

THE CANS TO CANDELARIA STORY



In March 2005, the Student Dietetic Association sponsored the first UNC campus-wide food drive, *Feed the Bear*.

In the spring of 2006, journalism students in a public relations capstone course at UNC decided to create a PR plan for the non-profit Weld Food Bank for their midterm project, following the first food drive, *Feed the Bear*. After forming two teams, the students competed against one another to create a plan that would be voted on by employees of the Weld Food Bank. Both teams won, however. The food bank employees liked one team's event title and key message and liked the other team's ideas for a series of events that would lead up to a final day of the drive. The winning name was *Cans to Candelaria* with the key message of *Lend a Helping Can*. Journalism interns continued work on the plan during the summer, creating the steps toward implementation and public relations capstone students helped with food-drive events in the fall. The food drive is based on Colorado State University's *Cans Around the Oval* annual food drive, a CSU fall event that raises thousands of pounds of food each year for the Food Bank of Larimer County and involves not only the campus but also the Fort Collins community.

After creating awareness on campus through a variety of events (including a raffle and participation in the homecoming parade), almost 50 different UNC groups registered to participate in UNC's first food drive on October 19, 2006. Groups included campus resident halls, clubs/organizations, colleges, departments/schools, and programs; and some groups challenged their peers or other similar UNC groups to see which could collect the most food. The collected cans were dropped off by participating UNC groups and weighed then lined on the sidewalk from Bishop-Lehr Hall to Candelaria Hall. A celebration was held that evening, with pizza provided by Pizza Street of Evans. A 4-foot tall trophy was presented by the Weld Food Bank to the first place winners – members of the Student Dietetic Association. Second place went to UNC's Mortar Board while third place went to Pan-Hellenic.

In 2008, *Cans to Candelaria* started collecting cash in addition to non-perishable food, with \$1 equal to 6 pounds of food. *Show us Your Cans and Cash* was the key message for the successful drive which collected 28,000 pounds of food and cash.

In 2011, coordination of *Cans to Candelaria* changed from public relations students in the journalism program to members of the Student Dietetic Association.

In 2013, the first *Cans to Candelaria* 5K was held, an event that raised \$500, contributing 3,000 pounds to the overall food drive.

To date, approximately 350,000 pounds, representing non-perishable food and cash donations, has been raised by the annual *Cans to Candelaria* food drive at UNC. Each year, the Student Nutrition and Dietetics Association coordinates events during Homecoming week and encourages team challenges throughout the month of October to continue the tradition of this annual food drive. Past groups that have won the traveling trophy include Alpha Kappa Psi and the Student Nutrition & Dietetics Association.

Your involvement in the annual Cans to Candelaria food drive by forming a collection team and/or becoming a sponsor for the event is always welcome! For information on how to participate, those from the UNC community and Greeley-area businesses may contact [Dr. Katie Kage](#), faculty advisor for the Student Nutrition and Dietetics Association.