



How to End Food Waste at Your School



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I receive a lot of messages from students and parents who tell me they are bothered by how much food their school is wasting. Many of them feel like there is nothing that they can do about it. The really good news is that there is

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so much that can be done to end food waste at your school! Hundreds or thousands of schools have implemented programs to reduce food waste and put the extra food to good use. To help you end food waste at your school I've had the Executive Director of [Food Rescue and K-12 Food Rescue](#) write this guest blog. I'm confident that he can provide the help and the resources for you to get things going at your school. And for those of you attending university you can start a [Food Recovery Network](#) or [Campus Kitchens Project](#) chapter on your campus!

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Did you know that students throw 1 billion unopened and unpeeled food items into the trash annually in the U.S? And that it's largely for a very sad reason? Many districts won't allow schools to donate the food.

We believe students deserve a chance to feed people with nutritious food, rather than feed landfills with their unpeeled, unopened, and unwanted food items from their tray. Even more to the point, we believe it's tragic that it even has to be pointed out! Everyone in the food waste "arena" is very connected, and we at Food Rescue have admired the work of Rob Greenfield from afar, so it's an honor to be able to write a guest blog post today.

My name is John Williamson, and I am the Executive Director and Founder of [Food Rescue and K-12 Food Rescue](#), founded in 2007. Until April of 2014, our entire focus was connecting hundreds of restaurants who had surplus perishable food with hundreds of food pantries to come and pick it up. We connected over 10 million meals from restaurants such as Little Caesars, Charleston's, McAllister's, Panera Bread, Texas Roadhouse, and many others, including every City Barbeque in the United States with food pantries. These



TEDx Talk: How to End The Food Waste Fiasco



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stores have continued to donate annually with very little ongoing management from Food Rescue. As we always say, "A scheduled Food Rescue continues in perpetuity."

So what happened in April of 2014 to change our focus? School food waste happened! While we were passionate about our work, it was often like pounding concrete.....very difficult.....lot's of "no's" to get one "yes", although that one "yes" was usually very productive. And while our solution was helpful, it was really putting a much-needed bandage on the hemorrhaging wound of food waste. At the end of the day, my generation and the one before me is generally quite "tone deaf" when it comes to the issue of food waste. We waste 40% of our food, a stat anyone reading this blog is probably aware of. We wouldn't do that if we cared about it! It's well past the point of saying people just aren't aware. It's more alarming than that. They are aware and don't care in general, and the issue of food waste is in competition with our most valued asset....time. The food waste issue competes against many injustices in the world for people's attention, and even those willing to acknowledge it as a problem struggle with finding the time to make it a priority. All that to say....we need to change the youngest generations views of food waste to truly solve the problem.

Enter K-12 Food Rescue. It is WIDELY unknown that the Richard **Russell School Lunch Act** was amended in November of 2011 to clarify that schools have the same legal protections under what is most commonly referred to as our "**Good Samaritan Laws**". Most schools also are unaware of the wide support school food recovery has from the USDA and EPA. Any notion that it is illegal or not supported by our government is false as our website demonstrates. We found that once schools are made aware, see the stats and the photos, and are



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The Food Waste Fiasco: You Have to See it to Believe it

provided a clear plan to begin, they are much more receptive to implementing food recovery policies than restaurants who resist food recovery. We make them aware through our [Open Letter to School Administrators](#) and our [student video program](#) that encourages students to submit videos about their school's K-12 Food Rescue program. Education is very competitive, and nobody wants to be left behind as their neighboring district engages in becoming greener and providing hunger relief simultaneously. So positive peer pressure causes the story to spread quickly, especially when it's kids that are telling the story.

Our K-12 Food Rescue program has led to over 350 cafeterias to implementing food recovery, share table, or other food waste solutions simply by raising awareness, and often connecting that school with a local caring agency like a food pantry that will make regularly scheduled pick-ups. Students in California, Iowa, Illinois, North Carolina, Michigan, and Indiana have all been inspired by our resources to end school food waste. The average school donates [60 items per day](#). Our advocacy includes free resources, public speaking, free education training and mentoring, as well as assistance with coordinating logistics when necessary.

