



**Meet Rahul Karhik**, a senior pre-med major from like...9 different states; Rahul found community and the ability to connect with others through volunteering at Tailgate Tuesdays!

## Catholic Sibling Finds Joy Serving LuMin's Daily Bread Pantry

- by SYDNEY NGOC TRAN NGUYEN-  
Sophomore, Kay & Loren Jensen Daily  
Bread Intern, majoring in Biology and  
Nutrition.

As the new Daily Bread intern, I'm grateful for how it has allowed me to build genuine relationships that go beyond religious differences. This internship experience has brought me so much joy. I get to help provide not only food for those who are in need, but a safe space for them to receive it.

As a Catholic interning at a Lutheran church, I was not sure what to expect at first. I even worried that a religious barrier between us might make it harder to connect. From my first Wednesday at the food pantry, however, I realized that faith and kindness easily link us all.

Everyone one of my Lutheran-peers welcomed me with open arms, and I've built a strong sense of community rooted in compassion for each other rather than denomination.

What has brought me the most joy, however, is the time spent with the food recipients themselves. Every Wednesday, I get to hand out food and share smiles, friendly hellos, and small conversations with those who come through the doors. Seeing their relief and happiness when I first open the doors to let them in reminds me of why my role is important; it's more than just meeting their nutritional needs, it's about showing care and building human connection.

This experience has deepened my faith by helping me see God's love reflected in every act of giving. I'm reminded that service brings blessing not only to those who receive, but also those who give. Serving at Daily Bread has enhanced my life by strengthening my faith in action, humility, and compassion. Even small gestures, like handing a carton of milk, can carry the light of God's love and bring hope and gratitude to others, despite differences in our backgrounds.

## Eyes UP!

- by AUBREY CLAYTON - Senior, LuMin Wellness Intern, majoring  
in Psychology

In December 2023, it became clear to me that I had just spent my fall semester with my eyes turned down. I was tackling a full class load, multiple jobs, and living in an apartment for the first time, and as a result, my eyes had been down towards my feet— only focused on the next thing I had to do.

This realization of my downturned eyes led me to the practice of gratitude. I didn't like that I felt as if life was happening to me in ways I was unaware of, that God was in my midst and I wasn't noticing.

So I started a weekly gratitude journal in an attempt to document the things that were happening in my life. As the Wholeness and Healing Intern for LuMin this year, I decided that I wanted to share this impactful practice with my peers. After worship one Sunday, we got new journals to write in and shared in ink and word the good things in our life. After a few weeks of integrating this practice into our lives,

here's what some of our congregants grateful for:

"Intentional and genuine community through worship, service and fun!" ~ Isabella Garcia, senior.

"I'm really grateful for all the congregation gathering opportunities LuMin offers, like baking bread for worship, Tailgate Tuesdays, and paddleboarding outings..." ~ Andrew Johnson, junior.

"I'm so grateful for the community LuMin has provided me as I transition to living in a new city with new people." ~ Paige Durrenberger, freshman.

Gratitude is a practice that takes initiative and provides perspective. Sometimes it's difficult to see what is good in a world that pushes the negative to the forefront of our attention. Gratitude as a practice brings our eyes up from our immediate obligations and centers us on the good news that we're blessed, seen, and beloved people of God.

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# Cookies, Milk, and The Tree That Keeps on Givin'



- by **ISABELLA GARCIA** - Senior, Kacie Brekhus Community Life Intern, majoring in Textiles and Apparel

It wasn't long after we gathered in the LuMin lounge - on a Wednesday night this past October - that the smell of freshly baked cookies wafted into our nostrils - it smelled like home. LuMin had decided to host a night of bedtime stories complete with cookies and milk - a midweek study break for our fellow students.

I was delighted to find that Pastor Brad had brought some of my favorite childhood books to read including *Where the Wild Things Are* and *Goodnight Moon*. The group of us grabbed a cookie (or two or three!), poured a glass of milk, and settled in to be read to, something I at least haven't experienced in years.

