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Media Relations

December 11, 2012

University of New Hampshire's Wildcat Friends Pitch in to Help Feed Those in Need



UNH senior Diana Clayburgh (standing) and Wildcat Friends student Hannah Kendrick pack boxes with nonperishable food for Cornucopia, the UNH food pantry that serves the university community. Students in the Wildcat Friends program sold wreaths to raise money to buy the food.

DURHAM, N.H. - Students who attend the University of New Hampshire through the Wildcat Friends program took their community service project for the month of December full circle.

First, they made evergreen wreaths, manning a table in the Memorial Union Building during lunch, and taking orders for delivery. Then they took the \$1,400 profit from the sale of the 125 wreaths and went grocery shopping with students from Pi Kappa Phi fraternity and Alpha Xi Delta sorority. Last week, they got together at Alpha Xi Delta to box up the nonperishables for delivery to Cornucopia, UNH's food pantry, where it will fill baskets for those in need this holiday season.

Community service is an integral part of Greek life on campus. It is also are the core of the UNH Wildcat Friends curriculum. Launched in 2009, the project gives young adults with developmental disabilities the chance to attend college. It was founded by Heidi Chase '87 '95G, director of Friends in Action, a nonprofit organization that creates social and recreation

opportunities for young disabled adults.

The 40 students in the program are on campus once a week, attending class, eating in the dining halls, and participating in community service or recreational activities. This is the second year they've raised money to help Cornucopia feed members of the UNH community.

"This has been a great project. A lot of kids have gotten so close," says senior Diana Clayburgh, community service chair for Alpha Xi Delta. She and the other sisters have spent the semester working alongside Wildcat Friends on community service projects and in recreational activities. Several sorority members as well as some of the fraternity brothers were on hand last week as the food was sorted and boxed.

Clayburgh walked around the room, helping students decide which box still needed stuffing; cranberry sauce; a can of olives.

"Doing something like this, everyone feels so good afterward. It's been so rewarding," she says.

Sophomore Maggie Saliba agrees. She got involved with Wildcat Friends last year as an assignment for her community leadership major. This year she is doing an internship with the program.

"It's been an awesome experience," says Saliba who wants to turn Wildcat Friends into a student organization. "This isn't about just serving as the kids' buddies. They don't just want a buddy; they want to feel they are on the same level as their peers. This kind of project helps them feel they are."

Chase adds, "Wildcat Friends has been so well received. After three-and-a half years on campus, we've had lots of students asking 'how can we help; how can we get involved; how can we make this permanent.' It's fantastic to get that kind of support."

Wildcat Friends is fee-based and has limited enrollment. To be considered for the program, participants have to have been involved in other Friends Project activities for at least six to 12 months. For more information, visit <http://www.friendsinactionnh.org/join-a-program/>.

Read more about Cornucopia at <http://www.cornucopia.unh.edu/>.

Photograph available to download: <http://www.unh.edu/news/releases/2012/dec/clayberg.jpg>

Caption: UNH senior Diana Clayburgh (standing) and Wildcat Friends student Hannah Kendrick pack boxes with nonperishable food for Cornucopia, the UNH food pantry that serves the university community. Students in the Wildcat Friends program sold wreaths to raise money to buy the food. The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 12,200 undergraduate and 2,300 graduate students.

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