



Don't Waste, Donate: Feeding Our Vets

Sara Starck – Wisconsin Veterans Home at Chippewa Falls | External Relationships



Food Donation Program

Introduction

The Wisconsin Veterans Home at Chippewa Falls strives to provide their members with choices that will fulfill their wants and needs, and food does not take the back seat. In general, two choices are on the menu for both lunch and supper, and orders are taken from the members prior to each meal. Because staff members do not know what choices will be picked until after the cooks have begun prepping meals, there is a significant amount of food waste every day. In an effort to reduce the amount of food being thrown away, a food donation program has been designed and implemented.

Current Knowledge

Before this program was implemented, three things were evident from researching the issue:

1. There is a significant amount of food being thrown away after each meal
2. There is a homeless shelter for Veterans located across the road
3. The dietary team strongly dislikes throwing away so much food that they work hard to prepare everyday

Methodology

In preparing to implement this new program the following steps were implemented:



1,741 servings of food, totaling a cost of **\$903.65** was donated to the Veterans Assistance Foundation over a 28-day period.

From September 6 – October 3 (28 days), **2,890 servings of food were thrown away**, which is an estimated cost of **\$1,828.62**.



First Donation Ready to Go

From left to right: Alison Fransway (Wisconsin Veterans Home cook), Sara Starck (practicum student), Lisa Strasburg (Wisconsin Veterans Home cook)



There was a **77%** reduction in food waste and an **89%** reduction in the cost of food going in the garbage after implementing the Food Donation Program

From February 7 – March 6 (28 days), **664 servings of food were thrown away**, which is an estimated cost of **\$192.26**.



Veterans Assistance Foundation Employees Picking up a Load of Food

From left to right: Tiffany Semanko (Food Service Supervisor), Dana Schimmel (Case Manager)

Measures

Both qualitative and quantitative measures were used to measure the success of this project

Quantitative Measures

- Audits that measure food waste in "servings" (food waste was defined as any food going into the garbage)
- Cost analysis of both food waste (pre- and post-donation) and food being donated

Qualitative Measures

- Satisfaction surveys for the homeless shelter's kitchen supervisor and the director
- Satisfaction surveys for the dietary team at Wisconsin Veterans Home at Chippewa Falls

Determining Success

The success of this project is based on the following factors

Food Waste Audits

- A reduction in food waste of 50% or greater after implementation of donation program

Veterans Assistance Foundation Survey

- A satisfaction rating of "significant" with the process of the program
- Reduction in staff work hours for the Veterans Assistance Foundation

Dietary Team Survey

- Not feeling as if the workload of donating food is too much to handle long-term
- Overall, feeling that the food donation program has been successful

Survey Results

Employee Survey: 8 Respondents

"How much time do you spend on the food donation program and do you feel this is manageable long-term?" Average time spent: 15 minutes

- All 8 respondents stated that they feel this program is manageable long-term
- "Do you feel that the food donation program has been successful?"
- 7 out of 8 respondents stated "significantly" and 1 stated "moderately"
- "Has the food donation program increased your job satisfaction?"
- 5 out of 8 respondents stated "yes" for a total of **62.5% increase in job satisfaction** among this group

Veterans Assistance Foundation Survey: 2 Respondents

"How much has the food donation program decreased the workload of the Veterans Assistance Foundation staff?"

- 2 out of 2 respondents stated 3-4 hours per week
- "What is your current level of satisfaction with the process of the food donation program?"
- 2 out of 2 respondents stated "significant satisfaction"
- "How much of the food donated have you been able to use?"
- 2 out of two respondents stated "75-99%"

Conclusions

Overall, this project went better than expected. The project met or exceeded several of its original goals, including:

- Reducing food waste by 50% or more (food waste was reduced by 77%).
- Not increasing the workload of the dietary team so that they feel it is too much to manage long-term
- Significant satisfaction rating with the donation program for both the WI Veterans Home dietary team and the Veterans Assistance Foundation

So far, staff have not experienced any significant challenges and the Veterans Assistance Foundation, as well as the WI Veterans Home dietary team, continue to enjoy the program.

Recommendations

- Dietary staff can better recognize what foods are consistently thrown away and make appropriate changes to portions being cooked and/or find out why it is not being consumed by the members.
- This program provides a great marketing opportunity for the Wisconsin Veterans Home.
- There should be one person designated to be in charge of this program in my absence. This person should communicate frequently with the Veterans Assistance Foundation, as well as the dietary team, to ensure continued satisfaction on both ends.

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