Pastor Brad read with passion and animation, bringing the stories to life. However, it wasn't the funny voices that stuck out to me, it was the words of one book in particular: *The Giving Tree*. Though a beloved classic, I don't recall reading *The Giving Tree* as a kid.

By the end of the book, I could hardly hold back the tears. What a profound story of love and generosity! It really struck a heart-string in me as I reflected on the words and the relationship between the boy and the tree. I was reminded of my relationship with God and my relationship with LuMin.

God is love and God wants us to be happy. He is a provider among many other things. When we, like the boy, come back with new problems, like the tree, God comes back with new provisions. It's hard to imagine that humans could be as generous and selfless as the giving tree or as loving and providing as our God, but I see that breaking through here at LuMin.

God has made LuMin my giving tree here in Austin. My home away from home. Here, I am provided for. LuMin gives and expects nothing back. This is all done by the power and grace of God. LuMin also allows its students to sit and rest, just as the tree stump does at the end of the book. In all circumstances, LuMin is there; a constant earthly expression of God's divine love.



# Blessed to Say "Thank You!"

- by **MADLINE CHANDLER** - Sophomore, double major in Sociology and Psychology  
Kent & Joan Bohls Donor Care Intern

I found LuMin last year as a freshman looking for community and a place that I would fit in. I was planning on just trying it out and continuing to search for other church communities, but something about the welcoming nature of LuMin students kept bringing me back. Despite being nervous about trying something new, I truly felt like God was calling me to this place.

Before I stepped into my role as LuMin's donor care intern, I didn't know much about the "donor ministry" here. I was aware that people donated to LuMin, but I never knew how much of our mission was donor supported.

Our donors and their generosity are what help make LuMin such a welcoming community. Donors provide for our weekly church activities such as Tailgate Tuesday, the Daily Bread Food Pantry,

the Daily Bread Food Pantry, funds for our student interns, scholarships for Lutheran students, weekly meals, or for however college students - like myself - need for church to be Church.

These people who so graciously provide for this ministry are a part of something that goes beyond the walls of 2100 San Antonio Street and into the hearts of every student who has stepped foot in any LuMin event.

I am so incredibly thankful to the wonderful people who have felt called to donate to LuMin. I'm also grateful to serve as LuMin's Bohls Donor Care Intern. Serving as LuMin's "gratitude czar" has not only granted me the joy of and opportunity to give thanks, but I - too - have been extended the blessing of giving back through leading our worship community's effort in saying "Thank you."

# "Litter-ally" Communing with God



- by **VIRGINIA VANICEK** - Junior, Carl & Claudia Tienert Social Justice Intern, majoring in Astronomy & Physics

This semester, I had the joy of participating in The Project - a UT student run volunteering opportunity and joined many fellow Longhorns in the act of caring for our neighbors in the Dove Spring neighborhood in Austin.

This event is one of the largest volunteering events in Texas and mobilizes college students and other Austinites to take care of our neighbors and the environment through efforts such as painting fences, mulching landscapes, revitalizing neighborhood homes, and picking up trash. LuMin Austin participated in gathering garbage scattered around Dove Spring park - an area that serves as a central point of contact for the community with their intramural fields, playgrounds, and walking trails available to all in the area.

While I served, I saw kids playing team soccer - their parents eagerly cheering them on. I saw a multitude of children enjoying the playground. My heart filled with joy as

I went about my clean-up work, imagining the collective impact The Project would have on the area and the people who live in the vicinity of Dove Spring Park.

Is it not amazing how picking up trash draws a person into communion with God's and God's great Earth? I'm still gratified - two weeks later - for how God moved in me and through me through the simple act of litter clean up. At the end of the event, each UT Project participant was reminded of this: evidence shows that cleaner areas encourage less littering.

When we take care of God's good Earth, we encourage others to do the same - whether they see us in our work or benefit from the outcome. I hope that you will take a moment today to step outside and enjoy the wonderfulness of God's creation, which he has called us to care for, and be reminded of the love he has for all.