already committed to donating their remaining meal swipes to the initiative.

“I was so excited when I saw how many students were willing to help out with this,” said Grant. “I honestly cannot believe that this program is being put into place. It seems too good to be true because it is actually making a difference in our community rather than just talking about it, as I had been for so long.”

Given the success of the meal swipe donation program, Grant and Jayam look forward to finding more opportunities to give back.

“I’m so excited to see how this program will work out,” Jayam said. “And, I am currently exploring more ways we can help the community.”



Macey Grant '20 (right) has teamed up with fellow Illinois Wesleyan students, staff and faculty to organize a meal swipe donation program to benefit local homeless shelters.

By Rachel McCarthy '21