

## Sorority collects goods and money to help EUP Food Bank

Contributed by Marcy Misner  
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In keeping with a nearly decade long tradition, women from the Sigma Lambda Sigma sorority held a 48-hour vigil to collect money and non-perishable goods in front of Glen's Market this past weekend.

Aptly termed "Box It", the tradition was started by the sorority to recreate what it would feel like for a homeless man or woman to inhabit a box as their home, and create awareness of that in the community. Members of the sorority camped out on the sidewalk near Glen's from 3 p.m. Friday until 3 p.m. Sunday, using boxes, blankets and coats to stay warm during the overnight hours, when temperatures dipped below 40.

Leslie Dowell, a junior studying criminalistics at LSSU, said the sorority collected \$694 and a grocery cart and a half of non-perishables over the weekend.

Money collected during the "Box It" drive will go toward putting together Thanksgiving baskets and purchasing gifts and dinners for needy families at Christmas, Dowell said.

"Thanks to the people who came out and supported us," said Ashley Hamel, a member of the sorority and a junior in the nursing program at Lake State.

"The girls who started it graduated before us. We re-enact what it would be like out here for a homeless person," Hamel said.

When asked what it's like living in a box, if only for a short time, Hamel said it's "boring and cold."

"We're layered to the max, at least I am. It's an eye opener to people. But it's for a good cause," said Hamel.

"I slept in that one," Dowell said, pointing to a cardboard box about four and a half feet tall. "It was warm. I wasn't cold. If I sleep in one of the boxes tonight, someone can have one of my blankets because I won't need it," Dowell said Saturday.

"It was cold. I had like 17 blankets on. There were only two underneath me," said Laurel Ekin, a freshman and member of the sorority. "Before I came to college I made Thanksgiving baskets for families with Hospice. This makes me feel closer to home because this is something I do," Ekin said, referring to her community involvement. Ekin, a native of Jackson, is studying nursing at Lake State.

"I joined this sorority in '03 and I really liked how they have focused on community service. I have a real good life and it makes me feel good to help other people have a good life like I did," said Laura Zaki, another member of the sorority. Zaki, a junior majoring in human services, was one of several who took part in the effort this weekend.

Dowell later said one woman thought Dowell was homeless, until the woman's friend corrected her. She did give a donation, Dowell said.

Glen's personnel came out around midnight to offer the ladies hot coffee and baked goods.

"We always have one sister awake at all times," Dowell said. The sorority sisters weren't worried for their safety because members of the fraternities drove by during early morning hours to check on the ladies' safety and Glen's staff came out as well, Dowell said.

The sorority has its 8th annual pop can collection drive scheduled for October 31. Proceeds from that go to making Thanksgiving baskets and purchasing Christmas gifts. Anyone wishing to drop off cans may leave them with Leslie Dowell in North Erie Hall.