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Take a look at activities on the Lawn!

SGA and Volunteer A-State partner to host swipe drive for Swipe Out Hunger

Swipe Out Hunger aims to address food insecurity on campus

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NEWS WRITER

With the Student Government Association passing a new proposal combating food insecurity, Swipe Out Hunger hopes to do that, one swipe at a time.

In February, Swipe Out Hunger was introduced to the Student Government Association where it ultimately passed into effect. This was an initiative that was spearheaded by Sen. Ellie Mayberry. It was meant to try and combat food insecurity for many students at A-State.

"I stumbled across this program last year when planning a Student Government Association campaign with Anna Raffo," Mayberry said. "We were looking for something that would give back to students and allow students to be able to help each other too. When we saw Swipe Out Hunger, we knew it would be a perfect fit for our campus."

Although her campaign didn't win the election, Mayberry continued to push forward with this proposal, even after being re-elected into the SGA senate.

"I think especially with the loss of income that many experienced from the effects of COVID-19, now was definitely the right time to push it through," Mayberry said. "Students are looking for support, and many are looking for a way to help others too."

Swipe Out Hunger is a national program where students can donate unwanted meal blocks to students who don't currently have a meal



PHOTO COURTESY OF VOLUNTEER A-STATE

Volunteer A-State and SGA partnered to host a swipe drive for Swipe Out Hunger. Food pantry Co-Chair Kaleb Webb helped announce the event on Instagram.

plan. Students can then apply for a portion of the swipes accumulated in the bank. The donated swipes are then equally distributed amongst the accepted applicants.

Students can donate up to 10 swipes or the equivalent amount of Flex Dollars which equals \$8.99 per meal. Applications for this semester will be open until 5 p.m. Friday before Spring Break.

Seeing how SGA passed this resolution with a large amount of support, it is no surprise that food insecurity and the pandemic has made an impact on the student body.

"Though there may not seem to be an issue as food insecurity at our university, along with the pandemic, many students are struggling, and we must do what we can as SGA to improve the lives of students best as they venture through

higher education," SGA President Rashad Kirksey said.

Kirksey's role in the Swipe Out Hunger program includes organizing communications between many different organizations on campus.

"I am organizing the reviewal committee and communications between SGA, Volunteer A-State, Sodexo Dining Services, and Card Services, as well as organizations collecting next week," Kirksey said.

Although there have not been any numbers publicly regarding students facing food insecurity on campus, the A-State Food Pantry does report serving 235 households, or 588 people, from August to December of 2020.



PHOTO COURTESY OF VOLUNTEER A-STATE

SGA Sen. Ellie Mayberry passed her resolution to bring Swipe Out Hunger to A-State. There was a swipe drive where students could donate Flex Dollars or meal swipes from Monday-Wednesday.

Coupled with studies from organizations such as Feeding America, it does highlight the very problem Swipe Out Hunger is trying to mitigate.

So far, it seems students are just as eager to show their support for their fellow Red Wolves.

"We have already begun to see students donating and are excited to see how many donations we receive next week's drive," Kirksey said.

Of course, this is only the beginning, as both Mayberry and Kirksey are working on adding in new programs to fight the issue of food insecurity at A-State.

For Mayberry, Swipe Out Hunger does have the flexibility to grow and expand

to fulfill other needs on campus.

"I would love to be able to offer point-of-sale donations one day, or even offer the round-up option at check-out flex locations," Mayberry said. "We would also love to expand it in such a way that faculty and staff could get involved one day too."

Kirksey is also working on implementing another program that could be beneficial to A-State: food recovery.

"SGA is working with both administration and Volunteer A-State to create a food recovery program," Kirksey said. "This program will transfer safe and unused food from Sodexo dining venues to the Food Pantry, then disperse it to both students, faculty and staff."

Right now, this program has the potential to make a significant impact for students at A-State. Although it is currently

in a pilot stage, it seems it would be a major game changer for students facing food insecurity. This is an initiative Mayberry and Kirksey are hoping students will be invested in the future.

"Students at A-State should be invested in this program because it is an easy way to give back to your peers. There is so much food insecurity around us every day that we just don't see or notice, and this program will help with that," Mayberry said.

Kirksey adds on to this sentiment, as he said, "This program helps our campus ensure that food insecurity is not a problem with students in their pursuit of higher education and can use their energy in their studies and other development into their profession."

For any student interested in participating in the program, Mayberry and Kirksey offer some very insightful information.

"If you are able, please donate and help us fight food insecurity and make sure it is not a problem at all on our campus," Kirksey said. "If you are in need, please take advantage of this opportunity, we are here to serve you, please let us."

Students can apply by clicking on the links found on Volunteer A-State's and A-State SGA's Instagram pages.

"If you are interested in donating- do it! You don't have to donate the entire allowed amount. Anything you can give helps," Mayberry said. "If you are interested in applying- do it! Applications are secure and only seen by the committee. Take advantage of the resources at hand, and don't let yourself skip a meal or go hungry just because you second guessed applying."

Dr. Cherisse Jones-Branch makes an impact around the A-State community

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NEWS WRITER

Dr. Cherisse Jones-Branch was appointed as the Graduate School dean last year. She also serves as the Vaughn Endowed Professor of History and is the author of three published books. She also was recently named a fellow for the American Council on Education for the 2021-2022 academic year.

Jones-Branch grew up in Charleston, South Carolina where she attended the African Methodist Episcopal Church. She currently attends a non-denominational church in Jonesboro. She said her faith has always been important to her and even became more

important to her with age. "As I've gotten older, I fully understand that whatever happens, God is going to work it out," Jones-Branch said.

Although they met as faculty members at A-State, Dr. Carmen Williams, assistant professor of English, considers Jones-Branch as a sister-friend, mentor, colleague and advocate. When they both attended the Association of the Study of African American Life and History Conference in North Charleston, Jones-Branch's parents invited both of them to dinner.

"There was lots of love and laughter," Williams said. "Her mom did all of the best things southern moms do. She told us wonderful stories, fed us well,

and sent us back to the hotel with leftovers. It was perfection."

In school, Jones-Branch said she enjoyed anything involving reading and writing. She said she grew up in a family of readers and always had a book in her hands. That love for reading and writing stayed with her and lead her to publish her own books: "Crossing the Line: Women's Interracial Activism in South Carolina During and After World War II," "Competing Memories: The Legacy of Arkansas's Civil War," and most recently, "Better Living by Their Bootstraps: Black Women's Activism in Rural Arkansas, 1914-1965."

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Photo by: Krishnan Collins | Editor-in-Chief

Dr. Cherisse Jones-Branch is the Graduate School dean at A-State and the Vaughn Endowed Professor of History. Jones-Branch impacts both students and faculty around campus.