

**Overview.** *Waste Hunger Not Food* rescues healthy edible food from restaurants, schools, and markets that would have been wasted and distributes it to those in need.

**Challenge.** Kern County faces devastating hunger: Bakersfield has the most people in a metropolitan area who cannot afford to buy the food they need. One in four children in Kern County go to bed hungry every night. Every day, 116,000 people in Kern County do not know where their next meal is coming from. Poor health outcomes plague Kern residents; the rates of heart disease, diabetes, and obesity in Kern County far surpass state averages. In an era where it is easy to eat cheap, high-sugar, and high-fat foods, there is a desperate need for *healthy* food to be accessible to the hungry. These poor health outcomes seem paradoxical since Kern County produces the world's supply of many fruits and vegetables. However, a staggering 40% of food produced in the United States is wasted. Our mission is to rescue the healthy, edible food that usually goes to waste and distribute it to the hungry.

**Solution.** *Waste Hunger Not Food* partners with 56 schools, markets, and restaurants who donate surplus healthy food. We were awarded a unique grant that funds our three refrigerated vans that safely transport the donated food to our distribution points. Our vans make six runs each day to rescue food and so that it does not end up being thrown away. For food distribution, we have partnered with CityServe, an international non-profit organization that trains community churches to respond to their neighbors in need. We now have 32 churches participating in *Waste Hunger Not Food*, distributing the donated food to the hungry in our community.

**Innovation.** *Waste Hunger Not Food* built an affiliation of public agencies, non-profits, and private businesses to solve hunger in our community. We pursued a partnership with CityServe so that we could distribute food directly into neighborhoods and into the hands of families in need. We designed this partnership intentionally: we did not want residents to have to travel long distances to get the food that they need. Local reporter, Sam Morgen writes, "The food distribution sites that do exist in the county are not necessarily in the most convenient locations, and those who wish to use their services sometimes need to walk to get to them. This can be difficult, especially if a person does not have access to a car." Morgen praises *Waste Hunger Not Food* for prioritizing accessibility and distributing the food directly to families. With local funding, we hire our delivery drivers through our partnership with the Bakersfield Homeless Center Job Development program. We have created five new jobs that provide a source of income for our drivers, who were formerly homeless or hungry, and help them develop marketable skills.

*Waste Hunger Not Food* has experienced unparalleled popularity in our community and the media. In our partner schools, we educate staff and students on the impact that rescuing food from ending up in the trash has on our community. We actively recruit students to be Food Rescuers and donate their uneaten food rather than throw it away. *Waste Hunger Not Food* celebrated our Food Rescuers at the end of the school year, updating students on the amount of food rescued from their school and challenging them to surpass that number next year. Nutrition Services Director of Bakersfield City School District, Eric

Sabella, observes, “The kids really seem to understand how important it is to donate their uneaten food instead of throwing it away in the trash.” Sabella adds, “With so much food insecurity here in Kern County, it’s a blessing to do something like this.” With students who are excited to be Food Rescuers, we anticipate increasing food rescue in the future.

To meet the health needs of our communities, we specialize in rescuing healthy and perishable items such as milk, juice, fruits, vegetables, sandwiches, and other healthy items. During our initial recruitment, many donors wanted to participate but had concerns about liability if someone got sick from donated food. We built relationships of trust with donor facilities by informing them of food donors’ legal protections and of Public Health’s dedication to food safety. Local restaurant owner, Ralph Fruguglietti remarks, “I don’t know how many times we have gone to a catering, and you have food left over, might feed 25-50 people. We would like to pick up the phone and say, ‘I’ve got this food, can anyone come get it?’ And we couldn’t do that. This gives us the opportunity to be able to do that.” Fruguglietti goes on to praise *Waste Hunger Not Food* for our dedication to food safety and for creating an opportunity for restaurant owners to donate unused food without fear of liability. Through our capacity as the Public Health Department, we give our donor restaurants a special letter grade that identifies them as participants in *Waste Hunger, Not Food*.

**Results.** *Waste Hunger Not Food* has rescued an amazing 301,334 pounds of edible food that otherwise would be thrown in the trash, since we began in September, 2018. This is the equivalent of almost 250,000 meals going to children who otherwise would go to bed hungry in Kern County. We have made over 8,200 food rescue runs. *Waste Hunger Not Food* is growing exponentially: in the month of May alone, we rescued 74,585 pounds of food that otherwise would have gone to waste. Now, there are 32 neighborhoods that receive healthy food. Students from 46 schools are being educated on food insecurity, community service, and sustainability. The next generation is eagerly impacting our community and gaining sensitivity to the needs of our neighbors. In addition, *Waste Hunger Not Food* has created five new jobs that employ formerly homeless Kern residents.

**Replicability.** *Waste Hunger Not Food* is an excellent model for implementing food rescue in other counties. The same conditions exist in all 58 counties; all across California, there are hungry families and wasted food. The success of our system of donors, distributors, and transport is not dependent on conditions that are unique to Kern County. We have been tremendously successful in the first ten months of *Waste Hunger Not Food*, and we anticipate steadily growing over time. We endeavor to make a difference: *Waste Hunger Not Food* is committed to eliminating hunger, minimizing food waste, and promoting the health of our residents. We hope that food rescue efforts like ours will eventually be implemented across the state.

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