In mid-November 2019 the Val R. Christensen Service Center at Utah State University partnered with USU's Dining Services to raise nearly $9,000 for the Cache Community Food Pantry, while also hosting an event demonstrating principles of food security.

Led by Community Service Coordinator Nelda Ault-Dyslin, along with the group Students Together Ending Poverty (STEP), this event was part of National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week. During one of the days, students were able to donate the cash equivalent of meals from their dining plans to the food pantry. The total dollar amount ended up being $8,857.52, which will be delivered to the food pantry this month.

The USU Service Center chose the Cache Community Food Pantry to honor their long-standing relationship and weekly food donations which includes upwards of 1,000 pounds of food per week to the Student Nutrition Access Center (SNAC).

SNAC is located on the third floor of the Taggart Student Center and is a place where students can access a free bag of groceries per week when they are in need. The Cache Community Food Pantry also supports pantries in every high school and middle school, and runs a backpack program for every elementary school in the local school districts.

The Student Nutrition Access Center also stocks unsold food from all of the campus dining service locations, recovered by the USU chapter of Food Recovery Network, and repackages hot food from the dining operations through another student group, Campus Kitchen, which is a partnership formed in 2015 by students and Dining Services Director, Alan Anderson.

In addition, the pantry has a partnership with local company Oakdell eggs, which supplies fresh eggs at a discounted rate. This arrangement is made possible by a one-time funding donation from the USU Student Association. New this last year, the Student Nutrition Access Center recovered fruit from 89 individual fruit tree owners around the valley under and donated a portion of the 15,000 pounds to the Cache Community Food Pantry.

A newly formed program, UCC Urban Community Farm, which is near Herm’s Inn at the Utah Conservation Corps headquarters, has also donated over 7,000 pounds of organic produce to SNAC and family housing this last year and hopes to donate even more this year.

“The relationship with the Community Food Pantry, Dining Services, and the Service Center has made this student-
run pantry and associated student programs possible, but it's 100% the unpaid student volunteers and leaders that give the program its soul and ability to grow and thrive," said USU Utah Food Corp Vista James Wirth.

In a Fall 2019 survey, 33% of SNAC patrons reported they skipped a meal within the last 12 months because they didn't have enough money for food. Numerous SNAC patrons have expressed that the Center assists them in being able to focus on their education, and because of this initiative they do not have to skip meals. It proves the University and other students care about one another, individuals said.

Currently, the Student Nutrition Access Center is open Tuesday through Thursday from 1-5 p.m. and on Friday from 12-2 p.m. It currently serves over 300 individual students per week.

Find more information about USU's food pantry in SNAC at snac.usu.edu.