

Thursday, February 20, 2014 By [Erin Martin Kane](#)

## SU Redeems Campus Bottles and Cans to Benefit Rescue Mission



Enactus members hope new stickers will remind students that spare change from bottles and cans can make a big impact on the homeless and hungry.

Syracuse University will now redeem all cans and bottles collected from the University's academic and residential buildings through Mission Returns, the bottle and can redemption service owned by the Rescue Mission Alliance of Syracuse. Proceeds from Mission Returns support a wide range of efforts and services intended to end hunger and homelessness in the city.

SU is one of the first large organizations in Syracuse to transfer its redemption program over to the Rescue Mission.

“The idea really came from our students,” says Jamie Cyr, director of Auxiliary Services. “We currently redeem approximately 255,000 bottles and cans from the residence halls and academic buildings annually. Redeeming through Mission Returns does not require us to make major changes to our internal processes, and yet the Rescue Mission is able to collect an average of 3.5 cents per bottle or can to benefit its many programs. Every 65 cans redeemed provides a meal to someone in need.”

Based on Rescue Mission estimates, SU will contribute nearly 4,000 meals over the course of one year.

The student-run nonprofit organization Enactus, based in the [Martin J. Whitman School of Management](#), was the driving force behind the procedural change on campus. Spencer Herbst '14, president of SU Enactus, says the group has been working with the Rescue Mission of Central New York for more than two years to solve supply chain issues in its warehouse, helping with its Thrifty Shopper stores and assisting with the opening of the 315th thrift store on Marshall Street. More than 100 students and alumni have gained valuable work experience through the partnership. When the group learned about Mission Returns, it seemed a natural fit.

“SU students care about the environment and the community around them. Most want to help out, but are unsure how to,” Herbst says. “This initiative provides an easy, tangible and measurable action that addresses both concerns and can be done whether you’re at your dorm or in class.”

To encourage more students to participate—and keep their empties out of the landfill—Enactus also designed bright stickers bearing the words “Small Change, Big Change” that will be applied to various recycling containers throughout campus.

Amanda G. Nicholson, associate dean of undergraduate programs at the Whitman School and faculty advisor to SU Enactus, says the campus benefits by encouraging responsible recycling of bottles and cans by students, faculty and staff. “Not only will we continue to encourage our campus community to act responsibly to aid environmental sustainability,” Nicholson says, “we are now encouraging an action that will also help with improving social sustainability.”

Charles Chappell, chief commercial officer for the Rescue Mission, says the partnership between SU Enactus and the Rescue Mission continues to deliver on a joint interest of the two

organizations: identifying and helping people in need through sustainable entrepreneurial action.

“The Rescue Mission has a great relationship with Syracuse University and we are very thankful for all the students, faculty and staff do to support our mission to end hunger and homelessness in our community. We see loyal SU volunteers on a regular basis, we have ongoing dialogue and projects with students and student groups, and our 3fifteen store wouldn’t be in operation without the support of Enactus.

“Now, we will be redeeming bottles and cans collected at Syracuse University residence halls and academic buildings, and processing them through our Mission Returns bottle redemption centers to benefit our life-saving programs,” Chappell says.

With the redemption program successfully up and running in SU’s residential and academic buildings, SU Enactus plans to reach out to all of the organizations in the surrounding campus area to encourage their participation in the coming year.