

Two Companies Using Technology to Reduce Food Waste



ORGANICS > FOOD WASTE

Two Companies Using Technology to Reduce Food Waste

One firm, the recently re-named Food Rescue US (FRUS), specializes in large-scale fresh food recovery.

Megan Greenwalt | Feb 01, 2017

In 2013, the United States Department of Agriculture and the Environmental Protection Agency joined together to launch the U.S. Food Waste Challenge to provide a platform to assess and disseminate information about the best practices to reduce, recover and recycle food. A pair of U.S. Companies have taken this challenge one step further by creating unique approaches to food waste recovery through their use of real-time, mobile technologies.

One firm, the recently re-named Food Rescue US (FRUS), specializes in large-scale fresh food recovery. The company is focused on transferring healthy, usable foods to where it can feed those in need. This volunteer-driven, technology-fueled process coordinates with restaurants, grocers, bakeries, caterers and other food-service organizations, who have foods destined to be thrown away, and delivers the food to soup-kitchens, food-pantries and other hunger-relief organizations serving food-insecure individuals and families.

Headquartered in Norwalk, Conn., FRUS currently operates in 10 locations around the country. To date, the organization has rescued and delivered more than 16.6 million meals, saving 25 million pounds of food from landfill, at an estimated value of \$42.3 million.

“The FRUS app offers volunteers to self-schedule (Uber-style) on-demand and prescheduled food rescues,” says Kevin Mullins, co-founder and executive director of FRUS. “All the details necessary to pick up food that would have otherwise been wasted for direct transfer to those in need is provided by the app as well as the chance to report the volunteer activity for tracking purposes.”

The company is announcing the name change this week along with a new version of its app. New features include:

- Food Donor Portal to enable key partners to list and track their food donations
- Receiving Agency Portal to enable front line organizations to list their specific needs and track the food they receive
- Automated Food Rescue Matching Algorithm based on supply, demand, capacity and distance
- Enhanced communications processes and award recognition programs for volunteers
- Availability of the iOS app in the App Store (Android to follow next year)

“We’re excited to have a new name that better reflects our national focus and continued expansion initiative. Through the recovery and direct transfer of fresh food, we have seen our national impact grow and intensify,” says Mullins. “The launch of the next generation of the app is even more important as we move toward our expansion goal of 25 sites by the end of 2017. We are actively seeking individuals and organizations to

partner with us and bring FRUS to their communities. Our simple solution to ending local hunger works everywhere.”

The other firm calls itself the “Uber of food recovery and distribution.” San Francisco-based Copia matches businesses with surplus food to those in need. Through its web and mobile platform, customers can request pickups of excess food. Copia’s drivers, also known as “Food Heroes,” pick up and deliver the food to local shelters, after school programs and nonprofits.

“We recover and deliver excess food in real-time. Our startup is at the intersection of the tech and food industry and aims to bridge the gap between those with excess edible food to those in need of it,” says Komal Ahmad, founder and CEO of Copia.

Currently only serving the Bay Area in California, Copia’s goal is to build a scalable and sustainable platform that feeds billions of people all around the globe.

“Hunger is bad—it’s terrible everywhere—but in America ... this problem shouldn’t exist,” says Ahmad.

The idea for Copia was conceived and developed in 2012 when Ahmad was a student at UC Berkeley. Ahmad launched a food recovery organization on the UC Berkeley campus called BareAbundance, and then Feeding Forward. The organization redistributed excess food from campus dining halls to nearby afterschool programs, homeless shelters and other human service agencies.

“Through my work at BareAbundance, I realized the traditional method of coordinating food donations over the phone is fraught with inefficiencies,” Ahmad says. “Often people end up with excess food and are unable to locate and contact the people who need it most when they need it most.”

Copia’s platform launched in 2016 and is mobile-based to increase efficiency. Businesses request a food pickup through the company’s website or mobile app by identifying the type of food, the amount, and when it needs picked up. A “Food Hero” will pick up and deliver the food to a nearby organization in need.

“Copia also weighs and documents the food donation so that we can provide impact reports and help our customers benefit from tax savings,” Ahmad says.

So far, Copia has recovered and redistributed more than 722,000 pounds of food that has fed more than 602,000 people through its partnerships with 650 businesses and 200 nonprofits/recipient organizations. The company recently announced a partnership with the San Francisco 49ers’ on-site restaurant company, Bon Appetit, to recover its leftover food.

Source URL: <http://www.waste360.com/food-waste/two-companies-using-technology-reduce-food-waste>