



## Hunger Solutions

**OSU students crossed the country for food-security innovations**

By Darryl Lai

### In Brief

OSU students excel at bringing practical solutions to persistent problems. Last summer, a team from the OSU chapter of Students in Free Enterprise hit the road to fight hunger. They worked in soup kitchens and food distribution programs and met with business managers across the country. In August, they took first place in the national Let's Can Hunger: Hunger Awareness Competition.

**DREW ANDERSON KNEW WHAT IT** took to fight hunger. The Oregon State University sophomore in pre-business served meals at local food banks and donated canned and packaged goods to people in need. At the end of the day, though, Anderson wasn't satisfied. He wanted to know what more he could do. So he jumped at a chance last summer to learn about innovative ways to solve this persistent problem.

Anderson was one of eight students in an OSU Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) team that drove over 6,000 miles across the country in search of effective hunger-fighting ideas. They traveled to San Francisco, Phoenix, Raleigh, Boise and other cities. Their Hunger in the Homeland Tour brought an entrepreneurial eye to this daunting task, looking at how organizations raised money, conducted business practices and served communities.

"The overall goal of the project while on the road was to explore innovative ways to end child hunger," says Sandy Neubaum, associate director of OSU's Austin Entrepreneurship Program and faculty adviser to SIFE.

In August, their efforts earned a \$3,000 first-place prize in the national Let's Can Hunger: Hunger Awareness Competition sponsored by the national Students in Free Enterprise and the Campbell's Soup Company.

## Flash Freeze

On the trip, students worked in kitchens that served hot meals and in food banks that gave away food, but the SIFE team was looking for something different. "While we know that there's enough food to go around, it's about how to get that food out there, how to get it dispersed in a way that works better than the models that we're used to," says junior business major Dale McCauley. "Maybe there is a better way than just tossing it all in a giant warehouse and having it distributed. We don't know that quite yet, but we're trying to find it."

In their journey, they discovered some unique solutions: a mobile soup kitchen, a food pantry supported by a local farmers market, a flash-freezing operation with a national reach. In Dallas, Texas, they learned about a soup kitchen on wheels that takes food directly to people in poor neighborhoods. In Nashville, Tennessee, workers at Project Preserve flash-freeze food and ship it across the country at affordable prices.



## Social Entrepreneurs

In looking at hunger through an entrepreneurial lens, students considered each organization as a business. "We were thinking about the business operations, finances and marketing because without them, the organization will fall just like any business would," says senior Stephen Hodges. "At some stops we would find bottlenecks in the warehouse operations, and other times, we would help set the organization up with a Web presence."

While in San Francisco, team members took matters into their own hands. After attending a conference, they filled an entire van with leftover food and donated it to the local food bank. They say that, for them, it was a no-brainer; the real challenge is to educate others to do the same.

## Looking forward

Today, the SIFE team is building on its efforts. "We all put a lot of time, effort, energy and heart into the Hunger in the Homeland tour, and it was such a privilege to work with so many amazing people and programs," says Andrea White, president of OSU SIFE. "A first-place prize will help to bring additional awareness to hunger and how we can all help to end it on both local and national levels."

After their tour, they hit the road in August to 24 locations around Oregon. This fall, SIFE recruited new members to kick-start its own food drive using practices from around the country. The goal: collect 55,000 pounds of food, one for each Corvallis resident. The team plans to partner with local initiatives and is preparing educational lessons for use in Corvallis middle schools.

To learn more about the OSU SIFE team, visit [osusife.org](http://osusife.org) or their hunger blog (<http://hungerinthehomeland.blogspot.com/>), or contact them at [info@osusife.org](mailto:info@osusife.org).