



COMMUNITY KITCHEN

The Tarrant Area Food Bank COMMUNITY KITCHEN combines free culinary job-training for low-income adults with the production of meals for distribution by hunger-relief charities.

PURPOSE The Community Kitchen program, initiated in January 2007, has two purposes: 1) To prepare low-income and unemployed men and women for work in food services and (2) Turn surplus prepared and perishable food donated by grocery stores and restaurants into nutritious meals for emergency food organizations.

PROGRAM A professional chef teaches a 14-week course in food preparation and service, and supervises the subsequent two-week internship for each student. In addition, all participants receive life-skills and time management training as well as career coaching provided by a case manager from the Women's Center of Tarrant County. As the students work toward their own self-sufficiency, they also serve the community by converting donated food into meals distributed by the Food Bank's partner hunger-relief charities.

CRITERIA FOR ENROLLMENT

An applicant must be 18 years or older, eligible to work in the United States and economically disadvantaged; have reliable transportation or be on a bus line; and able to pass initial drug screening and random screening throughout the training. Also, an applicant must have a high school diploma or GED, or be enrolled to earn or be willing to work on a GED; able to read and write English and able to do math at the sixth-grade level. Most students are referred to the program by workforce development and social services organizations.

SPONSORS Funding and in-kind donations are needed from individual donors, food service operations, foundations, businesses and community groups.

VOLUNTEERS Chefs and kitchens in restaurants, hotels, hospitals and other food service facilities are needed to provide internships for Community Kitchen students.

LOCATION The Tarrant Area Food Bank Community Kitchen was housed for its first two years in the small kitchen of a school that belongs to the Food Bank's network. Beginning with the seventh class of students in February 2009, the program began operating in a new 2,400 square-foot facility inside the Food Bank's warehouse.

HISTORY The first Community Kitchen began in 1989 in Washington, D.C., when a food-rescue organization saw the opportunity to train low-income people in food production skills while transforming donated prepared and perishable food into nutritious meals for other hunger-relief organizations. Feeding America, the national network of regional food banks, adopted Community Kitchens as a national program and began providing technical assistance to affiliates such as Tarrant Area Food Bank.

COMMUNITY KITCHEN INFORMATION

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