

King County Green Schools Program

School Districts Put Leftover Edible Food to Good Use

At the end of every school year, school cafeterias often have edible food such as produce, dairy products, baked goods and other staples that would spoil over the summer. In the past, this food often has been thrown out and sent to the landfill.

In June 2007, the King County Green Schools Program organized meetings between interested King County school districts and two nonprofit organizations, Food Lifeline and Northwest Harvest, to discuss donating food rather than throwing it away.

As a result, Federal Way, Issaquah, Lake Washington, Northshore and Shoreline school districts asked Northwest Harvest and Food Lifeline to pick up their usable leftover food and distribute it to the needy.

In June the two charitable organizations collected more than 5,000 pounds of food from these school districts, and distributed it to food banks and meal programs throughout the community.

What would have gone to waste instead provided 3,900 meals to hungry families in Washington at a time when donations to food banks were at their lowest. Donating leftover food items may also reduce disposal costs for participating school districts.

Food Lifeline and Northwest Harvest will collect surplus food from school districts at other times, including prior to other breaks in the school year. Food is transported in temperature-controlled vehicles and handled by drivers who have received food safety training

The national Good Samaritan Food Donation Act encourages the donation of food to nonprofit organizations for distribution to needy individuals. The law protects donors from civil and criminal liability if food donated in good faith is later found to cause harm to the individuals that receive the food.

Interested school districts can contact:

- Food Lifeline: Dani Turk at 206-545-6600, ext. 231, DaniT@fil.org
- Northwest Harvest: Barbara Cerna at 206-923-7451

September 2007