



Fall 12-6-2012

Annual Holiday Pet Food Drive Gathers Food for Seniors' Pets

Winthrop University

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Winthrop University, "Annual Holiday Pet Food Drive Gathers Food for Seniors' Pets" (2012). *Winthrop News 2012*. 171.

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12/06/2012

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Annual Holiday Pet Food Drive Gathers Food for Seniors' Pets

Quick Facts

- Winthrop folks learned several years ago that homebound seniors who receive Home Delivered Meals from the York County Council on Aging were sharing their lunch with their companion animals because they had nothing else to feed them.
- The Winthrop offices will continue the drive this year, collecting pet food and toys until Dec. 12 and then making deliveries to the York County Council on Aging on Dec. 13. Donations for each client include bagged or canned dog or cat food, treats and toys.



Michele Smith and co-worker's dog Turk at drive collection

ROCK HILL, S.C. – If you didn't have much to eat, you'd share your food with your dog or cat, right?

It's not a question that would occur to most people, but it's a reality many homebound senior citizens face on a daily basis. To respond, several Winthrop University offices worked together to start what is now an **annual holiday pet food drive**.

Winthrop folks learned several years ago that homebound seniors who receive **Home Delivered Meals** from the **York County Council on Aging** were sharing their lunch with their companion animals because they had nothing else to feed them. "This was heartbreaking and something many of us could see ourselves doing if we were in that

situation," said **Michele Smith**, cat owner and Winthrop's administrative assistant in the **Academic Affairs division**.

For the past three years, members of the **Advancement division** (Admissions, University Relations and Printing Services), the **Office of the President** and the **Division of Academic Affairs** have collected food for dogs and cats and presented the donations to the **York County Council on Aging** to distribute through its **Home Delivered Meals program**.

"A large number of our homebound seniors are completely isolated, and for many, their pets are their only family," said Wendy Duda, executive director of the **York County Council on Aging**. "Winthrop's pet drive has meant so much to these seniors, and to the health and well-being of their beloved animals."

The **holiday drive** has raised an average of 220 total pounds of cat and dog food annually for some 30 pet owners. The Winthrop offices will continue the drive this year, collecting pet food and toys until Dec. 12 and then making deliveries to the York County Council on Aging on Dec. 13. Donations for each client include bagged or canned dog or cat food, treats and toys.

The holiday bags and food will then be delivered by meal delivery volunteers to the pet-owning clients on their routes.

Officials with the **York County Council on Aging** praise Winthrop and the holiday pet food drive as a way to help seniors, many of whom do not have family or friends nearby. The clients may see their lunch delivery driver for only a few short minutes each day. The rest of the time, the clients depend on their pets for companionship.

"For many seniors, the lunch they receive is their only meal of the day. The Winthrop pet gifts help ensure that these seniors are able to keep their pets fed and healthy, without compromising their own nutritional needs," said Duda.

Lt. Governor Glenn McConnell has enjoyed sharing the pet food project story with seniors during a tour of the state. "This pet food drive needs to spread throughout the year and across South Carolina to benefit those who have given so much and asked for so little," McConnell said. "Sharing pet food with seniors gives life and hope to them and their companions."

For more information, contact **Judy Longshaw**, news and media services manager, at 803/323-2404 or e-mail her at longshawj@winthrop.edu.

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