

Cougar Cupboard Will Be Installed At Three SIUE Locations

by Submitted by SIUE

November 28 2023 1:47 PM



The Cougar Cupboard, a non-profit food pantry overseen by the Office of Student Affairs, has expanded by three Mini Cougar Cupboards on the campus of Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. Thanks to a generous grant from the Meridian Society, an auxiliary organization of the SIUE Foundation, the Mini Cougar Cupboards will be installed after Thanksgiving at three locations: the Morris University Center (MUC), Lovejoy Library and Campus Recreation.

The Mini Cougar Cupboards will expand the mission to fight food insecurity and hunger on the SIUE campus, create connections within the community and support clients with convenience and anonymity beyond the singular existing location in the MUC.

“When the Cougar Cupboard is not open for student food pick-up, these boxes can serve as a short-term opportunity for students to obtain a grab-and-go item,” said Kelly Jo Hendricks, director of the MUC and Student Success Center. “The beautiful thing about these pantries is that students may ‘take what they need’ and others on campus may ‘leave what they can:’ meaning that anyone at any time can donate things to the mini pantries.”

Hendricks was inspired by the idea to create miniature pantries after seeing similar ideas on social media from her friends and their church groups. After searching at other universities and colleges for similar concepts, she found very few. Realizing this would serve a niche but essential population, Hendricks worked with students on the MUC Board and Student Government. “I saw the post for the Meridian Society grants applications and we received the award to build the pantries in spring of 2023.”

Meridian Awards are made possible through the generosity of Meridian Society members.

"The SIUE Meridian Society is proud to have approved funding for the SIUE Mini Cougar Cupboard project," said Julie Babington, senior director of annual giving. "The Meridian Society feels honored to have supported the Mini Cougar Cupboard project, especially given its dual purpose—crafted not only for student use but also by the hands of our students."

SIUE Student Government and the Cougar Cupboard partnered with the [Kimmel Belonging and Engagement Hub's](#) Cougars in the Community and [Service Saturday](#); pairing two organizations with programs to engage students in community service.

According to Hendricks, about 20 students built the three mobile boxes. “We had some great volunteers with carpenter skills that assisted the students with tools and the project.”

Food insecurity looks different to everyone on campus, Hendricks explains.

“We have students who need to visit the Cougar Cupboard as much as they are able, as well as requiring other sources like SNAP benefits,” Hendricks says. “We then have students who may have a short-term, immediate need for something in a pinch. This is where we hope these pantries will help out.”

And help out, they will.

