

BEST PRACTICES
FOR
FOOD RECOVERY
AND
GLEANNING

IN THE
NATIONAL SCHOOL
LUNCH PROGRAM

SY 1998 - 1999

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Report on the Food Recovery and Gleaning Grants Project

- Introduction -

The results are in! Secretary Dan Glickman's Food Recovery and Gleaning Initiative has achieved another milestone. Twelve nationwide school districts that received funds in July 1998 through one-year Food Recovery Cooperative Agreements have completed their projects and filed their reports. The results have been compiled into this "Best Practices" manual by USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS).

This manual describes how the school districts used their USDA funds to help them recover food from their cafeterias and donate it to the needy. It addresses how school food service staff developed systems to recover, store, and donate the recovered food. It explains how partnerships were formed with local non-profit agencies in the community, and how school districts were able to identify and overcome obstacles to developing a school-based food recovery program. Finally, it shows how students can take an active role in this effort, and how food recovery and gleaning can be integrated into a school's curriculum.

At the time the funds were awarded to these 12 schools, USDA estimated that over 30 million Americans were in danger of going hungry and 96 billion pounds of food were being wasted at the retail and food service levels. These facts fueled Agriculture Secretary Glickman and Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services Under Secretary Watkins to start a food recovery and gleaning initiative in 1996. As a part of this initiative, USDA awarded up to \$10,000 to each of the 12 school districts throughout the country. This money was provided to promote gleaning and food recovery efforts at the school level. The school districts that received the funds were chosen based on applications which detailed their ability to recover food cost-effectively, develop best practices that could be shared with other schools, cooperate with non-profit organizations within the community, and involve students in community service.

Schools are natural choices for food recovery efforts. Many cafeterias often have some leftover food that cannot be reused in spite of the most careful planning. In addition, food service managers have expertise to handle and store recovered food until it can be delivered safely to organizations that serve the needy. It is important to note that food recovery should never become a financial drain on a school. Staff should be trained not to overproduce in order to have food to share with the needy. Leftovers should be utilized in future school meals as much as possible. Only when remaining food cannot be used by the school is food recovery for the needy a viable option.

This manual contains descriptions of school food recovery efforts that can serve as models for other school districts in the country who want to get involved in donating excess food to the needy. These donations, although relatively small, can make a significant contribution towards reducing hunger in the local community and, when multiplied by the number of school districts across the nation, make a substantial contribution towards reducing hunger in America.

Below is a list of ideas and suggestions that schools believe are important and should be considered when initiating or beginning a food recovery project.

Receive approval from school administrators.

- This is the first step; students and staff cannot participate without approval of appropriate officials.
- Recruit volunteers from school staff and students; involve students in all phases of the operation:
 - Planning
 - Packing and storing food
 - Pick-ups and deliveries (or riding along)
 - Designing and producing marketing materials
 - Liaison between administration/staff and students or student organizations
- Tie the project into the school curriculum:
 - Food safety training
 - Nutrition education
 - Civics, social sciences

Involve your entire community.

- If another local group has a program underway, ask for their guidance.
- Piggy-back on established programs, if appropriate:
 - Conform to their pick-up/delivery schedule
 - Share equipment
- Identify and contact recipient agencies.
- Contact other food preparation sites that might want to participate.
- Solicit financial support (for equipment and operational supplies) from local businesses and civic groups.
- Enlist volunteers from community agencies as well as from the school.
- Maintain open lines of communication with all cooperators (this is essential to ensure their commitment).

Make food safety a priority.

- Enlist school food service personnel as well as local health professionals for training in food packing, transporting, and storing.
- Consider using the opportunity to train staff and volunteers in the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) system of food safety.
- Use reliable equipment:
 - Coolers, insulated pans, or gel-pack trays
 - Carts
 - Refrigerated trucks

Establish and maintain good scheduling and record-keeping systems - organization is key.

- Develop food safety guidelines for acceptable food transfer items.
- Create record-keeping forms:
 - Staffing
 - Types and amounts of foods
 - Dates of recovery and transport

Use the Internet to find useful information on funding sources that can be used to support hunger efforts; here are a few suggested places to start.

- <http://www.fns.usda.gov/FNS/MENU/GLEANING/RECOVER.HTM>
- <http://www.agr.state.nc.us/fooddist/gleaning.htm>
- <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/EDSO/il/IL103/page11.html>

Share your success.

- Consider producing videos of the project by student groups.
- Use booklets and brochures as marketing tools.
- Encourage students and staff to make personal appearances/presentations.
- Notify your local and state-wide media.
- Make your products available to local, state-wide, and national interest groups.

Be patient and plan carefully. Time and energy are needed to start a food recovery program, but one that is well-established can be maintained indefinitely with moderate effort and minimal expense.

Remember, small amounts of food from each school in the district add up to large amounts in the overall community.

The key to success is to involve appropriate school administrators, school lunch managers, students, the community and health department personnel.

Above all, keep an open mind, be flexible, and keep the goal in sight!

Albany County School District One Laramie, Wyoming

Ms. Maureen Lutterman, Food Service Director for Albany County School District No.1, started the Food Recovery Project in Albany County Wyoming (Laramie) in 1998. “I took the project request as a personal challenge to better the life of the community” said Ms. Lutterman.

In order to get the project off the ground, Ms. Lutterman met with organizations in the Laramie area who serve the needy. These included food pantries, soup kitchens, and the local food stamp office. These meetings provided Ms. Lutterman with insight into the extent of the hungry problem in Laramie and convinced her that a program was feasible. Ms. Lutterman soon realized that the recovered food would never stretch as far as needed. Original plans were to send food to soup kitchen, food banks, the elderly, and other needy. Her research revealed however, that there was one group of needy that had never been targeted. These are young people who are on their own, by necessity or by choice, between the ages of 13 to 25. Many are parents, many are poor, and many do not receive parental help. They often do not go through the usual channels for help.

