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Students share funding with God's Abundant Pantry

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▲ Security officer Bryan Madden helps lead the processional during a dignified departure at AMITA Health Bolingbrook.



▲ Cristina Grys, manager, Spiritual Care Services (left), walks with local resident Kathy Stalker during a dignified processional.



▲ A volunteer works at God's Abundant Pantry.

New 'Code Dignity' honors life and death of patients

The processional started quietly. A chaplain read Psalm 23 and the sounds of "Amazing Grace" filled the air. More than 40 staff members lined the hallway and silently prayed as the family followed their loved one. When a patient dies at AMITA Health Adventist Medical Center Bolingbrook, the family is offered the opportunity to walk with their loved one along a back hallway to the morgue. A "Code Dignity" is called overhead and staff have five minutes to arrive at the designated area to participate.

"When a family loses a loved one, their world comes to a stop," said Cristina Grys, manager, Spiritual Care Services. "So, we stop with them and honor the patient whose earthly journey

has ended and give support to the grieving family."

Grys said within minutes of the Code Dignity announcement, doctors, nurses, kitchen staff, volunteers, the ICU team and more come to pay their respects. "All nurses and leaders have been supportive and responded with presence," said Grys. "It's a beautiful experience for all of us."

"If you see it happen in real life, you [will] hardly see a dry eye, because everybody is connecting to the purpose we have here," said Obed Cruz, chief nursing officer.

When local resident Kathy Stalker's loved one passed away recently, the family graciously accepted the offer of the dignified processional. "As we turned the corner, I was taken back, my eyes filled with

tears as we saw staff lining both sides of the long corridor in quiet reverence," she said. "The procession, the Psalm, the song . . . It was such a sacred moment! I cried. Our beloved was honored in her death — a beautiful child of God."

"Our Value of Dignity states, 'every person is sacred and of immeasurable worth,'" Grys said. "Showing respect after death and compassion to the family is a powerful way to demonstrate our mission of extending the healing ministry of Jesus."

"I was touched by it. I was moved by it. But the thing I kept thinking was, 'God is present here.' It was a holy and sacred moment," said Stalker. ■

Julie Busch, associate vice president, Communications, AMITA Health

Students share funding with God's Abundant Pantry

As Nehemiah Sitler, a freshman Communication major, was in class, he began to talk with other students about a mutual predicament: what to do with unused funds on their meal plans.

Rosemary Bailey, a University employee in the same class, overheard the conversation and began to think about students on the other end of the spectrum — those without enough to eat. "I know we have Andrews students where food insecurity is a problem, especially with graduate students who have families and only one parent has a work visa," says Rosemary. "I also know Chuck and Bev Peck who volunteer at God's Abundant Pantry. I wished there was a way these undergraduate students could connect with the ministry."

God's Abundant Pantry (GAP), a food bank ministry of Pioneer Memorial Church, has impacted the lives of thousands of Andrews students over the course of 40 years. Each Tuesday and Thursday, students who qualify to receive GAP supplemental food staples can pick up items such as canned goods, rice, beans, pasta, cereal, bread and flour. Chuck Peck, who coordinates GAP's food distribution, reports, "We serve 80 to 100 clients during cold months and from 140 to 150 clients in September when fresh produce is available. Some student clients line up an hour ahead of time to receive the food."

Rosemary recommended to Nehemiah that he work with Chuck Peck to find a way to allow undergraduates to donate unused

funds on their meal plans to GAP. Her idea was met with enthusiasm.

Nehemiah, who also serves as an Andrews University Student Association (AUSA) senator, thought he might be able to work such a project through the AUSA Senate. "In my experience, life is segmented here at Andrews. As an undergraduate, the only graduate students I know are the ones that work with me or sit next to me in class. However, graduate students make up so much of our campus and University. Because of this separation, I never noticed the need until I looked in that direction. There are so many international graduate students who are doing well [just] to pay the bills and come to school — life is hard for them."

Initially, Nehemiah hoped the unused student funds could be used to host a banquet for clients of GAP. When he talked with Lawrence Schalk, senior vice president for Financial Administration, Lawrence suggested a direct donation to GAP, where each dollar is worth four to five times the amount donated. Nehemiah proposed this plan to the AUSA Senate, and they excitedly approved it.

Nehemiah set up a booth in the Campus Center to offer this giving opportunity to other students. Within 36 hours, 131 students had donated from their unused funds.

"As an undergraduate student, I feel blessed to have so much and the support of a family that helps me with what I need. That's why I did this project," says Nehemiah. "I think it worked because students wanted a better way to use their leftover meal plans. It is exciting to me that in a University that values diversity and inclusion, we are able to help the members of our family who truly need support." ■

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