

# Uncle Sam want your can

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It may be December but students from MSUM, NDSU and Concordia are braving the snow and low temperatures for a good cause.

Cadets from the Tri-College Army Reserve Officers Training Corps camped outside the Bentson Bunker Fieldhouse at NDSU last Thursday to kick-start their holiday food drive.

The students are gathering non-perishable food and personal hygiene items for the Fargo Food Pantry.

“We want to get the word out about the food drive,” said Michael Thompson, an NDSU graduate student in the ROTC program. “Some students that are going home (for the break) may have stuff left over in their dorms that they could contribute.”

Collection boxes with the slogan “Uncle Sam wants your can” are located in residence halls and student unions on all three campuses.

ROTC is offered through the department of military science at NDSU and is open to students from NDSU, MSUM and Concordia. Nearly 50 cadets make up the local Bison Battalion. Once cadets complete the ROTC program and requirements for a bachelor’s degree or graduate degree, they receive a commission as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army. Officers then work in the active duty, National Guard or Reserve branches of the Army.

Junior Luke Moran entered the ROTC program after transferring to MSUM from North Dakota State College of Science, Wahpeton. As a member of the 164th National Guard unit in Minot (N.D.), Moran was able to enroll in the two-year ROTC program.

“The first two years are basic military courses and an overview of the military,” Moran said. “It’s during your third year that you start taking leadership roles and leading missions.”

Students with no previous military experience enter the four-year ROTC program. Students with prior military experience may enter the two-year ROTC program and begin taking advanced military classes such as MS 301 Leading Small Organizations I and MS 310 Leadership Lab.

Several of the ROTC classes also apply to students going into business or other fields that require leadership skills.

“The training is not only relevant for military officers but also for people entering the business world,” Thompson said. “It’s learning to work with others and knowing when to take the lead.”

During the summer between their third and fourth years, cadets attend a national advanced leadership development and assessment course in Fort Lewis, Wash. Cadets use the skills they’ve developed during their first three years in a variety of circumstances and scenarios.

“It’s really good training. It puts you in situations that normal college classes don’t,” Thompson said. “It offers you a different way to be a leader. It puts you in a position of responsibility. You’re responsible for leading your troops and getting the mission done.”

The food drive is one of several community service projects conducted by cadets during the school year. Other projects include the Multiple Sclerosis Walk and giving merit badge classes to Boy Scout troops in the community.

Thompson encourages any interested students to attend a training session and see what the ROTC program is all about. Incentives and several scholarships are offered for students interested in the program. They also have specialized training for medical and nursing students.

The training, mixed with being a full-time student and having a full- or part-time job, can be grueling sometimes but in the end it pays off, Moran said.

“It gets a little tough sometimes,” Moran said. “Having been in the Army, you get accustomed to it. That’s what being an officer is like. You have a lot to do and not a lot of time to do it.”