As luck would have it, a hunger awareness activity day occurred in Laramie during the same time that Ms. Lutterman was attempting to get the program started. The meeting was sponsored by several civic and government organizations in the area. The proposed food recovery program was put on the agenda. It received an enthusiastic response from community leaders. The support of the School District Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, and nine schools in Albany County School District No. 1 was enlisted. Parents were informed about the project through a parent advisory meeting. Teachers were informed through information sheets distributed to the faculty. Laramie City Environmental Health inspectors were enlisted to establish documentation requirements and food safety procedures for the project.

In this project, foods not used in the school food service are picked up from nine schools in the district and repackaged into family size portions. A variety of excess food from breakfast and lunch are transported daily by food service staff to a central kitchen at Whiting Alternative High School. This school also provides a variety of alternative learning environments for students in both classroom and community settings. In the kitchen, student volunteers and food service staff pack the food into servings to feed three to six persons. The staff also devised an easy system for repackaging excess foods like cheese and spaghetti sauce, vegetables and other foods not in pieces. They set up a tray of six, one gallon plastic jugs that fit a food service bread sack. They can quickly fill the jugs with food, twist shut, and place it on the freezer shelves. Dated labels are applied, although dates are not too relevant because the food moves out very quickly. It is then frozen, and stored in two upright freezers purchased with USDA funds. The labeled portions allow recipients to identify what they want and serve themselves from the freezers. The food is given out to those in need by food service staff in the High School cafeteria once a week. The area needy come to the kitchen on Thursdays between 6 a.m. and 5 p.m. to pick up the frozen portions for re-heating at home. Any food left over after the needy have

selected their choices is delivered to a local food pantry. During the summer months, lunches recovered from the summer feeding program are used as the source of the meals.

Information about this program is spread mostly by word of mouth. This method has sufficed up to now since limited food is available. The Program is looking into a more structured advertising approach that would provide a more consistent client base.

USDA funds were used to purchase a 15 foot long truck and fit it with a lift. The truck does not require a special driver's license - - making it easier to find drivers. The truck is used by food service staff to recover leftovers from three schools. School District vans pick up the leftovers from the other six schools which participate in the program. Food is picked up daily. It is brought to the central kitchen at the Whiting Alternative High School. Although the food is frozen at the schools where it is recovered (except on pick-up days), it is always a challenge to keep it cold enough during its trip to the central kitchen for repackaging. Pans with gel in the walls that can be strapped into a truck for transport were purchased with USDA funds. They keep food cold for eight hours and have worked very well.

The School District integrated an in-depth study of social studies curriculum into its classes so there are lots of opportunities for students to talk about service learning theory as it relates to the food recovery project. The curriculum includes "Kitchen Keys," a short hands-on lesson on sanitation in food handling presented by food service staff during the year to District students in grades K-12. Service Learning Theory curriculum material from the University of South Carolina is used for benchmarks and teaching objectives. These materials, as well as a HACCP kit from USDA, is funded through a Nutrition Education and Training project. The program is also exploring the possibility of becoming a service learning project. Ms. Lutterman is optimistic about the possibility, "new things in the school system seem to take about three years to really get going - - just about enough time for our freshman to become seniors" she said.

The food recovery project pretty much runs itself these days. The basic equipment and supplies that were needed have been purchased using the project money provided by USDA. "Now expenses are minimal" she said. Staff have gotten used to the routines involved in food recovery and so have the recipients. Ms. Lutterman is pleased with how well the program has turned out. "I'm glad that the program has been able to serve a population that, for various reasons, seemed to be falling through the cracks" she said.

Here is Ms. Lutterman's advice for someone wanting to start a food recovery program at their school:

- Community involvement is critical. It is important to get support from civic leaders, school administrators, feeding organizations, health professionals, etc., before the project gets too far along. The support of these groups helps "grease the skids" and keep the project moving.

- Coordinating the pick up and distribution of food can be a real challenge and must be planned carefully. Food safety must also be a priority.
- It is important to tie the project into the school curriculum if at all possible - - you need that base of support from school administrators, teachers, and students.
- Be patient - - a food recovery project often takes more time to get started than originally envisioned - - eventually, much of it can run itself.

Ohio County Schools Wheeling, West Virginia

“We were taught as youngsters not to waste food,” said Dr. H. Lawrence Jones, Superintendent of the Ohio County Public School District. This philosophy is the driving force behind the Ohio County School District’s food recovery program. The program is a partnership between the school system, The Soup Kitchen of Greater Wheeling, and Ohio Valley Harvest. The partnership allows excess food from school cafeterias, that would otherwise be discarded, to be given to organizations that feed the needy.

The Ohio County School District is located in West Virginia’s northern panhandle. It serves over 4,600 breakfasts and lunches per day to school children in the greater Wheeling, West Virginia, area. Hot meals are prepared in two central kitchens- - in the District’s high school and the other in an elementary school. Meals are distributed daily by vans to the other 12 schools within the system. During the summer, the District also provides 800 meals to children at feeding sites in churches, schools, youth centers, and housing developments.

“The School District’s food recovery program started in 1994,” said Jim Freeland, contact person for the program and District Administrator for Child Nutrition. The program’s success resulted in the Ohio County School District being selected to receive funds from USDA through a cooperative agreement. The funds are being used to publicize the school district’s efforts and increase awareness within the community of the need for food recovery. The District was instrumental in sponsoring State legislation that allowed schools to pilot food recovery efforts within the State. “At first,” said Dr. Jones, “We were concerned that donations could generate adverse publicity. We didn’t want to give people the impression we were purposely preparing too much food.” To address this problem, the District developed news releases explaining the initiative and met with the local news media. “When you are preparing daily meals for such a large number of children there’s bound to be some food left over,” said Jones. “It’s impossible to know exactly how many meals will be eaten every day. We always want to have enough food to serve that last child in line, so we sometimes have excess.”

Food still on steam tables after meals are served doesn’t go to waste in Ohio County. Felicia Harto, Cafeteria Manager for the County schools, uses her 34 years of experience in the School Districts’ kitchens to help her decide what to do with what’s left. She reuses what she can, and sets aside what’s left for the local soup kitchen. She refrigerates the food in plastic containers provided by Ohio Valley Harvest, a nonprofit organization affiliated with the soup kitchen. “We were a bit hesitant about giving the food away at first,” she said. “But we’ve had no problems, it’s really no extra work.” She describes the program as “a total success.” Her motto: “Why throw good food away?”

