

Free Holiday Market



Two children sat on the floor of Gaiser Student Center and examined their treasures: a box of various toys and stuffed animals, a Star Wars coloring book, and a bag of clothing including pink pajamas with animals dancing across the fabric.



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Clark College hosted its first-ever Free Holiday Market for students and their families on December 6 from 3 to 5 p.m. in Gaiser Student Center. Hosted by faculty and staff, the event provided an opportunity for students and up to four family members to “shop” from new and gently used items at no cost to them.



Organizers Fay Shorten, Stephanie Hall, Lucy Winslow, and Alison Dolder. *Photo courtesy of Kathy Chennault.*

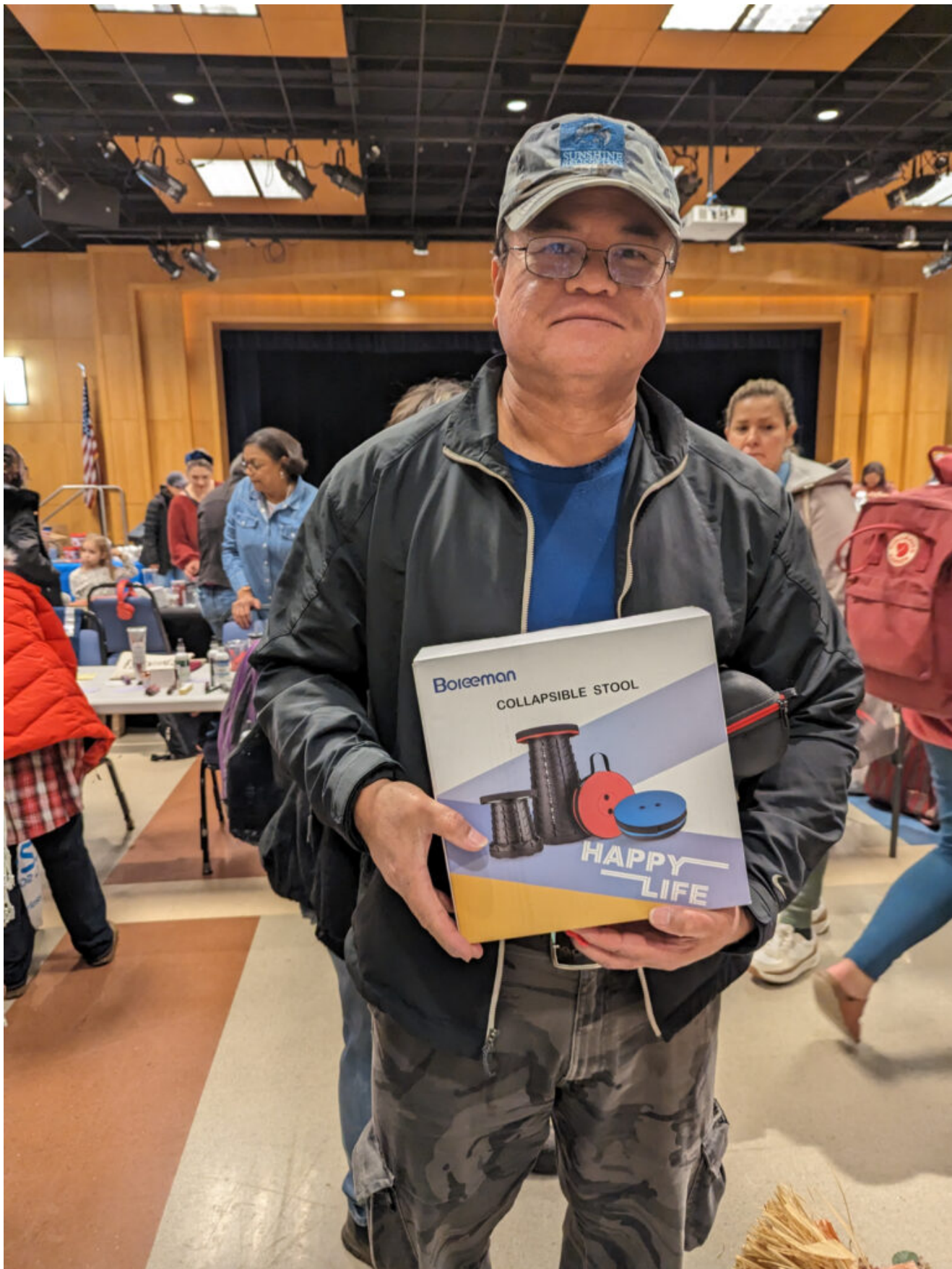
The event was sparked by Chef Alison Dolder, head of the Professional Baking & Pastry Arts program, who first had the idea to host a free student holiday market. The pandemic lockdown had dragged on for so long. As classes began meeting on campus again, she thought it would be fun to do something for the students.

