

Food pantry marks 10 years

NCC celebrates decade of feeding students, faculty

BY TIFFANY CUSAAC-SMITH
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While teaching a summer course at Nassau Community College years ago, Helen Rice confronted a very thin student who was falling asleep in the back of her classroom.

Rice, an adjunct professor in the college's English Department, said she was initially angered by the student's nodding off, until he told her he hadn't eaten in 24 hours.

"We had many students who were hungry," Rice said, "and they were hidden."

Since then, the college, which estimates that roughly a third to half its student body is facing food insecurity, has helped students facing a similar predicament through its food pantry, The NEST.

On Tuesday, the pantry marked 10 years on the Garden City campus by doing what it always does — providing food for free to hungry students, except this time with hot pizza among the foods available, along with music and a bounce house for the occasion.

The food pantry remains in high demand as inflation stretches students' ability to buy food. Also, pantry officials said, recent cuts to assistance programs by the Trump administration have reduced the amount of food available for students.

Moreover, many college students are not eligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, according to the state Office of



Nassau Community College's food pantry volunteers distribute free food on campus on Tuesday.

Temporary and Disability Assistance's website.

Many times, "the students have to decide, 'Am I going to pay for my tuition, or am I going to be able to put food on the table for my family this week?'" said Sharon Masrour, executive director of The NEST and also a professor in the English department.

"There's such a tremendous need," she later said, "and we're just grateful that we're able to be here for it."

The pantry was stocked Tuesday with items such as canned goods, frozen chicken potpies and stuffed pasta with butternut squash sausage. Whether that will change is a growing concern.

The pantry sources food from Island Harvest and Long Island Cares — The Harry Chapin Regional Food Bank. Both food banks have seen their federal funding cut by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Newsday has reported, leading to less food to places like The NEST.

Each week, hundreds of people — mostly students, but often also faculty members and other staff — arrive at The NEST in search of provisions for themselves and, in many cases, their families. It is a long way from the days before the pantry's creation, according to Masrour and Rice, when they would stash granola bars and juice boxes in cars and file

cabinets to give to students.

Leah Li, a sophomore at Nassau Community College, volunteers at the pantry about once a week. After she does that, she picks up items from the pantry like fresh vegetables for herself.

"It saves a lot of money," she said.

Pantry officials are considering plans to expand in the future to include clothes and social services, said Jerry Kornbluth, NCC's vice president for community and governmental relations and its spokesperson.

"We're just not an educational institution," he said. "We need to provide for our students so that they are successful."

Police: East Hampton officer charged with DWI

An East Hampton Town police officer was arrested and charged with driving while intoxicated after Southampton Town police said he crashed into a utility pole early Tuesday morning in Hampton Bays.

East Hampton Police Chief Michael D. Sarlo confirmed the driver, Luis Morales, 39, of East Hampton, is a member of his force and, in an email statement Tuesday to Newsday,

said: "Officer Morales has been immediately placed on administrative leave pending a full internal affairs investigation of the incident."

Southampton police said the crash occurred at 2:04 a.m. on West Montauk Highway. The incident resulted in some minor power outages in the area — though the PSEG Long Island outage map showed repairs had been made and power in the

area was restored.

Morales was "found to be intoxicated by alcohol" at the scene, Southampton police said, and he was transported to a hospital for treatment of what was described only as "non-life-threatening injuries."

Arrest information was not immediately available. It was not immediately clear if Morales is represented by counsel.

— JOHN VALENTI



Repair work continues Tuesday after a car crashed into a pole.

Newsday

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CORRECTIONS

Fine Art Photography & Video took the image for the "I Do!" column featured in Sunday's Long Island Life section. The photography studio was incorrectly identified in the photo credit.

USMC Sgt. Alexandra Khan was shown in a photo Sunday from the Women's Military Service Medal Ceremony at the Cradle of Aviation Museum. Her rank was incorrect in the caption.

THIS DATE IN HISTORY

1789 George Washington took the oath of office at Federal Hall in New York as the first president of the United States.

1803 The United States completed its purchase of the Louisiana Territory from France for about \$15 million.

1945 As Soviet troops approached his Berlin bunker, Adolf Hitler took his own life, as did Eva Braun.

1973 As the Watergate scandal deepened, President Richard Nixon announced the resignations of two top aides, Attorney General Richard Kleindienst and White House counsel John Dean.

1975 The Vietnam War ended as the South Vietnamese capital of Saigon fell to Communist forces.