Three times a week, volunteers from Ohio Valley Harvest call Felicia to see if she has any food. “Sometimes we don’t have much to give them, but they never complain,” she said. “They’ll come for half a container of food.” The volunteers use their own cars to pick up donations. They deliver the food directly to the soup kitchen located on the first floor of the

YWCA in downtown Wheeling. “The logistics of picking up can be complicated,” said Mike Cox, a retired accountant and regular soup kitchen volunteer. He picks up food from all over the greater Wheeling area. “Sometimes we have problems finding volunteers to help pick up, but we always manage somehow,” he said.

At the soup kitchen, the donations from the school system are added to the daily menu. The menu also includes commodities donated by USDA, and food donated by area businesses such as caterers, retail food chains, and wholesalers. The soup kitchen uses these donations to provide an average of 200 hot lunches and cold packed suppers to Wheeling area needy every day. “The School District donations have been a big help,” said Althea Burns, Executive Director of The Soup Kitchen of Greater Wheeling. “We can get several hundred meals out of what they give us some weeks,” said Burns.

There is a heightened awareness of food recovery in Ohio County these days. Ohio County Schools Superintendent Jones attributes part of this awareness to the food recovery program. “A stronger ethic of sharing leftover food seems to be developing,” he said. The District and State Department of Education have fostered this ethic by developing a curriculum designed to increase student consciousness about social issues related to food recovery. Some of the students at the schools are even volunteering to help at the soup kitchen. According to Jones, “When functions are held in this area and there is food left over, it’s more common now to hear people say- - don’t throw it out- - take it to the soup kitchen.”

Madison Metropolitan School District Madison, Wisconsin

When Bonnie Goeke-Johnson met with Madison High School students in Madison, Wisconsin, in early 1998 to talk about establishing a food recovery program, she received enthusiastic support. “Student commitment has been key to keeping the project going since its inception,” she said. The students are part of an alternative program at Madison East High School called East Higher Ground. The program provides a variety of different learning experiences using classroom, community, and service learning environments. East Higher Ground students recover pre-packaged lunches from ten schools in the Madison Metropolitan School District and deliver them to local feeding organizations.

Bonnie Goeke-Johnson is coordinator of the East Higher Ground Program and also coordinator of the school’s food recovery effort. She began her food recovery efforts in January 1998, after the Madison Community Action Coalition facilitated two in-class presentations on local hunger and nutrition needs at the high school. The Coalition operates the Wisconsin Harvest Program, a food gleaning program run by volunteers with an established network of 40 distribution sites throughout the State. The Coalition convinced her that food recovery at the school level was not only technically feasible, but also needed.

East Higher Ground students got involved in the program from the start. “They quickly developed a sense of ownership in the program,” said Ms. Goeke-Johnson. The students helped perform an initial assessment of Dane County’s hunger needs. They presented the school’s food recovery proposal to the District Superintendent, the District Food Services Coordinator, high school faculty and staff, and leaders of local community feeding organizations. Students provided input into the food recovery project proposal that was sent to USDA. They also sent letters to the elementary and middle schools that feed into the high school asking them to support the program by saving leftover lunches for pick up.

The Madison Community Action Coalition provided initial support and technical expertise. They trained students on hunger issues, sponsored a field trip, and allowed students to shadow them as they recovered and delivered food from other sources. They also identified local community feeding outlets that would accept recovered food, and helped set up the initial meetings between school staff and the outlets.

Ms. Goeke-Johnson drives the 40-mile route with her students to pick up lunches from schools and deliver them directly to community feeding organizations in Madison. Students pick up anywhere between 100-200 leftover pre-packed lunches every Tuesday and Thursday when school is in session from the eight elementary schools and two middle schools that funnel students into Madison East High School. Before they start their bi-weekly route, students call each school to make sure there will be enough leftovers to make a stop worthwhile. The lunches are picked up from each school’s cafeteria and put into coolers which are transported by van. They are delivered to the Salvation Army Food Pantry, the Atwood Community Center Food Pantry, the East Madison Community Center, and a walk-in homeless shelter. There the food is

distributed to the needy by staff from these organizations.

Madison East High School's principal was instrumental in obtaining the donation of the used van. USDA project money was used to get the van operational. The project money was also used to purchase a freezer, two refrigerators, disposable aluminum pans for handling recovered food, coolers for transporting food, and other food handling items.

The food recovery project has been successfully integrated into Madison East High School's curriculum. Students who volunteer for the program receive elective credit towards graduation. "The project teaches students many useful skills such as problem solving, data analysis, and effective communication," said Ms. Goeke-Johnson. "It provides the kind of hands-on experience that is hard to replicate in the confines of a traditional classroom." In addition, University of Wisconsin-Extension Education staff provide periodic age-appropriate nutrition education and food safety training during school science classes.

Ms. Goeke-Johnson has learned several lessons from her experiences as coordinator of the project:

- These types of projects won't work unless students can see that they are valuable and relevant.
- The hands-on experience these programs provide make them good service learning projects.
- Ongoing communication with partner community feeding organizations is a must to ensure their continued commitment.
- A lot of time and energy is needed to start a food recovery program.
- Once you've gotten over the initial start-up hurdles however (obtaining student and staff buy-in, finding willing community feeding organizations, purchasing basic equipment, and developing workable schedules), school food recovery programs can be maintained with moderate effort and minimal expense.

Although the one-year USDA funds for the project ran out in August 1999, momentum has built up and the project continues. "USDA provided the seed money we needed that allowed us to harness our students' enthusiasm," said Ms. Goeke-Johnson. "We definitely see this project continuing into the future."

Clarendon School District Two Manning, South Carolina

A local church food pantry is the latest beneficiary of the Food Recovery Project at Clarendon County School District Two. When Ms. Mary Graham, District Director of Food Services learned about the USDA food recovery and gleaning projects, she networked with other professionals to determine how the District could expand beyond what they were already doing - - providing small amounts of food to the county jail.

