

# Penguin Pantry



*Clark College/Susan Parrish*

Clark's food pantry for students marks its fifth anniversary in July. Penguin Pantry had a soft opening on July 24, 2017, and an official grand opening on October 25, 2017.

Penguin Pantry supports a healthy college community by reducing hunger and food insecurity on campus and connecting students with essential resources. Over the past five years, the pantry has become an important resource to help Clark College students stay on the path to graduation. The global pandemic, inflation, and skyrocketing prices have created more barriers for students trying to stay in school and complete their degree.

Director of Student Life Sarah Gruhler, who supervises Penguin Pantry, says it is helping to ease the financial burden of

students.

“The Penguin Pantry was created to address student hunger at Clark,” said Gruhler. “The goal is to provide support for students’ basic needs and serve as a bridge to campus and community resources. We want students to persist to graduation and goal completion – and know the pantry can help with this.”



Grand Opening 2017 Science Buliding





First Anniversary 2018



First Anniversary 2018



Second Anniversary 2019





## Pantry Moves to PUB 2020



## Car Pick-ups start 2020





Car Pick-ups start 2020



Volunteers

# Increasing Needs

Since the beginning of the pandemic, food banks nationwide have witnessed sharp increases in the number of people facing food insecurity and accessing emergency food aid. This correlates to significant increases in the cost of food, housing, fuel, and utilities.

- Clark County Food Bank reported an increase in food insecurity since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, Clark County Food Bank provided food to more than 23 percent of the population of Clark County.
- In 2021, 40% of students at community and technical colleges nationwide were food insecure, according to the Seattle-based nonprofit organization Northwest Harvest.
- In 2017 when the Penguin Pantry opened, almost half of Clark's student body was classified as lower income, according to data from the college's Office of Planning & Effectiveness
- In 2018, campus-wide surveys indicated that 43% of Clark students were low-income and 23% had dependent children.

Any currently enrolled Clark College student may access pantry services simply by filling out an online form on MyClark@Clark. Food is distributed once per month, usually on the last Tuesday of the month.

Before the pandemic, students shopped for food by walking into the Penguin Pantry inside the Penguin Union Building. But the COVID pandemic changed the delivery model to a no-contact, seamless curbside pickup system on the side of Gaiser Hall off Fort Vancouver Way. That delivery method continues today. Students make appointments to pick up their food, pull their car into the lot, pop their trunk, and staff and volunteers



load the food box into the trunk.



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## Penguin Pantry Q & A with Sarah Gruhler

**Q:** *How much food does Penguin Pantry distribute during an academic year?*

During the 2022-23 academic year the pantry has served:

- 511 Individual students
- 1,863 family members of students
- 1,243 boxes of food distributed
- 28,630 pounds of food distributed

**SG:** Each month the pantry also offers a bonus item – either

toiletries (shampoo, conditioner, soap, toothpaste, toothbrush, and deodorant), laundry soap, or toilet paper and a gift card to Fred Meyer or Safeway.

*Q: What are the most popular items?*

**SG:** The items we hear most about are our bonus items like laundry soap and gift cards. Students express a lot of thanks for those items.

*Q: Where does Penguin Pantry get its food?*

**SG:** Thanks to donations from community partners, we purchase shelf-stable items from Costco and get supplemental items as we can from Clark County Food Bank.

*Q: Is the pantry paid for by donations?*

**SG:** Yes. Other than staffing, Penguin Pantry is supported by donations. Faculty and staff are our main contributors, through monthly contributions and during our annual Thanksgiving meal drive. Anyone can donate via Clark College Foundation.

## **Upcoming Penguin Pantry distribution:**

- Tuesday, August 29
- Tuesday, October 24

## **How students can request a monthly pre-packaged food box:**

1. Log into **MyClark@Clark**



2. Look for the **“Penguin Pantry Order Form”** located in the right navigation list under ***Get Started***
3. Fill out the form completely and submit
4. You will receive a confirmation email with your food box pick-up date and time.

If students need immediate assistance with food, housing and/or other basic needs, please visit the following Clark County community resources:

Clark County Food Bank

Council for the Homeless

## How to donate to Penguin Pantry

- Online: Give online with Clark College Foundation's online giving form and choose 'Penguin Pantry' from the drop-down menu.
- By mail: Mail your check/money order to: Clark College, Attn: Cashier's Office (PUB 153), 1933 Ft. Vancouver Way. Write the check to "Clark College" and write "Penguin Pantry" in the comments area.

Learn more at  
<https://www.clark.edu/campus-life/student-support/penguinpantry/index.php>