Gamma Delta, Avis host food drive for Second Harvest

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The Gamma Delta Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. paired with Avis Car Rental for a food drive at Lafayette's Second Harvest Food Bank on Wednesday, bringing in 300 goods, in honor of National Volunteer Month.

"National Volunteer Month, celebrated in April, honors volunteers across the country while encouraging people to become active in their communities. "April is the volunteer month, but since April is kind of a busier time for us, I thought this would be a better opportunity to kind of get a jump start on it," said Sheri Fisher, Operations Manager at Avis Car Rental. "I reached out to (Second Harvest) because each different location within Avis Budget Group tries to do some kind of volunteer help within the community, and that is one area that I wanted to help out in."

Fisher gathered a eight employees, including herself, to participate in the drive. Although Fisher and employee Marlon Watkins aimed to bring the food drive to the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, the effort became a bit difficult with the time crunch and students and staff gone away for spring break.

Still, Watkins, a senior management major at UL Lafayette and president of Gamma Delta, found a way to reach the community to get donations starting with the seven other members in his chapter.

"Family and friends helped out, and because it was too late to put it on campus, we just went home and asked our people for it," Watkins said. "Or if we had the money, we bought it ourselves. We just gathered as many cans as we could."

In total, Gamma Delta initially collected 200 food items. As a chapter, they collectively bought an additional 100 as their goal was to supply half of what they were able to gather altogether.

Watkins said members of Omega Psi Phi take pride in their involvement. Two of their annual projects include a blood drive on Martin Luther King Day and "Cuts for Kids," a school supply giveaway where kids can get free haircuts and free food at Blue Cliff College during the summer.

"Uplifting the community is a very valuable part of our fraternity and it's part of what we stand on," Watkins said. "As president, I saw this as an opportunity for us to exemplify what we stand on to the community and actually do something that's going to help a noble cause."

Second Harvest is a nonprofit organization, and according to Volunteer Services Coordinator Michelle Rosamond, the largest food bank in Louisiana. Rosamond said the best way to get people involved in a food drive is to get creative.

"We have a list on a flyer of our most needed items, so what some people like to do is they take that list, and they'll do a theme," she said. "We have different themes that people like to use. So maybe like "Naturally N'awlins," which is red beans and rice, or "Spread the Love" — peanut butter and jelly — "Meat the Need," which is protein like beef and beans.

"Just stuff like that helps people get more excited about it," she continued, "and it also helps people know what we really could use."

Second Harvest's most-needed items include fruits, vegetables, cooking oil, milk, proteins and grains — all non-perishable — in addition to paper products, diapers and toiletries. Second Harvest accepts monetary donations as well, with a statement that ensures they can provide three meals per $1 donation.

To organize a food drive through Second Harvest, register online at http://no-hunger.org/food-fund-drive-registration.

Lafayette locavores speak out on community cause

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Lafayette's locavores — people whose diets consist of using produce that has been grown exclusively within their community — are expressing their support for the community and how it coincides with their health-conscious diets.

Locavore, a term coined by chef and author Jessica Prentice of Berkeley, California, is a belief that's grown significantly in Lafayette and promoted the support of small businesses in the community.

There are several businesses in Lafayette that purchase their produce from locally owned venues. Nathan Stubbs, a founding partner of The Saint Street Inn, said he and his partner, Matt Tutwiler, wanted to open a business that represented all staples of the Lafayette community.

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