



A student's guide to start a Food Rescue Program

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What is a Food Rescue Program?

Food Rescue is a program that collects uneaten, pre-packaged food items that students would normally throw away. The rescued food is then collected and donated to an organization that distributes the food to the community, such as a food pantry.

Are we allowed to donate food?

Food donations have been encouraged and donors are protected by federal law. The Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act protects anyone who wants to donate food from any criminal or civil liabilities should anyone get sick from the donated food for any reason other than gross negligence.

In 2015, USDA and EPA set the first National Food Waste Reduction Goal calling for a 50% food waste reduction by 2030. In addition, the USDA and EPA have issued Food Recovery challenges that encourage organizations, schools, restaurants, and stores to donate food that would normally be thrown away.

Are schools allowed to donate food?

The National School Lunch Act was amended in 2011 to allow school cafeterias to donate food. This means that schools are not only protected by law, but also protected and encouraged by the School Lunch Act to donate food.

Why is a Food Rescue Program important?

Food Rescue is a unique program that offers a solution to many problems at once.

1. Saving Valuable Food: The most obvious feature is the opportunity to rescue healthy food. Food items that are collected include fruit cups, whole fruits, salads, string cheese, yogurts, milk and more! These rescued food items are nutritional and are put to much better use than sitting in landfills.
2. Helping the Environment: When food is thrown away and sent to landfills, it begins to produce methane gas which is 22 to 27 times more dangerous than carbon dioxide. Both carbon dioxide and methane gas are primary greenhouse gases. By reducing the amount of food schools wastes, this reduces the amount of methane gas schools emit.
3. Helping the Community: The amount of food wasted by schools alone is staggering while our communities are filled with people who don't know where their next meals are coming from. Rescued food has the ability to be distributed to people in need and help make a difference.
4. Share Tables: Some students are still hungry after their school meals and the Food Rescue Program allows Share Tables to come into place. This means that

students have the ability to take an extra food item from the cooler if they are still hungry. Share tables are now promoted and approved by the USDA.

How do I start a Food Rescue Program?

It's very simple to start a Food Rescue Program! The information found on the next few pages will help you start a program at your school.

If you are **not** part of Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools in North Carolina and there is not a Food Rescue Program already implemented in your school district, then you will have to contact your Food Service Director as well as your State or Local Health Department and to get approval for your school to host a Food Rescue Program. Once you have approval, the next steps will be applicable!

Eight Easy steps to starting a Food Rescue Program at your school

1. Getting approval

- Set up a meeting with your school principal and the school's cafeteria manager and introduce the program to them.
- It is important to explain the benefits of the program:
 - It's a simple program to run.
 - Your school is able to reduce the amount of food wasted.
 - The rescued food will benefit the members of your community.
 - Your school is leading the movement to stop healthy food from being wasted!
 - Your Food Service Director or Cafeteria Manager can streamline the menu based on what is being wasted the most.

2. Finding an advisor

- Find a teacher or staff member who will be able to help you oversee the program and provide assistance and advice.

3. Creating a Food Rescue Team

- Find a group of dedicated students that will help you run the program. Roles include collecting the food, counting the food, promoting the program etc.
- Set up an initial meeting with your advisor calling for interested students.

4. Finding an organization

- Once you have approval and a team, you need to find an organization that will be willing to collect the food. Organizations can include food banks, libraries, homeless shelters after school programs etc.
- Once you find an organization, remind them of the benefits: they will be receiving healthy, uneaten, pre-packaged food items that would otherwise have been thrown away; many people can benefit from it.
- After the food is collected, it can only stay refrigerated for three days before it becomes a health risk. Arrange appropriate pick up dates with the organization to come and pick up the food (it can be daily or every two days, it just has to be within three days).

5. Gathering Equipment

- There are only three items (one is optional) that you need to successfully run the program: a cooler, refrigeration and crates/boxes.

- Refrigeration: You can either get a new fridge donated or use pre-existing refrigeration. If you are using pre-existing refrigeration, make sure that there is an area clearly marked 'Food Rescue' or 'Donations'.
- Cooler: It is important that while perishable rescued food is sitting in the cafeteria throughout lunches, it is being cooled. A small cooler is recommended. Fill the cooler with ice and after each lunch, the food needs to be collected and taken to its appropriate refrigeration (food can only sit outside of refrigeration for 30 minutes so it needs to be collected immediately after each lunch has ended).
- Crates/Boxes (optional): Having crates or boxes makes it easy to transport food from the cooler to the fridge, and for the organization to collect the food. You can easily get one or two donated from your cafeteria milk crate stock.

6. Create a Plan

- Now that you have everything you need, you can create a plan of action on how to run the program.(see 'Example of East Meck Food Rescue').
- The plan should include: who is collecting the food from each lunch, who will fill the cooler with ice in the mornings, who will count the food, how will the program be advertised, how will you encourage students to participate etc.
- Food Rescue Tracking Tool is a great way to collect data on the number of food collected. You can find the link on the 'Helpful Links' document. It is also recommended to keep a paper copy as well of the food collected.