Ms. Graham identified an organization in the community that needed help - - the Saint Mary's Catholic Church food pantry ministry. After receiving her funds from USDA, Ms. Graham prepared a written agreement with this group. The agreement outlined the church's responsibility and stressed they would be held harmless from lawsuits under the terms of the Good Samaritan Act.

An early stumbling block to expanding food recovery was the short supply of food. The School District's five schools generate a minimum amount of leftovers. Ms. Graham was surprised to discover that the project made food service staff even more conscientious about waste. "If some other agency can use it - - then we can too" was their philosophy. To remedy this, the program solicited donations from local businesses. Although many were hesitant to get involved for fear of possible lawsuits, a local truck stop and a produce market agreed to donate leftovers on a regular basis. St. Mary's food pantry offered its bulk purchases from the Harvest Hope Food Bank and started sending them to the Manning High School kitchen to be transformed, along with recovered food, into cold plated dinners for pantry clients. USDA funds paid for some of the food service labor involved in the project as well as transportation costs, supplies, and program promotion materials.

During the school year, food service drivers recover leftovers from District schools as they drive their regular routes. They also periodically pick up leftovers from the truck stop and produce market. The food is taken back to the Manning High School kitchen. Student volunteers from the high school and middle school and paid food service staff transform the food into delicious and wholesome meals.

Saint Mary's Church receives some 240 cold plated dinners two Thursdays each month. Student volunteers not only help prepare the meals, they also help distribute them to clients at the pantry. The meals are made from a combination of recovered food and food that is bulk purchased by the pantry and given to the project. The food is transformed into many wholesome and delicious meals. "It's like the miracle of the loaves and fishes," said Fran Pletl of the Saint Mary's Food Pantry. Before the food recovery project went into effect, clients at the pantry received only canned goods and staples. Now they also take home a chilled plated dinner for each person in their family.

Great care is taken to ensure that sound food handling practices and HACCP concepts are followed from start to finish. Food safety procedures start at the point of food recovery. Food service staff provide volunteer students with hands-on training in food preparation and safe food handling techniques. Drivers transport the chilled dinners in insulated containers to St. Mary's pantry at below 40 degrees and adhere closely to the delivery and receiving schedule. Food temperatures are kept constant by use of blue ice packs. Each food pantry client is told to store the food in the refrigerator until dinner time and re-heat it well before eating

Many people do not know what food recovery means and have no real knowledge of how widespread hunger really is. To raise hunger consciousness, the project funded a short video that illustrates what they do. It is used as part of a hunger awareness lesson in some classes at Manning High School. The South Carolina Education Television Network broadcasts the video regularly.

After a year, the expanded program has gained momentum. Support from the School Superintendent and the Board of Trustees has allowed the project to continue after USDA funds ran out. Two members of the District food service staff operate the project at minimal cost with very little day-to-day involvement from Ms. Graham. The labor needed is provided by a combination of student volunteers, food service staff, and paid senior citizens. Money to cover future program costs will come from the School District catering fund.

Ms. Graham would like to see food recovery become part of the school curriculum. The County Cooperative Extension Service and some student club sponsors have expressed an interest in working to increase student awareness of hunger issues in the classroom. The program also has the potential to become a service learning project at the middle and high school level.

District Director of Food Services Mary Graham has several pointers that she can pass on from her experience coordinating the project:

- Successful food recovery projects need the cooperation and dedication of school staff, students, and contributing agencies.
- Prior to setting up a program, it is important to network with civic groups, student clubs, and churches. The greater the networking effort, the more support and interest you will build.
- It is important to establish a reciprocal relationship with cooperators that already provide services or that have sources of volunteers and funds.
- Research your community to determine where there is real need. Find target audiences that will truly benefit from your efforts.

- The Internet contains useful information on project sources that can be used to support hunger efforts (see Introduction for helpful Internet sites).
- Above all - - keep an open mind, be flexible - - and always remember to keep the goal in front of you!

Hewlett-Woodmere Union Free School District
Hewlett, New York

Helping to feed the hungry is a project that has been undertaken enthusiastically by the students at Hewlett-Woodmere Union Free School District in Hewlett, New York. These students didn't let the fact that they reside in an affluent neighborhood stop them from taking the initiative to assist with feeding the needy.

In the 1997-1998 school year the students at Hewlett-Woodmere who were involved in the "Rock and Wrap It Up! School Program" decided that they wanted to further help the needy people in their school district area. The "Rock and Wrap It Up! School Program" involves young student volunteers assisting musicians (bands) backstage to collect the concert's excess catered food to donate to the needy. The students at Hewlett-Woodmere approached the faculty to ask if their district could also participate in the local Hunger Relief effort to help feed the needy. The faculty agreed and the students borrowed "Rock and Wrap It Up!" coolers to start the food recovery project. The school district used the USDA funds to purchase their own coolers and other storage and handling equipment.

Under their food recovery project, students and staff developed a plan for assisting with the local Hunger Relief effort. Thus, a decision was made to freeze any portion of prepared cafeteria food that could not be served the next day in plastic ziplock bags or recycled plastic containers. Ms. Emily Rein, Cafeteria Director, stated "the high school students use their own vehicles to pick up the coolers of frozen food every Friday afternoon and deliver it to the Five Towns Community Center." This Center offers a variety of multi-social and economic services, including donated foods to needy families and individuals. The center's food recovery project liaison, Ms. Annie Reyes, stated that the Hewlett-Woodmere district provides approximately 100-150 pounds per week of donated food to the center for the needy. This donated food, combined with other community donations, allows the center to prepare a lunch for senior citizens, a snack for the after school program participants as well as supplying 80-100 families with miscellaneous food items to take home for a meal. In addition, the school district is planning to place coolers in the school cafeterias to retrieve unopened cartons of milk that the children do not drink. New York has no health regulations prohibiting the retrieval of milk for food recovery as long as the milk is unopened.

