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## Rivier's Thanksgiving project sets record

By *TINA FORBES*  
Staff Writer

Led by Rivier University, a community-wide donation drive broke its own record this year with 470 Thanksgiving baskets.

Called the Thanksgiving Basket Program, the holiday tradition has helped bring Thanksgiving to local families in need for nearly 30 years.

On Tuesday, Rivier students, staff and community nonprofit agencies gathered for an interfaith prayer service at the Dion Center, and then dispersed the hundreds of totes and turkeys across about a dozen agencies.

"Today we truly come together as a community," said Rivier University President Sister Paula Marie Buley. Buley thanked the nonprofit agencies for their work in the community.

"We welcome our community partners with deep humility. Your work of direct service to others helps us carry out our work of educating future leaders," she said.

Kristin Nelson, director of campus ministry, said students and staff from Sunset Heights Elementary School are responsible for collecting much of the donations from the neighborhood.

"I am truly overwhelmed with the amount of support and giving from the community," Nelson said, addressing the audience. The elementary school is a community partner in the Thanksgiving Basket Project, and has contributed for the past 27 years with food drive donations.

Nelson said this was her first Thanksgiving with Rivier.

"I had no idea what this would look like in real life, and it is truly amazing," she said, referring to the piles of tote bags stuffed with Thanksgiving food, and large carriers on wheels overflowing with turkeys that filled the room. "And that's not all the food," she said, adding more food supplies were stored in another area on campus, and some had been picked up already.

"It's safe to say we've exceeded last year's goal, so thank you," Nelson said to the audience.

Last year the community donated more than 400 Thanksgiving care packages and turkeys to families in need. Packages include staple Thanksgiving dry goods such as cornbread mix, stuffing, gravy, flour, cranberry sauce, as well as breakfast and dessert items like oatmeal, cookies and hot chocolate. The turkeys were stored separately in the large rolling bins.

The interfaith service included brief prayers, songs and remarks from university leaders. Afterward, Rivier athletes filed in to tote the Thanksgiving baskets outside to waiting vans and food trucks.

Participating agencies carted the baskets back to their facilities to disperse to families.

Participating agencies carried the baskets back to their facilities to dispense to families.

Recipient organizations include the Salvation Army, Nashua Soup Kitchen, Harbor Homes, Corpus Christi Food Pantry, Anne Marie House, Title One, Nashua Oncology/Hematology, Community Council, Keystone Hall, N.H. Catholic Charities, HIV/AIDS Task Force and Caregivers.

Community organizers and agency staff were also invited to a Thanksgiving luncheon on campus.

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