With inflation, skyrocketing prices for food, housing and other essentials, how would students have money left over to buy holiday gifts for their families, and maybe even buy a little something for themselves?

Dolder explained, "I thought it would be great to get the students together on campus after so long away. But we couldn't find any organization or group on campus that had the bandwidth to take on the event."

Later, Dolder shared her idea with her colleagues in Culinary: Fay Shorten, Lucy Winslow, and Stephanie Hall. They decided to get the event going themselves. When other departments heard

about the event, they eagerly joined in.





A gift for everyone

A few minutes before the doors opened, the line of students and their families reached down the hall past the culinary kitchen and café. Clearly, people were excited about this opportunity to choose holiday gifts for their families—and even for themselves.

The faculty and staff stood at their tables, ready to assist shoppers. Dolder stood behind a table. So did Dr. Edwards. They were joined by Tina Barsotti and Carol Hsu from STEM—and dozens of other faculty and staff at their own tables.



Clark College President, Dr. Karin Edwards with SOFA Dean, Tina Redd set up tables at the event. *Photo courtesy of Kathy Chennault.*

The tables were piled high with classic board games: Scrabble, Jenga, Clue, Operation, Pictionary, and Mastermind. Other tables were stacked with jigsaw puzzles—from kid-sized to 2,000-piece puzzles that a family might spend several days putting together.

Clothing racks displayed all types of clothing and coats,

including shoes still in the shoeboxes.

Other tables had kitchenware, household items, books, toys, holiday décor, and even propagated live plants and rosemary boughs. Some Clark employees shared their handiwork from their hobbies including sewing, knitting, crocheting, photography, and woodworking.

Penguin Pantry was ready with 600 meals to distribute.

The doors opened, and students and their families flooded in, ready to shop. In all, 195 student shoppers brought 198 guest shoppers, with almost 400 people shopping.

Dolder added, “The students and families were so happy to be there.”



Lucy Winslow, one of the event organizers, said, “It was so great to see our campus come together in support of students.

It made me proud to be a penguin!”

A student spied a pair of leather cowboy boots on a table and asked, “How much for the boots? And what size are they?”

The answer: “One ticket. Size 8. Just polished with black shoe polish to bring out the shine.”

She smiled. “I’ll take them. My sister will love these!”

That kind of happy transaction happened again and again during the two-hour event. No money was exchanged. Only red tickets, which shoppers received at no charge when they entered the room.

Before the event started, Dolder worried if the event would be successful. Would students come? Would they bring their families?

“Looking around at everything on the tables, there was a moment of panic that these volunteers would have to take everything back if no students came,” Dolder said.

She added. “At the end, there was nothing left! I think we need to have it again next year. It will be bigger and better. We had 51 tables—and could have used more! It far exceeded our expectations.”



Donated clothing has been a long-running tradition at Clark College through the Career Clothing Closet, many of the donated items from this event will be available during the career fair in the spring.

Ongoing opportunities to give to students:

- *Career Clothing Closet:* Donate career clothing for students and new graduates starting their careers. Contact careerservices@clark.edu or call 360-992-2902.
- *WES Giving Tree:* Donate new hats, gloves, scarves, hand warmers, socks, and throws for students and their families through January 5 in GHL 215.

Photos: Clark College/Susan Parrish