Knowledge is vital to convince school corporations to donate food rather than destroy it. So we've supplied you with these [Get Started documents](#) to help you implement K-12 Food Rescue at your school. Once you've gotten that program going you can also use our Project Based Learning Curriculum called the [Student Led Entrepreneurial Initiative \(S.L.E.I.\)](#) for middle school and high school students that can be used in the classroom or as an after school project for a Key Club, Eco Club, or any civic minded club.

As a former school teacher, I was always taught the axiom....Show me, I see; tell me, I hear; but involve me and I understand. [In this article](#), a group of



All My 111 Possessions...



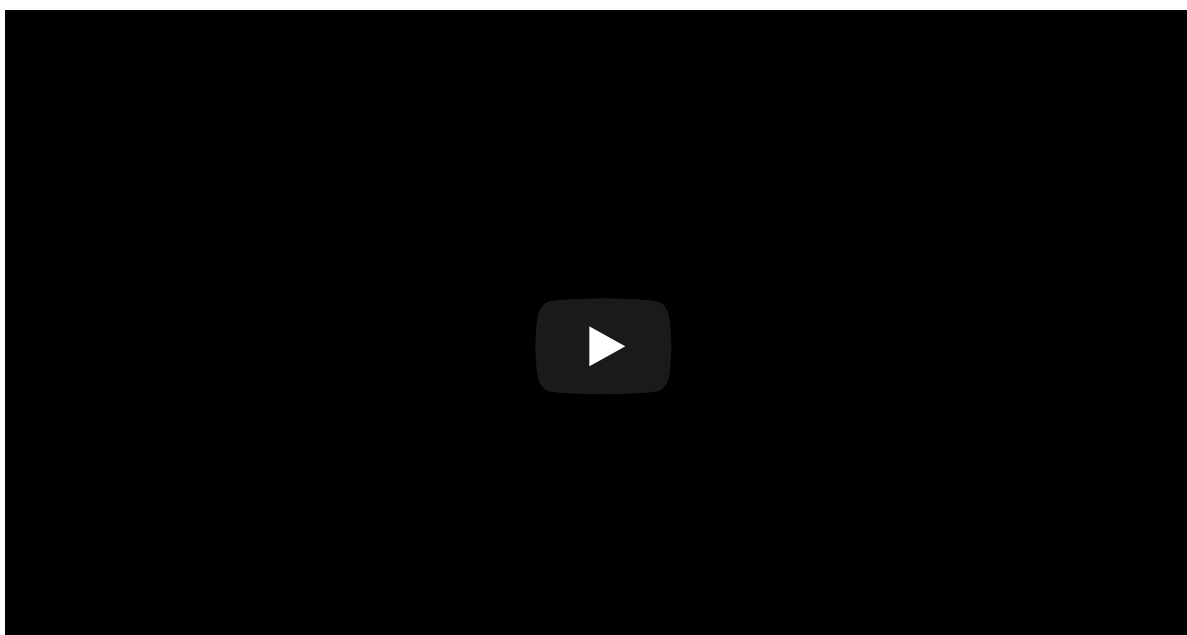
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 Earth Friendly Living
 Environment
 Food
 Forget Money
 Freedom
 Growing Food
 Health and Happiness
 Inspirational
 Love
 Personal

kindergartners participated in our K-12 Food Rescue S.L.E.I. initiative. Yes, I said kindergartners. They preserved their unwanted food, they took pictures of it, they wrote stories about it, and they submitted a class video to Food Rescue for it to be posted onto our website. Now here is what we know. Their work will be viewed by people from other states, and other students will be inspired to say....."if a kindergarten class can do this, we can do it too!" So those 5 and 6-year-old kids have literally changed the world. That's our ultimate mission. To empower the youngest generation to solve the food waste crisis in schools, which will lead to the entire generation developing that attitude that "Food is Not Trash!"

For resources on school food waste solutions and links beyond those noted in the article visit www.FoodRescue.net or contact me at jw@FoodRescue.net

Also, see our step by step video of how to start a food rescue at your school and become a K-12 Food Rescue School:



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For a deeper look into food waste, detailed information on the problem and solutions, how to get involved, food rescue programs, dumpster diving, and more go to [Rob's Food Waste Activism and Dumpster Diving Resource Guide](#).

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