Food Recovery in the Kent Gardens Cafeteria

Dear Parents,

My name is Rachel Simon and I am a parent of a 3rd and 6th Grade student at Kent Gardens. I am also the former President of the Kent Gardens PTA. This year I will be working on a new initiative at our school to collect uneaten, wrapped food from students in our cafeteria, and donate that food to the local food pantry in McLean called SHARE (<http://www.shareofmclean.org/>). This program is currently taking place in school cafeterias around our region – including Chesterbrook ES (FCPS), Haycock ES (FCPS), Lemon Road ES (FCPS), Sleepy Hollow ES (FCPS), Ashlawn ES (Arlington), Glebe Elementary (Arlington), Luther Jackson MS (FCPS), Longfellow MS (FCPS) and other new schools that are getting setup this fall. Thousands of pounds of food have been collected and donated to those in need through these school cafeteria recovery efforts.

**Our goal is to have every student at Kent Gardens eat their entire meal, every single day**. The reality, however, is that the school lunches are designed so that students are often required to take certain foods as part of their cafeteria meal that they don’t necessarily want, and the food goes uneaten by the students and eventually gets thrown away. Our goal is to recover the uneaten food, store it in a designated refrigerator, and donate the food to the local pantry every Friday afternoon.

Kent Gardens is working with the local non-profit 501C-3 organization called The Food Bus (<https://www.facebook.com/FoodBus>) to help get us started on this journey. The Food Bus has purchased Kent Gardens a refrigerator and collection bins for the cafeteria, and will advise us on best practices as we move through the process of getting our system established. They helped me during a trial day this past Spring when we collected over **67 pounds** of uneaten food in one day. Think about the positive impact we can have within our own community! The students were very excited about our efforts and excitedly asked when we would be returning to do this again.

***Are you interested in helping with this effort?*** I hope so! I am looking to put together a committee of parents to work on this effort so it can become a sustainable program, not dependent on one individual for it to be successful. There will be two ways you can help us kick off this program.

First, we are looking for some parents to help in the cafeteria for the first two weeks of the program in assisting our students with properly identifying which foods can be donated vs. thrown away. If you have a flexible schedule and would like to help out please sign up here:

<http://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0f4aa9af2ea46-cafeteria>

Second, if you would like to help out by weighing and transporting food to the SHARE pantry on a Friday afternoon you can sign up via the following link. The entire task should take around 30 minutes. Food can be collected anytime from 1:30-6:00pm. The SHARE pantry key must be checked out from the front office any day Monday-Friday before 4pm.

<http://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0f4aa9af2ea46-food>

If you have any questions or concerns about this program please don’t hesitate to contact me via email at Rachel@simon.net. We welcome any and all feedback that can make this program successful.

Warm Regards,

Rachel Simon