7. Contract with Child Nutrition (Only applicable to Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools)

- If you are a CMS School, it is required by Child Nutrition that a contract be written up between your chosen Organization and your school outlining that Child Nutrition will not be held responsible for any actions. Simply contact Executive Director Cathy Beam and attach information about the organization and your plan of action; Child Nutrition will then take care of the contract process.
- Continuously check on updates and once the contract process is complete, you are ready to start the program.
It is important to understand that schools are already protected by the Good Samaritan Act if they choose to donate food. A contract is an additional protection and optional depending on if a school system or organization requires it.

8. You're Ready!

- Congratulations, your school is now ready to host a Food Rescue program at your school! Keep track of your school's progress through the Food Rescue Tracking

Tool and take pictures and post them online to promote Food Rescue Programs to other schools!

Example of East Meck Food Rescue

East Mecklenburg High School in Charlotte, North Carolina has implemented a Food Rescue Program since the 2015-2016 school year collecting over 4,600 food items in just one school year! Below is an overview of how the program is run at East Meck to provide an example for other schools.

Organization

The Independence Regional Library

Organization Pick Up Dates

Every Monday and Thursday (falls within the three day limit)

Equipment Location

- The cooler is placed in the middle of the cafeteria where it is easily accessible to students to drop unwanted food items.
- The fridge designated for Food Rescue is located in the back room in the office. The location was chosen due to its security and is easily accessible for an organization member to find when picking up food.

Daily Collection Methods

1. Every morning, the cooler is filled with ice by a volunteer student (one student is assigned a day to fill ice).
2. After breakfast and the first lunch, the Exceptional Children pick up the rescued food items and transport them to the designated Food Rescue Fridge located in the office. Students count the food items and record them on the Food Inventory Sheet located on top of the fridge. Food is picked up by Student Congress members during the second and final lunch. They transport the food items to the designated Food Rescue fridge and record the items on the Food Inventory sheet.
3. At the end of the day, a student empties the ice.
4. At the end of each week, the binder collecting the Food Inventory Sheets are collected by one student and the items are logged into the Food Rescue Tracking Tool.



Food Rescue Inventory Sheet

Food Items	Breakfast	A Lunch	B Lunch	C Lunch
Milk				
Juice				
Water				
Cereal				
String Cheese				
Nutri-Grain Bar				
Yogurt				
Graham Crackers				
Salads				
Fruit Cups				
Apple Slices				
Whole Apple				
Whole Orange				
Banana				
Pears				
Cookies				
Chips				
Other				
Overall Total				

Helpful Links

Below are links that will help you get more information about Food Rescue and how to run the program.

K-12 Food Rescue Website: <http://www.FoodRescue.net>

- Food Rescue is an organization that educates students, schools, organizations etc, on food waste and helps students across the country start a Food Rescue Program.
- On the following link, by submitting your contact information on the 'Getting Started'. You will be sent a pdf with information about starting a program: <http://www.foodrescue.net/getting-started.html>.
- If you are student, on the website, sign up for the Student Led Entrepreneurial Initiative so you can be officiated as a Student Leader for Food Rescue!

Food Rescue Tracking Tool: <http://www.foodrescue.net/freetool.html>

- This is an easy, electronic way for you to track the amount of food your school collects per week and also provides additional information on the amount of meals your school has saved and methane gas prevented!
- It is also recommended to keep a paper copy of the collected food items. Below is an example of a Food Rescue Inventory Sheet. The Sheet can be adjusted according to your school depending on the food served and number of lunches.

State Health Department and USDA guidelines:

<http://www.k12foodrescue.com/active-schools.html>

TEDx Talk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qaMos1wiC4Y>

- Here is a TEDx talk that gives more information on the Program and the impact of it.

News Links: Below are multiple news interviews on the Food Rescue Program at East Mecklenburg High School.

- <http://www.thecharlottepost.com/news/2016/09/15/local-state/food-for-thought-and-activism-one-student-s-initiative-to-battle-hunger/>
- <http://www.wncn.com/news/local/local-high-school-students-idea-saves-food-nationally/323202464>
- <http://www.fox46charlotte.com/news/local-news/204055717-story>
- <http://thecharlotteweekly.com/education/2016/05/east-meck-sponsors-food-recovery-program-to-eliminate-waste/>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BViQo3Tocqs>

- http://www.wsocvtv.com/community/family-focus/teen-organizes-food-recovery-program-at-charlotte-high-school/296013901?ecmp=wsocvtv_social_facebook_2014_sfp

Social Media: Follow for Food Rescue updates!

Facebook

- Food Rescue Page: @FoodRescueInc
- Hanna Wondmagegn

Twitter

- @Food_Rescue
- @hannawon72

Instagram

- @food_rescue

Youtube Channel

- Food Rescue

Any More Questions? Email Hanna Wondmagegn, National Student Program Director for K-12 Food Rescue at hannawon72@gmail.com.