The Hewlett-Woodmere public school district staff teaches food safety to its students and considers community service an integral part of their educational enterprise. USDA funds were also used to develop informational materials that are used to teach and integrate food safety and food recovery into their curriculum. The Hewlett-Woodmere Union Free School District is proud of their efforts to assist in the Hunger Relief effort by partnering and working cooperatively with the Five Towns Community Center. The USDA funds have enabled them to support this project and make it a success.

Iowa City Community School District Iowa City, Iowa

For the past several years the Iowa City Community School District food service department has had a food recovery operation in place whereby schools occasionally provided foods to the Salvation Army. Thus, when food was available, schools took the excess products that could not be reused to the Salvation Army to use in the evening meal provided by that organization. Also, in the past, the schools' excess fresh produce from the preceding winter and spring breaks had always been taken to the Iowa City's community crisis center food pantry.

The Iowa City Community School District's food service departments provide food to 21 school locations plus several contracted meal sites. The Iowa City Community School District had a food rescue program in place, but decided to use the USDA funds to identify how the district's food service departments and secondary students could best assist an anti-hunger organization known as *Table to Table*. *Table to Table* is a nonprofit organization which services an area food pantry, four child care programs, three soup kitchens, emergency and domestic violence shelters, three senior citizen programs and a jobs program for the homeless.

Student volunteers were recruited from Iowa City Community School District's government classes whose class schedule corresponded to the end of the lunch period. They received training in safe food handling practices that included hand washing, proper use of gloves, personal hygiene, food packaging, labeling, and storage techniques. A training video from the American Culinary Federation was used to teach the students and staff about safe food handling practices. Reinforcing safe food handling practices for the end user of the food recovered was accomplished by using labels with "use by date" and reheating instructions placed on the containers or pans of food. Food received from each location was primarily frozen and transported in insulated containers. At the high school level some students who became involved with food recovery served as volunteer drivers for *Table to Table* even after the school year ended.

The USDA funds were used to purchase equipment (transport pans and carriers), a freezer for *Table to Table* to store their frozen food, and training materials on safe handling procedures for the staff and students. These purchases will continue to allow safe and easy transportation of recovered food. At each secondary building, there is either an individual or student group committed to the recovery project so there will be continuity from year to year as more students are recruited as volunteers.

The Iowa City Community School District would like to share the following tips on operating a food recovery and gleaning project:

- Do not work alone. Locate in your community an organization already involved with providing social services such as a local department of social services, emergency shelter, Salvation Army, or food bank and contact that group.

- Once a contact person has been located outside the district, determine guidelines for what type of food will be recovered. As long as the food has not been transported to another building (with the exception of baked goods) or served to a student, the food can be recovered.
- Contact your school's social studies or guidance department to locate a staff member to serve as a link to the students and/or student service organizations. A Youth Advisory Committee could easily be involved with such a project.
- Take small steps. Do not try to undertake too large a project. Even if daily leftovers seem small, explore options of storing and freezing the food in either the food service department or at the service organization.
- Work with the service organization to determine a very simple pick-up and delivery schedule. High school students may be recruited to serve as volunteers to make weekly deliveries when transportation is a drawback.
- Training information on food safety and handling used for food service staff can be used for student volunteers. Specific training material including not only food safety but information on hunger can be designed for use with students.

Keystone Oaks School District Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

The Keystone Oaks School District partnered with an active field gleaning agency, the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank (GPCFB). The school introduced their students to food recovery and gleaning through an arrangement with the GPCFB for a field gleaning trip. The GPCFB supervised approximately 80 students sent to two local farms to glean wholesome excess green beans and tomatoes left in the fields. Once the food recovery and gleaning spark was struck, it ignited the students' fire to work as volunteers at the community food bank. The students volunteered at the food bank's warehouse to repackage the gleaned food. The food was then distributed to families in need throughout the food bank neighborhood. The food bank reported that the Keystone Oaks students involved in the food recovery and gleaning activities were "motivated, focused, and full of fun." The students showed further interest in the food recovery and gleaning project as they wanted to know the larger picture -- where the food goes and who gets it, etc.

In addition to field gleaning, the students toured school cafeteria kitchens and discussed safe handling procedures for recovering excess school lunch food. Students also learned about nutrition, sanitation, the spread of germs and disease relating to salmonella, e-coli, food poisoning, proper storage temperatures, shelf life and their relationship to the food recovery program. The Keystone Oaks School District food managers discussed with the students the acceptable types of excess school lunch food that was available for donation. Also, they met with the Allegheny County Health Department's inspector for a presentation on sanitation and food safety.

The GPCFB and the schools worked out a routine to have the cafeteria workers wrap, freeze, and store the excess school lunch food. The school district arranged with the GPCFB driver to collect all of the food weekly and transport it to the food bank for distribution to the needy. As a part of the schools' curriculum on food and nutrition, the students prepared a different soup each month for themselves from in-season vegetables and other food items. The students are now donating the soup to the food bank to help feed the needy.

The Keystone Oaks School District used their USDA funds to purchase food storage containers and materials, pay for miscellaneous food recovery expenses (such as staff help), repackaging costs, and field gleaning bus trips.

An idea that the school proposed, and is considering for the future, is a garden project that would give students "hands on" experience to grow food for the hungry. The responsibilities would include preparing the soil in the fall, purchasing supplies, installing a fence, and paying a summer crew to maintain and water the garden. Other schools may want to consider soliciting public or private donations to assist with starting a similar project. If there are other schools interested in pursuing a project of this nature, they should contact Keystone Oaks School District for additional information.

Lawrence Union Free School District Lawrence, New York

The USDA funds awarded to the Lawrence Union Free School District in Lawrence, New York were used to purchase equipment and supplies and to develop a series of educational tools promoting food recovery efforts in schools. These are activities that fit right into an existing and well-established food rescue program. The school district operates in partnership with Five Towns Community Center and the “Rock and Wrap It Up! School Program” to collect leftover food from each school twice a week and deliver it to the center. In fact, soft-sided food transport containers were one of the purchases made with the USDA project money. These lighter, more manageable containers facilitate food delivery for the volunteer students and staff members; they are also permanent equipment, eliminating the cost of replacement.

