

Hunger on campus



A car pulled into the Red Lot 3 roundabout in the northwest corner of the Penguin Union Building. Sarah Gruhler, Clark's director of Student Life, stepped up to the car and greeted a Clark student through the passenger window.

"Good morning! Where would you like your box?"



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Volunteers carried the food to the car and loaded it into the trunk. The student drove away with a large box of food, two holiday dinners and a \$25 Safeway gift card.

During its November distribution on the 21st and 22nd, the Penguin Pantry distributed 6,716 pounds of food and served 221 students plus their families, for a total of 755 people assisted.

That’s a 70% increase from pantry statistics last November, when the pantry distributed 3,900 pounds of food and served 130 students, for a total of 431 people.

“We are definitely seeing an increase in the use of pantry services,” Gruhler said.

Food insecurity is a real concern

Penguin Pantry marked its fifth year in July. The pantry supports a healthy college community by reducing hunger and food insecurity on campus and connecting students with essential resources. The pantry has become an important resource to help Clark College students stay on the path to graduation. Penguin Pantry's assistance is welcomed by students who are navigating inflation and skyrocketing food and housing costs that have created barriers for students trying to stay in school and complete their degrees.

Studies have shown a direct correlation between college students' food insecurity and their ability stay in school.

- *Inside Higher Ed* reported on a study of community college students and food and housing that found nearly a third of community college students ran out of food in the last 30 days and they didn't have money to buy more food.
- Best Colleges reports that about 23% of college students were food-insecure in 2020, and that number increased during the pandemic. The study also reported that food insecurity affected students' grades and graduation rates.
- Another study by Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health reported that "food insecurity among college students is associated with lower college graduation rates."

Hunger: The local story



Student volunteers help with food distribution.

Increasingly, more people are seeking food assistance from food pantries nationwide. Clark College's Penguin Pantry is not alone in seeing more local people seeking assistance.

Locally, the *FISH of Vancouver* pantry in downtown Vancouver continues to see client numbers increase. During the week of November 12-18, FISH of Vancouver welcomed 90 new clients, served 881 households, and fed a total of 3,375 people. Clark College students also can receive food assistance from FISH of Vancouver.

FISH Executive Director James Fitzgerald said, "We are so thankful for community support that allows us to serve so many more people in need. We are glad to be a place people can come for food to help supplement their budgets and make ends meet."

Although Penguin Pantry receives some food from Clark County Food Bank, most of Penguin Pantry's food is purchased through local stores with funds from donors.

Clark County Food Bank manages 8 million pounds of food each year, which is equivalent to 6.7 million meals for individuals and families experiencing hunger. It works with 43 nonprofit partner agencies at 130 distribution sites, along with food bank led programs, to serve neighbors facing food insecurity throughout Clark County.

Clark County Food Bank's annual Walk & Knock food drive is this Saturday, December 2. You can participate by volunteering or by filling a bag with nonperishable food and putting it on your doorstep by 9 a.m. on Saturday. Here are the statistics for last year's Walk & Knock: 2,200 volunteers, 150,753 pounds of food and toiletries donated, and \$31,000 in cash donations.

Finding food assistance: For students and others in the Clark College community who seek food assistance, find available food pantries (including Penguin Pantry) and other resources with Clark County Food Bank's Food Finder Tool.



Student volunteers at the food distribution in November.

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

1. Log into MyClark@Clark
2. Look for the Penguin Pantry Order Form (right navigation) under Get Started
3. Fill out the form completely, and submit
4. Your confirmation email with a pick-up date/time.

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

- Clark County Food Bank
- Council for the Homeless

How you can donate to Penguin Pantry:

- **Online:** Give online with Clark College Foundation's online giving form.
- **By mail:** Send your check/money order to:
Clark College, Attn: Cashier's Office (PUB 153)
1933 Ft. Vancouver Way, Vancouver, WA 98663.
Write the check to "Clark College" and write "Penguin Pantry" in the lower left note area.

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