

# Program fills hungry kids' bags

Students working to grow nonprofit

BY ANASA HICKS  
STAFF WRITER

Along with school assignments, some Chapel Hill and Carrboro children can now carry home food in their backpacks.

Volunteers with Table, a new nonprofit organization in Carrboro, give children backpacks — not plastic bags, which lack privacy — filled with food to take home with them Thursday, and the children return the backpacks Monday.

"Teachers talk about kids coming in from the weekend, not having had much to eat," said Kathy Herington, a UNC junior who is on the board of directors.

"By targeting children, we're actually giving them the tools they need to work to improve their future."

Table had its first distribution Feb. 29. The organization gave backpacks to seven children at El Centro Latino, another nonprofit in Carrboro, as part of an eight-week pilot program.

Table Executive Director Joy MacVane said the organization grew out of a relationship between her and the UNC students who walk by her house daily.

MacVane lives in downtown Chapel Hill and said she used to put out cookies or hot chocolate for students who walked by her house on their way to campus. One day she put out a sign inviting anyone to help her bake a cake for a local

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KATHY HERINGTON, UNC JUNIOR

homeless shelter.

Herington was one of the 11 students who came. She helped form Table last semester.

MacVane said that when she began to talk with UNC students about Table, some said there are already plenty of food resources within the community.

But she realized that children don't have control over whether their parents take advantage of available resources.

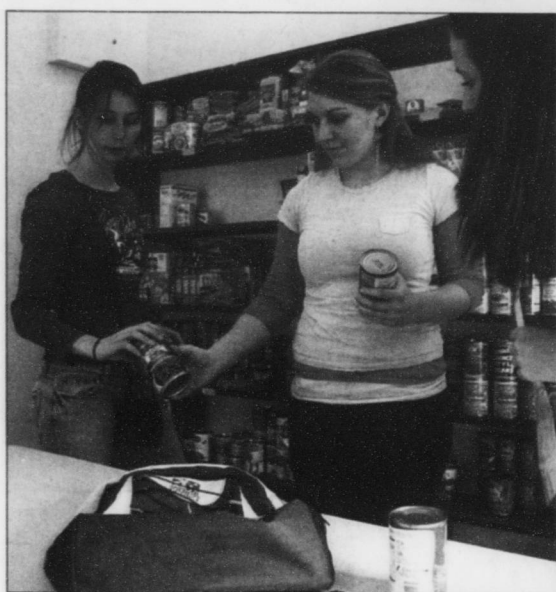
"A program that targets children really benefits the whole family," Herington said.

Chris Moran, executive director of the Inter-Faith Council for Social Services, said Table also benefits the student volunteers.

"This particular program is very different from most nonprofits because it's focusing on how to help students focus on areas of service that they might want to consider," he said.

The organization has 25 active volunteers.

"More and more, I'm seeing Table as a community organization that has student volunteers but also students focusing as leaders of the organization," MacVane said.



Volunteers Claire Newlon and Sandy Skolochenko pack a backpack with canned food at El Centro Latino on March 6 for a weekly program.

Table had its first fundraiser, a bar night at The Library, on Tuesday.

Junior Katie Lefevre, who planned the event, heard about Table through the Campus Y list-serv.

"I've been looking for ways to help out because there's so much poverty and need right outside of our area, and I like kids," she said.

"It seemed like the perfect way to combine my interests."

Table is gearing up for a much larger food distribution in the fall. MacVane said one of its goals is to find other ways to provide food for children.

"It reinforces for me my sense that food is more than just a source of nutrition; it can also be a source of connection between people," she said.

Contact the City Editor at [citydesk@unc.edu](mailto:citydesk@unc.edu).

# Exchange students adapt to campus life

BY RACHEL KUROWSKI  
STAFF WRITER

For Sofia Mitjans, the biggest adjustment she had to make was buying her own groceries.

Mitjans, who is at UNC for the spring semester, usually lives with her family in Buenos Aires, Argentina, so she doesn't have to worry about cooking for herself or buying her own groceries.

Mitjans also enjoys more liberty in Chapel Hill — with no one to report to when she comes in at night on the weekends.

Life at Universidad del Salvador in Buenos Aires is different from life as a Tar Heel.

For university students who study abroad, the jolt of culture and language can make the adjustment challenging at first.

Students from other countries who come to Chapel Hill often feel the same culture shock that UNC students face when they study abroad.

Mitjans arrived in January and said her first month was the hardest because of the language barrier and being so far from home.

"Little things, like everyone paying by cards instead of cash and how the grocery stores function, confused me," she said.

"But instead of thinking this is too hard and different, I reminded myself that I have only four months here and I may never have a chance like this again."

Some exchange students decide they like Chapel Hill enough to stay. Patricia Casbas came to UNC from

Madrid, Spain, to study biochemistry for the 2007-08 year. Now she's applied to a doctoral program and will be here for another five years.

Like Mitjans, the centralized campus and "university environment" were a big change for Casbas.

"In Madrid, I just go to the university for classes and then go home," said Casbas, who attends Universidad Complutense de Madrid. "But here, I get to enjoy being a student."

Diana Levy, assistant director of the International Student and Scholar Services, said her office encourages international students to get involved during their stay at UNC. "It's an experiential education, not just classes," she said.

Levy said the Easing Abroad Students Entry program can be a big part of that.

The program promotes events and dialogue between UNC students who have studied abroad and foreign students.

Junior Bridget Rogers participated in the EASE program last semester after studying in India. She mentored a student from South Korea.

"I think the program benefits both the participant and the volunteer," she said.

"The volunteer gets to learn about the other's culture while the international student always has someone to help them adjust to American life or just someone to go to the grocery store with."

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