The “Rock and Wrap It Up! School Program” is the basis of the Lawrence partnership. This program was started in 1991 when Syd Mandelbaum, now a Lawrence Board of Education trustee, conceived the idea of rescuing leftover food from backstage after local rock concerts. He learned that concert caterers’ contracts prohibits running out of food, a rule which often resulted in many pounds of leftover food being wasted. Mr. Mandelbaum arranged to pick up food after one concert and deliver it to an organization that served the needy, thus planting the seed for a program that has grown to global proportions in the ensuing years.

In 1997, Lawrence was one of the first school systems nationwide to begin a process of collecting and distributing its unused food from school meals to those in need. For the period November 1998 to June 1999 the program delivered 1,178 pounds of prepared food to the Five Towns Community Center, which serves families and senior citizens. “I have been very impressed with the level of support our program has received from the students and staff of Lawrence,” said Mr. Mandelbaum. “Their efforts last year enabled the Community Center to distribute 100 to 200 meals every week, using food that may have otherwise been discarded.”

The Lawrence School District, Five Towns Community Center, and the “Rock and Wrap It Up!” partnership meet at least quarterly to review and monitor their activities and budget and to discuss their short- and long-term goals. The goals they set for using the USDA project funds included development of curriculum guidelines for creation of grade-appropriate lesson plans and marketing materials to help recruit student volunteers; an instructional and marketing video, also for the purpose of recruiting student participation; and development of a method for data collection and tracking. These activities were in addition to the normal resumption of the program in schools that participated the previous year in the food collection efforts.

The school district’s newsletter, *The Lawrence Xpress*, featured a full-page story about the ongoing food collection efforts and the USDA project. This story and corresponding press releases to the local media served to heighten awareness in the community of the food recovery activities. Marketing their idea is one of the group’s continuing long-term goals.

Lawrence students and staff members were very pleased to be invited to present their efforts at the National School Board Association Conference in San Francisco in April, 1999, where they distributed 500 copies each of the 22-page “Rock and Wrap It Up!” curriculum. The curriculum, which contains guidelines for food recovery, have been incorporated into classroom activities. The instructional and marketing video which was produced jointly by the Lawrence Public Schools and “Rock and Wrap It Up!” was also distributed at the conference. The video will be made available to other school districts and organizations interested in starting a food recovery and gleaning program, as outlined in one of the group’s long-term goals. Additionally, the group successes also include completion of a new project at one school in the district and ongoing implementation of new projects at three others. Also, volunteers were recruited and trained for the 1999-2000 school year, and worksheets were developed for tracking and monitoring program data collection.

As outlined in the “Rock and Wrap It Up! School Program” curriculum, Lawrence students share their food recovery educational materials with attendees at rock concerts as a means of building awareness of hunger in the community and encouraging new programs in other areas of the country. They are continuing their efforts to recruit local summer camps in the area, when school food recovery would not be going on, to participate in the program. This effort has been less successful than others, but the group continues to work at it. They have a monthly newsletter, *Wrapping It Up[™]* and a website. In fact, another way to help feed the needy is to purchase CDs of participating bands through their website.

Lawrence’s efforts have earned national recognition, including coverage on MTV and *Time Magazine for Kids*. Today, the organization collects food from nearly every major concert in the United States and abroad, distributing more than 3 million meals worldwide. Their ideas are truly innovative, and the success of their program can be held up as a model for other school districts to follow.

The Lawrence District offers the following guidelines for starting a food recovery program in your school:

- Talk to your principal.
- Find the shelters, food banks, and soup kitchens in your community.
- Search out organizations that collect and deliver leftover food in your community.
- Recruit volunteers from school staff and students.
- Talk to your school dietitian(s) and/or local health department about safe food handling.
- Arrange a schedule of pick-up and delivery.
- Contact “Rock and Wrap It Up!” online at www.rockandwrapitup.org or call them at 516-296-0670 for more information about becoming involved in their program.

Memphis City Schools Memphis, Tennessee

Memphis City Schools, Memphis, Tennessee received funds under a one year USDA cooperative agreement in 1998 to foster food recovery activities in their school lunch program. They partnered with the Memphis City Food Bank who used the recovered food they received from the schools to serve the needy and hungry. Initially, the Memphis City Schools held an orientation session with the Memphis Food Bank, the Memphis and Shelby County Health Departments, and cafeteria employees. Issues discussed included roles of the schools, health departments, and food banks in this food recovery project. Also, they addressed the importance of properly handling, storing and transporting the recovered food as well as food safety. Each school had a food recovery and gleaning coordinator assigned to serve as a contact person. The schools incorporated the weekly pickup of recovered foods into the existing food bank's schedule. The food bank pickup eliminated the need for the schools to obtain additional trucks or drivers. The volume of food that is collected from the schools varies from week to week. "The situations change in the schools weekly," notes Ann Terrell, Director of Nutrition Services at Memphis City Schools. "Let's take Thanksgiving, for example. We gleaned food from 151 school cafeterias, and that equated to approximately one-and-a-half steamtable pans per school."

"The program is proceeding nicely," Terrell also reports, "but can still be increased, and it can be improved." "Some things work and some don't," she notes. "We had a real problem in the beginning when some people felt we should be able to glean the leftover milk." What they did not understand, she explains, is that state health regulations, "as well as health precautions, don't allow us to do that because of the possible contamination of certain foods, and the milk was one of those foods."

The Memphis City School District introduced their students to food recovery and hunger in America by integrating hunger, food recovery and nutrition activities into their curriculum. Designated students visited other schools to raise awareness and encourage students local and global to become anti-hunger advocates.

The Memphis City Schools used the USDA money to purchase such items as disposable pans and lids to transport the recovered food to the food banks throughout the Memphis area. They printed handouts for students on safe food handling procedures. The students compiled a children's booklet titled "*Food for Thought*" and the schools used USDA funds to publish it. Also, the schools conducted a "Train the Trainer" workshop for managers and cafeteria employees on community nutrition and anti-hunger issues relating to food recovery. Additionally, the Memphis City Schools videotaped the schools' food recovery activities for use by other schools to initiate food recovery activities in their schools. The *Food Management* magazine featured a full-page story about the Memphis City Schools ongoing food collection efforts and the USDA project. This story and corresponding press releases to the local media served to heighten awareness in the community of the food recovery activities. Marketing their idea is one of the group's continuing long-term goals.

