

University of Memphis Fogelman College volunteers assemble meal packets, build ties to city

- By James Dowd
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PHOTO BY [MIKE MAPLE](#)

For their annual "Promise Day," students and faculty of the Fogelman College of Business and Economics at the University of Memphis assemble 10,000 fortified rice-soy protein meal packets Thursday for the Mid-South Food Bank.

Sporting a hairnet and looking more like a food-service worker than dean of the [Fogelman College of Business and Economics](#), Dr. Rajiv Grover on Thursday led students, faculty and administrators in a campaign to fight hunger and foster community involvement.

In conjunction with [Outreach International](#), more than 150 campus volunteers worked in food lines throughout the day to package 10,000 fortified rice-soy protein meal packets that will be donated to the [Mid-South Food Bank](#).

Set up in the lobby of the business school, the packaging project was the newest component of "Fogelman Promise Day," which is held annually at the University of Memphis to inspire pride in the business school and offer a relaxed networking atmosphere for students, alumni and business leaders.

The twist at this year's event, which featured free food, entertainment and prizes, was a focus on community involvement.

The idea, organizers said, was to aid the needy and help students develop more personal ties to the community.

"We take a holistic approach to education where learning is not limited to the classroom," said Grover, who established the Fogelman Promise Initiative. "We want to produce compassionate business leaders who care about their communities. Helping the needy is one way to do that."

But that's not all.

In addition to encouraging volunteers to strengthen the community, Grover said another goal of the program is to strengthen students' ties to Memphis through their investment in it.

"Our city is fractured, and our response should not be just to enjoy a life of entertainment and comfort and security," said T.W. Medlin, one of the food project's coordinators. "This pushes us to examine our social and moral responsibilities and realize that success involves much more than just making money. Helping our less- fortunate brothers and sisters is a powerful lesson to learn, and it's commendable that the university is instilling that in its students."

Costs of the meals -- about 25 cents each -- were paid for by the business school. Volunteers worked as long or as little as their schedules permitted, participating in an assembly line to package the meals.

For 22-year-old junior Elizabeth Stafford, it was a powerful experience.

"It's immediate and tangible, and I know that what I'm doing right now is going to help someone in my city who doesn't have enough to eat," Stafford said. "It's a small thing, but I believe it's making a difference."

Thursday's program was an unqualified success, organizers said, and they expect even more volunteers when they schedule another food-packaging project this fall. Plans call for the program to be held each spring and fall semester.

Outreach International's chief operating officer, Matthew Hamilton, couldn't be happier about the news.

"The energy here is tremendous and really exhibits the spirit of giving in Memphis," said Hamilton, who was on campus for the event.

"It's great to see young people committed to helping others. These are the kinds of future leaders we need."

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