

Lindenwood University

Digital Commons@Lindenwood University

---

Archived Lindenwood Press Releases

Public Relations

---

12-2-2020

## Lindenwood Free Pantry Offers Students Support During the Holiday Season

Lindenwood University

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.lindenwood.edu/press\\_releases](https://digitalcommons.lindenwood.edu/press_releases)



Part of the [Business and Corporate Communications Commons](#)

---

# LITTLE FREE PANTRY OFFERS STUDENTS SUPPORT DURING THE HOLIDAY SEASON

December 2, 2020

**By Hazel Denother**

The holidays are a time for gratitude, generosity, and goodwill, but for some, they can also be a time of hardship. As we enter this season of giving, Lindenwood continues to demonstrate its commitment to students' welfare by keeping the university's Little Free Pantry plentifully stocked for those who may face financial struggles over winter break. Located outside of the Center for Diversity and Inclusion (CDI) office on the top floor of Evans Commons, the Little Free Pantry runs under the motto "leave what you can, take what you need." This anonymous service has been operating with great success for the last two years, offering necessitous students canned goods, toiletries, and other essentials.

Rev. Dr. Nichole Torbitzky, university chaplain and assistant professor of philosophy and religion, is a major proponent of the CDI and was one of the driving forces behind the creation of the Little Free Pantry. She proposed the idea for this sustainable pantry model to Dr. Shane Williamson, the former Vice President of Student Affairs, who helped her turn the vision into a reality. She explained, "...Dr. Williamson helped me get the necessary approvals from all of our stakeholders. We recycled a shelf unit and spruced it up, due in large part to elbow grease provided by Jessica Bucci [Student Life and Diversity Administrative Assistant]. Now that the CDI is open, they have taken over the day-to-day operations and oversight of the little Free Pantry under consummate supervision of Jennifer Spellazza [CDI Coordinator]."

Recent studies have revealed a demand for food pantries at colleges across the country. Dr. Torbitzky noted, "We researched food pantry models and need and found that food insecurity is a problem on many college campuses. Usually this pertains to commuter students, but also to residents who need to supplement their caloric intake or have schedules that do not sync up with dining hall hours." She hoped that Lindenwood's Little Free Pantry "would be a helpful addition to the lives of students who are trying to make ends meet" and give them the tools they need to achieve.

The CDI is always striving to help students in need, and the Little Free Pantry is active all throughout the year. Dr. Torbitzky remarked, "We do get donations, and, like any

pantry, we are always looking for more.” Donations can be made at any time to the box adjacent to the Little Free Pantry. Dr. Torbitzky stated, “During this season, even when many people head home to family, for some, need becomes acute. The dining halls are not serving, and work may slow or cease or have to be stopped to help care for family members when daycares or elderly services close. In this season of giving, we encourage members of the Lindenwood community who have the means to donate what they can.”

The Little Free Pantry holds two food drives per year in conjunction with Lindenwood’s Staff Council and Faculty Council. Brooke Gutermuth, Staff Council chair and member of the Lindenwood Human Resources department, helped coordinate Pantry Wars, the Little Free Pantry’s most recent food drive. She explained, “Pantry Wars is a friendly competition between [staff] divisions on campus to solicit donations to stock the [CDI]’s Little Free Pantry before students return home for Thanksgiving break. The idea for this competition was sparked through a collaboration between the Staff Council’s Activities and Engagement sub-committee and the [CDI]—and it was a great one. I have worked closely with this team to communicate and increase engagement for this event with our faculty and staff.”

This exciting campus-wide initiative saw outstanding participation from several Lindenwood faculty and staff departments, which were divided into various teams for the competition. Gutermuth commented, “All members of our faculty and staff were invited to participate in this event. They could do so by donating toiletry or canned or boxed food items to the cause.” Teams earned positive points by donating food items to their own banks, and they could sabotage their competitors with negative points by donating toiletries to other teams’ banks. The event was great fun for participants, and it provided a sizeable donation for the Little Free Pantry.

Lindenwood University is constantly considering the needs and welfare of its students, faculty, and staff, and the institution displays true care for the overall wellbeing of all members of the Lindenwood community. The faculty and staff are not only committed to helping their students achieve academically but are also devoted to ensuring that students have the resources they need to be healthy, happy, and successful. Gutermuth said, “Lindenwood employees are committed to the personal and professional success of our students, and the Little Free Pantry is a wonderful resource in providing food and personal care items to students in need. The students are the reason we are all here, and I am proud to be part of such a creative and caring staff at Lindenwood.”