



Jean Sautter holds up her plate for some gravy dished out by Eastern Connecticut State University sociology professor Nicolas Simon during ECSU's annual Day of Giving Wednesday afternoon. Roxanne Pandolfi | Staff

Day of Giving ties Eastern to locals

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WILLIMANTIC — Local residents who might not have access to a traditional Thanksgiving meal were able to enjoy one Wednesday at Eastern Connecticut State University's annual Day of Giving.

Eastern's dining hall was open that afternoon for a hot meal, camaraderie and holiday goodwill.

Senior dining director Joe Salvaggio said, this year,

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Isaac Suarez, 3, takes a bite of pumpkin pie at the Day of Giving. Roxanne Pandolfi | Staff

Day of Giving ties campus to community

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Chartwells Dining Services prepared 400 pounds of turkey, 50 pounds of potatoes, dozens of pounds of vegetables and more.

The spread is enough for about 800 people, Salvaggio said.

ECUS Center for Community Engagement Director Kimberly Armstrong Silcox said those people mainly come from Windham and Willimantic, although nobody is turned away.

“The doors are open, so anyone can come in,” Armstrong Silcox said.

To help get people to Hurley Hall, where the lunch is served, buses pick up locals from the Covenant Soup Kitchen and local senior centers and housing complexes.

“We get calls starting in October,” Armstrong Silcox said. “People are very appreciative. This meal is focused on those who might not have a Thanksgiving dinner otherwise.”

This is the 12th annual Day of Giving.

Eastern President Elsa Núñez said the Day of Giving idea started with a



Eastern Connecticut State University sociology professor Nicolas Simon volunteers during ECSU's annual Day of Giving Wednesday afternoon. Roxanne Pandolfi | Staff

student and was expanded from there.

“The university’s been here

125 years,” Núñez said. “It can’t just sit here. We can’t educate people all over the

state and ignore the people in the community.”

Núñez said, before she began as president 14 years ago, the community felt disconnected from the university.

Now, locals come on campus for a cup of coffee, to use the athletic facilities or to enjoy campus entertainment.

Students are still integral to making the day happen, Núñez said.

Many students from Eastern’s Center for Community Engagement volunteer during the luncheon.

Student leader Amanda Taylor said a lot of little details go into making the event happen.

“I’ve done it a couple times now. It’s different to step into a new role as a student leader,” Taylor said. “I really enjoy this.”

Willimantic resident Jean Sautter said she loves attending the annual luncheon, doing so the past three years.

“It’s a wonderful thing the university does,” Sautter said. “I love greeting the students. Meeting your neighbors has so many benefits.”

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