The Memphis City Schools learned from the food recovery project that:

- Through the school lunch program wholesome excess food can be recovered for donation to nonprofit agencies because of unscheduled field trips, absenteeism, and schools closing early.
- In order for the process to be successful, all key players must be involved--school managers, students, food banks, health department personnel, and central office staff.
- Small amounts of food from each school add up to large amounts.
- The biggest expense is disposable pans and lids.
- Recipient agencies might share in the cost of the disposable items or solicit companies to donate these items.
- The food recovery and gleaning project could be initiated and transferred to other schools through:
 - videos;
 - school directors visiting other schools;
 - school directors attending state meetings to assist others in starting a food recovery and gleaning program.

At the end of the Memphis City school year, the 152 cafeteria managers coordinated a food roundup. The kinds of food the schools collected were incomplete or broken cases of food that could not be returned to stock or foods that did not store well over the summer months. The food roundup information and instructions were sent to every school cafeteria. The Memphis City School District collected and transported the excess food to their central warehouse. The District had the food inspected for wholesomeness and donated it to the food bank.

The Memphis City Schools' students, teachers and the local community instituted a food recovery drive known as Kid's Kan Food Drive. They collected cans of food to benefit the Memphis Food Bank and the hungry. Also, the school hosted and videotaped a USDA Town Hall Meeting on "How to Reduce Hunger in Our Community." It is an informational video to encourage schools to become involved in food recovery and gleaning.

Wichita Public Schools Wichita, Kansas

The Food Recovery Program was a very positive thing in the Wichita Public Schools. The Food Services staff were thrilled to share excess food and not see it wasted. They fed about 4,500 people and plan to continue their win-win program during the 1999-2000 school year.

After being selected to participate in USDA's food recovery initiative, the Wichita schools began their program in September 1998. The school district trained staff in the central kitchen and school sites on food recovery procedures, food safety, food quality, and anti-hunger issues in the city. Staff contacted local shelters, soup kitchens, and food banks to collect names and phone numbers in order to facilitate daily contacts.

By October 1998, food recovery was in progress, and remains so today. Leftover food is wrapped daily, and it is frozen if kept over the weekend. Contact is made with the recipient agencies, and deliveries are made two or three times a week. If appropriate, the food is served at the next meal. If not, the recipient sites have dry, refrigerated, and freezer storage to keep it, or the central kitchen holds it for them.

The Wichita schools are like most others in that, even though they prepare one meal per student per day, many things can happen - from snowstorms to the fickle eating habits of students - which result in leftover food. The Boys and Girls Club of South Central Kansas is one of the groups that benefits from the program. They feed about 150-200 kids during the school year and many more during the summer. They are very happy to receive the donated school food, according to Melvin Carter III, Executive Director. "These kids need to eat," he said. "I would rather see someone be fed than to see it wasted. We're very blessed."

USDA funds were used in Wichita to purchase counter pans and two carts (one hot and one cold); to pay the truck driver, to reimburse for mileage, and to set up a recordkeeping system for deliveries. Sharon Carlson, Food Service Director for the Wichita Public Schools, is enthusiastic about this project. "It's been extremely positive, both for the recipients of the food and for the employees who work in the food service," she said. "They don't like to waste things."

As the program progressed, trained staff developed forms for the recordkeeping system and began to document donated food supplies, mileage, costs incurred, and delivery dates. Participating staff members were quite pleased to share the food and the recipients were delighted. The new program received many thank you notes; truck drivers heard nice comments; and a newspaper article ran in December about food recovery efforts in the city and, in particular, the Wichita Public Schools project.

Additional recipient sites were identified and food was shared with them as the program continued through January and February 1999. Through the spring the team worked with local agencies to assist with volunteer community service activities. The Campaign to End Childhood

Hunger is one local agency that supported the food recovery program, and the school district works with several other anti-hunger advocates. The local food bank is certified by Second Harvest as a perishable food rescue program and has also safely recovered excess food from the school district. One of Wichita's greatest successes is the development of these community partnerships.

**Tulsa Public School District
Tulsa, Oklahoma**

A volunteer group of Tulsa Public Schools cafeteria staff from 10 sites who participated in the Food Recovery project gave their program a name and designed a logo for it! They named it the S.H.A.R.E. Program, which stands for “Schools Helping Advance the Redistribution of Edibles.” Among their primary goals were the desires to be a part of the solution in the fight against hunger and to provide their student population with every possible experience to become active community members. The Tulsa Public Schools partnered with the Tulsa Community Food Bank, who received the recovered school food as an expansion of their established *Table to Table* program.

The S.H.A.R.E. food recovery activities were performed primarily by school cafeteria staff, who were all trained in the HACCP system of food safety and self-inspection. Under HACCP, which stands for Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point, one looks at the flow of food production and handling from recipe development to eventual consumption to ensure the safety of the product. In addition to their safe, reliable food transfer system, the Food Bank employees and volunteers provided invaluable packing and storing experience to cafeteria staff and students as the new program got underway.

To minimize questions, confusion, and potential food safety problems about recovering unused food, the staff made up a detailed list of foods that could not be recovered for future use. The bottom line on the list is: “If in doubt, throw it out.” They designed a form for keeping detailed records of each food item stored, in what amount, date stored, at what temperature, and the date picked up. Another form was designed for delivery use, listing recipient agency, food item, date, and temperature, as well as the pans and lids used. Detailed procedures were written for collection of perishable food from schools before the Christmas holiday and at the end of the school year. Students participated in the sorting and packing of food during holiday food drives and rode along in the refrigerated trucks delivering leftover cafeteria food to the Food Bank.

