

Campus Caring Cupboard's food drive a success

By PAULINE TRAN

Campus Caring Cupboard (CCC) initiated a food drive to fill the empty shelves at the Chaplaincy Center from November 23 to December 4. Sister Joan, an organizer of the project, was pleased with the drive's outcome.

"It was marvelous," she said. "People were extremely generous."

Several boxes decorated with a Christmas theme were placed in nearly every building on the UPEI campus. After two weeks, CCC collected the boxes filled with a variety of non-perishable items ranging from canned goods to coffee and Kleenex.

CCC began in early 1998 when the Chaplaincy Center, Student Services, and the Student Union met to discuss student poverty on campus.

"There was a high number of people with difficulties feeding themselves properly," said Sister Joan.

In response to students' lack of food, Campus Caring Cupboard was established. The first food drive took place February 14, 1998, when many cardboard boxes were distributed to several high traffic buildings on campus.

All students are invited to take advantage of CCC's services. Students who use the services are given access to the storage room where the food is kept, and their identities will not be revealed. For those students who are in need of perishable items such as milk or bread, a small amount of money is set aside for them to make purchases themselves.

Sister Joan is concerned with the lack of awareness of CCC. Although many posters have been distributed and several media have been contacted, many students do not know that they have their own food bank conveniently located on campus.

"Students are more than welcome," Sister Joan stresses. "CCC is open to everybody."

Students interested in accessing the students may contact Marion Morrison of Student Services, Sister Joan of the Chaplaincy Center, or Pauline Tran of the Student Union.

Pauline Tran is the Vice President Internal of the UPEI Student Union. She can be contacted by e-mailing <ptran@upei.ca>

The Mapus Connection

by JANICE MUIR

Happy New Year! Isn't it great to be back? The year is new, the weather is hovering about one degree higher than temperatures were at this time last year, and we have a fresh start to accomplishing all of the things we wanted to do last year but could not fit in. What a life!

For those of you who are starting at UPEI for the first time, the Mapus Connection is a column that is dedicated to promoting the ideas, suggestions and concerns of mature and part-time students on campus. The Mapus lounge is in the Robertson Library 106A and is a great place to come and meet people. If you have some time, feel free to drop by and say hello.

One of the issues that came up before the holidays was the presence of all of those glossy Canada Student Loans Program posters around campus. Great eye-catchers, but they lacked specifics. So, for those of you who are interested, here is a condensed version of the information that you will need to know. I have Shirley Beaton from the Office of Joe McGuire M.P. in the Egmont riding to thank for providing us with this timely information.

The new Canada Student Loans Program is part of a number of measures announced by the Government of Canada that would make education more accessible. These measures include a 17 per cent tax credit on the interest portion of the amount paid on your student loan each year and Interest Relief Plan changes that would assist borrowers who are facing hardship. In these instances, the Government of Canada may pay the interest portion of the loan, extend the loan repayment period up to 15 years and/or reduce the loan principal in certain instances.

In order to assist a growing sector of the student population, those with children or other dependants can receive a grant of \$40 per week for students with one or two dependants and \$60 per week for students with three or more dependants. These measures apply to both full-time and part-time students.

Student loans, like any other loans, have to be repaid. The payments begin six months after you stop being a full time student. While you are repaying your student loan, you will be allowed to claim a 17 per cent tax credit on the interest portion of the amount paid on your loan annually. If you default, the lending institution and the Government of Canada will take steps to recover the debt and this could involve legal action. Please note that this new 1998 legislation prevents students from declaring bankruptcy for a period of ten years after the end of your studies.

However, if you are having trouble repaying your loan, then the Interest Relief Plan may be of help. This is when the government pays the interest on your loan. It is normally approved for three-month periods up to a maximum of 30 months per the lifetime of the loan. Application forms are available from the lending institutions, Human Resources Development offices or from student aid.

To be eligible, your total family income must be below a level that is determined by family size and the value of your loan payment. Special circumstances, such as health-related expenses or home emergency repairs may also qualify a person for assistance. If you face prolonged financial hardship and have exhausted the 30 months of interest relief, you can request that your lending institution extend the loan repayment period to 15 years. This, in turn, would lower your monthly payments by nearly 25 percent at current interest rates. In the event that you remain in financial difficulty, the government will reduce your

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