

Sustainability and Food Banks Make a Good Pear

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In a makeshift classroom turned grocery store, student shoppers walked down a line of tables filling their reusable bags to the brim with free cans, beans, fresh produce, tortillas and more.

One student hurriedly grabbed at the perishables and fruits, adding fistfuls of pears to totes already bursting at the seams.

Even though Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits resumed on Nov. 13, after a month without assistance many students were struggling to put food on the table. That's where Bobcat Bounty stepped in.

"We understand that basic needs have to be met for students to thrive," said Lesli Biediger-Friedman, founder and director of Bobcat Bounty. "Our students thriving is critically important to all of us."



Fresh produce at Bobcat Bounty food pantry in Family Consumer Science Building Nov. 17, 2025. Photo by Maci Gambrell

As a nutrition professor at Texas State teaching about food insecurity, Biediger-Friedman realized that over 50% of enrolled students didn't know where their next meal would come from. Nearly every Monday since 2017, Bobcat Bounty, under her direction, has opened its doors and is now feeding roughly 280 students a week.

When people were left hungry during the lapse in SNAP benefits, Bobcat Bounty fought to reduce food insecurity and limit food waste by distributing 'Just in Time' food that would've been thrown away by local retailers.

"There's a date on there, that date was a best buy date, and it is still safe," Biediger-Friedman said. "It does not need to be discarded... that's definitely a big piece of education that we're still working on."

Retailers often toss out good food to make room for more product on the shelves. Instead of going to waste, fruits that are the wrong shade or have small blemishes, or bread even a day old are donated to Hays County Food Banks, the supplier of Bobcat Bounty.



Free yams, pears, apples, and oranges for students at Bobcat Bounty food pantry Nov. 17, 2022. Photo by Maci Gambrell

After ensuring the food is safe to eat, Bobcat Bounty can then provide it to students during the food pantry between 5 to 7 p.m. every Monday in the Family and Consumer Science building.

“It’s not a matter of folks who can’t afford food get expired food. No, it’s a matter of folks who can’t afford food get the same quality food as somebody else; it’s just that for business reasons or regulatory reasons that food wasn’t on the shelf,” said Marek Muller, professor of Environmental Communication at Texas State.

Many of the items are also donated from local growers like Duval Family Farms and Bobcat Farms, an on-campus farm for students and agricultural classes.

Luke Orona, president of the Bobcat Farm organization, said it has donated hundreds of pounds of produce to Bobcat Bounty and recognizes the need for sustainable action to help support students.

“If we do a big harvest and we have extra stuff, my first go-to is always the food bank,” Orona said. “You know that this food is gonna get into the hands of people that really need it, which is just more than you could ever really ask for.”

Collecting food bank items from local farms and retailers instead of large chains can also help the environment.

“The less the food has to travel to get from farm to mouth, the lower [fossil fuel] emissions are going to be,” Muller said. “The idea that you can care about humans without caring about the environment is a limited viewpoint.”

With the holidays coming up, Bobcat Bounty is continuing to help students. The week before Thanksgiving they provided more than 4,000 pounds of food to a line of students wrapping around three corners of the building.

However, if students can’t make it to the food pantry, Bobcat Bounty also offers nine food cupboards across campus, hosted by Texas State professors, that stay stocked throughout the week with canned items, granola bars and box staples.

To get food assistance from Bobcat Bounty, fill out the form on their website, and to volunteer or learn more about the food pantry email bobcatbounty@txstate.edu.