In cooperation with the Tulsa Community Food Bank, the Tulsa Public Schools S.H.A.R.E. Program used some of their USDA funds to purchase additional food recovery supplies, transport pans, labeling supplies, and wrapping materials for start-up activities. These supplies were purchased by the schools through the Food Bank at discounted prices. About 40% of the USDA funds were used to train the students and cafeteria staff, pay for delivery truck gas, the driver’s salary, and for printing and marketing efforts. The majority of USDA funds was spent on marketing activities which included the production, design and printing of a spiral book and production of a CD-ROM describing the project. Additionally, funds were used for the development of “A Hunger and Nutrition Curriculum for Elementary School Students.” The curriculum was made available to teachers throughout the public school district, and in April 1999 the classroom education component of the curriculum was implemented. Tulsa Public Schools Public Information Department produced a short television spot highlighting the S.H.A.R.E. program and the partnership forged between the schools and the Tulsa Community Food Bank. The video was broadcast on the Tulsa Public School television channel.

The S.H.A.R.E. program received the 1998 Partnership Award from the Tulsa Community Food Bank at an appreciation banquet in the spring of 1999. Additionally, the students formed a Student Leadership Advisory Group and were instrumental in developing a community service brochure, which was distributed by the Food Bank to area secondary schools.

As a result of the S.H.A.R.E. activities, 4,000 pounds of food are being recovered every month from the 20 participating schools, translating into approximately 3,500 meals for needy individuals and families. According to Joe Reger, then Director of Child Nutrition for the Tulsa Public Schools, "This project has enabled us to pick up additional supplies and packaging. We're setting up a program that will have a long-term impact."

The Tulsa project is an excellent example of close cooperation between community groups, including the City/County Health Department.

Norwich Public Schools Norwich, Connecticut

The Norwich Public Schools in Norwich, Connecticut and, in particular, the Greeneville Elementary and Greeneville Intermediate schools are unique schools. These schools have developed a strong feeling for their community. The schools operate in partnership with the Reliance House Route Two Shelter, the Reliance House Laurel Hill House and the St. Vincent de Paul Soup Kitchen. The school district solicited community involvement from the Parent Teacher Organization and a local Girl Scout troop in the food recovery project. The USDA funds awarded to the district allowed them to purchase a used van to deliver recovered food to needy agencies. The van enables the school district to collect leftover food every Friday from each school and deliver it to the centers to help feed the hungry.

In addition to the food recovery project, the district established school food collection sites for donations of canned goods throughout the year from parents and the community. They recruited a local farmer's market and area businesses to donate excess food to the project. The students wrote to area businesses for food donations and collected money from students and parents to purchase fresh fruits and dairy products for the needy. The schools initiated an annual "fill the bus" event and donated contributions to the soup kitchen. The food collected and donated to the soup kitchen at this event filled two mini busses. Another drive produced three large donations of food that filled two vans. The Reliance House Centers, the Clubhouse and a halfway house received these donations to help feed the needy.

The school's Food Service Director, Sylvia Weathers, attended food shows where she collected a van load of excess food and beverages which were donated to the soup kitchen and Reliance House. Students collected donations of canned goods and turkeys and provided the food to three of Reliance House's sites. The Reliance House or soup kitchen received the excess food remaining from school activities, picnics, food from the Summer Food Service Program that could not be used the next day, and excess food remaining prior to school vacation.

The New England Dairy and Food Council provided nutrition education to the teachers. The Norwich Sanitation Department taught teachers, parent volunteers, and students about food safety. The school also used USDA money to purchase educational materials for students on CD-ROM, a safety and sanitation game, materials from Pyramid Explorer, and the materials for students to make pyramid collages. Students learned menu planning and nutrition from using the information in Building Good Nutrition, Play It Safe! A Food Safety Unit, Jaw Breakers and Heart Thumpers activities, and the Pyramid Explorers booklets.

A future goal of Norwich Public Schools is to introduce food recovery into the areas' private high school curriculum in order to obtain food donations from their school lunch program to help feed the needy. They are looking for a coordinator to maintain continuity and growth in the existing food recovery program. They are also pursuing the feasibility of an independent study for credits from the community college.

**SCHOOL CONTACTS - NAMES, E-MAIL ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE
NUMBERS**

Albany County School District One

Laramie, Wyoming

Contact: Maureen Lutterman

Telephone: 307-721-4482

Fax # 307-721-4486

Clarendon School District Two

Manning, South Carolina

Contact: Mary Graham

Telephone: 803-435-4082

Fax # 803-435-8172

E-Mail: www.state.sc.us.sde

Hewlett-Woodmere Union Free School

Hewlett, New York

Contact: Emily Rein

Telephone: 516-374-8018

Fax # 516-374-2622

Iowa City Community School District

Iowa City, Iowa

Contact: Diane Duncan-Goldsmith

Telephone: 319-339-6872

Fax # 319-339-5714

Keystone Oaks School District

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Contact: Scott Hagy

Telephone: 412-571-6040

Fax #: 412-571-6053

Lawrence Union Free School District

Lawrence, New York

Contact: Dyan Zeller Harris

Telephone: 516-295-7078

Fax # 516-295-7034

Madison Metropolitan School District

Madison, Wisconsin

Contact: Bonnie L. Goeke-Johnson

Telephone: 608-246-4893

Fax #: 608-246-4888

Memphis City Schools

Memphis, Tennessee

Contact: Ann Terrell

Telephone: 901-325-5550

Fax # 901-325-5393

E-Mail:

Terrella@Memphis-Schools.K12.tn.us

Norwich Public Schools

Norwich, Connecticut

Contact: Sylvia Weathers

Telephone: 860-823-4244

Fax # 860-892-4365

Ohio County Public Schools

Wheeling, West Virginia

Contact: James Freeland

Telephone: 304-243-0315

Fax # 304-243-0347

Tulsa Public Schools

Tulsa, Oklahoma

Contact: Jim Huffman

Telephone: 918-746-6110

Fax # 918-746-6833

Wichita Public School

Wichita, Kansas

Contact: Sharon Carlson

Telephone: 316-973-2160

Fax # 316-833-2162

E-Mail: scarlson@feist.com