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Veterans receive a helping hand for the holidays

The Veterans Resource Center tries to gather food for veterans at Cerritos

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'Tis the season for giving and that's exactly what the Veterans Resource Center at Cerritos College is doing for Thanksgiving.

"This year we had a really difficult time with our veterans having food," said Nancy Montgomery, Associate Dean of Health, Wellness and Veterans.

Despite the numerous programs that there are for veterans, many of them are finding a difficult time having enough money for food.

"This is for veterans who are really struggling right now," said Glen Pena, a social work major who is also a 10 year Marine veteran. "their G.I. bill is just not cutting it and some of them have families and they just cannot afford it."

The Veterans Resource Center and Montgomery plan to pass out the bags of food along with a \$20 gift card to Stater Bros. grocery store.

There will be between 40 to 50 bags that will be given out and the list has already begun to rise.

The operation is being taken discretely because many of the veterans are afraid to ask for help.

Johnathan Jones, a nursing major and Navy veteran said that many veterans will not ask for help because many of them didn't have to ask for assistance when they were in the service.

"I have mixed emotions about it. The majority of the emotions are good because of the simple fact of, you never know what anyone is going through whether they're

a student, whether they're working so it's a great idea, but I think there should be more flyers or something of that nature to post around."

Montgomery said that veterans need to meet a certain requirement in order to receive the bags but did not say what the requirements were.

According to Pena, he was given the chance to help with the operation because he knows many of the veterans on a more personal level and knows the veterans who will need the assistance more than others.

"This came about because one of our region 8 colleges said that they had done it for their veterans and I thought 'why are we not?' so I called our staff and said we need to do this because our food needs are so great," said Montgomery. "We have guys who haven't eaten for days."

The Public Affairs at Cerritos College, was the one that donated the reusable Cerritos College bags that the food is going to be given out in.

Wednesday will be the day that people will come and help put the bags together and by the end of the week the bags will be given out so that the veterans have enough time to buy the items they need for Thanksgiving.

The food that will be handed out is being provided by the general food bank on campus and some food will also be donated by Associated Students of Cerritos College.

"Our ASCC group on campus did a Zombie Walk and they had a canned drive that donated to our general food bank for the campus, and we use a special outside fund from the student health services, not the fee, and what we do is go and purchase more of that food and we go off of donations from the campus," said Montgomery.



PHOTO BY: JUSTINE YOUNG/TM
Giving back: Joseph Ierro, a 19-year-old political science major, clutches a stress ball while donating blood. The Red Cross was parked in front of the bookstore collecting blood from students from Tuesday to Friday

Every drop of blood helps

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The American Red Cross hosted a blood drive in Falcon Square, drawing potential donors to line up and wait patiently by the parked truck.

The blood drive, which lasted Tuesday to Friday, is the second drive held this semester with the first being held in September.

"We have a long-standing history with Cerritos College," Tracey Rivera, registered nurse and supervisor of the blood drive, said.

Over 170 students showed up and 132 units of blood were collected in two days during Sep-

tember's blood drive, according to Rivera.

Sixty units of blood were collected on Wednesday, and Rivera said the same was expected to be collected on Thursday.

The recent typhoon in the Philippines, which has killed over 3,900 people, according to the BBC, was one source of motivation for some students, prompting them to donate their blood.

"There was talk about the typhoon and making donations, so I decided to head over today," computer commission student Adrian Verdi said.

With her blood type being universal, journalism major and first time donor Zeinab Chahine

felt compelled to donate.

"I've always wanted to (donate blood)," Chahine said. "It made me nervous at first, but it's a way to help people."

Being a believer in the the concept of paying it forward, psychology major Elizabeth Ibanez felt the need to come out and donate.

"If something (bad) happens to me in the future, I'm hoping somebody else would be able to help me too," Ibanez said, who has been donating blood since her freshman year of high school.

The American Red Cross is always in need of blood donations.

According to the Red Cross' website, more than 41,000 blood

donations are needed every day, and every two seconds, a person in the United States is in need of blood.

Around 15.7 million blood donations are collected each year.

Despite these numbers, only 10 percent of eligible donors donate each year.

The Red Cross holds over 200,000 blood drives each year and 80 percent of all the blood collected comes from mobile blood drives such as the ones held at Cerritos College.

In total, the Red Cross is the source of 40 percent of the nation's blood supply which goes to around 2,700 hospitals across the United States.



PHOTO BY: GUSTAVO OLGUIN/TM

Change of Menu: Biology major Francisco Urrea eats Taco Bell at the Food Court. Cerritos College may soon have more food choices on campus.

Food Vendor Task Force looks for options

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ASCC President Juan Ramirez is part of The Food Vendor Task Force that will have to put together a proposal to the Board of Trustees for the potentially 16 new vendors that could be on campus by the end of the Spring 2014 semester.

"We just meet every other week on Tuesdays and discuss issues like how we can address the needs of the daytime students and the nighttime students, because they have different needs in relation to food," Ramirez said.

All of the vendors, including the current vendors on campus, will also have to go through the a process and be graded on a 1-100 point scale.

The process is going to continue until February and March of 2014, but the main focus of getting a new vendor will be having healthier options for the food on campus.

"There is actually an evaluation committee that is going to be reviewing these applications, but in relation to healthy food it looks like we just

might pull it off. The students just might get what they want, which is the healthier food franchise here on campus," Ramirez said.

The points are based from the vendors experience and qualifications to their menu offerings and pricing, which accounts for 40 percent of the score.

To get an idea of what the students want on campus, Ramirez worked with Mark Logan and conducted a survey during the beginning of the Spring 2013 semester.

Seventy-seven percent of the people that responded said that they eat on campus at least once a week and 43 percent of them spend around five to eight dollars a day on the food.

Thirty-nine percent of the students requested that a Subway would be put on campus and healthy fresh food was one of the qualities that students were looking for.

"Yes. This is one of the initiatives. ASCC has been actively working with (the) Purchasing (Department) on this initiative for about a year and was also one of the reasons why a food services survey was conducted last year," Logan said about getting healthier options on campus.

Criminal justice major Alec Torres can see how getting more options on campus can change the way people eat.

"It would actually help people out and have a diet from that. It would benefit more people to help them watch what they eat and it will benefit Cerritos (College)," Torres said.

There will be another survey conducted toward the end of the year and Ramirez plans for there to be a prize for the respondents.

"I am planning on actually taking money out from my own account to pay for a raffle prize, in order to encourage students to fill out this survey, because we need this information when we go up to the board and present the awards," he said.

The board then reviews the vendor's qualifications and will award them with three-year contracts throughout the 2016-2017 school year with two one-year options after. The urgency to go healthy has been happening all over the country and it is now in full force here at Cerritos College.

"They notice the demand for different food here on campus. So with the demand for change, eventually comes change," Ramirez said.