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Education Through Creation: Fighting Food Insecurity With Food Finders

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Cover Page Footnote

Thank you to Food Finders for giving us their time and support.

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Education Through Creation: Fighting Food Insecurity With Food Finders

Stephen Cavaliere, College of Science; Clarissa Corpstein, College of Science; Christopher Ioerger, College of Engineering; and Jessica Wyckoff, College of Engineering

Food insecurity is a growing problem that few Americans know about, and without the support of the community and local volunteers it is hard to combat. Food Finders is a local food bank situated in West Lafayette, Indiana, that could benefit more from Purdue University student volunteers, both new and returning. As a service-learning project, our English 108 class partnered with Food Finders to create material that would put a face to food insecurity to increase the impact of their efforts. Additionally, such materials could help train new volunteers and encourage them to come back.

Our English 108 service-learning and rhetoric class was partnered with a local West Lafayette, Indiana, food bank, Food Finders, in order to create rhetorically appropriate material geared towards volunteers. For this project, we created several means and different mediums to promote the impact that volunteers at Food Finders have on the community and to inform the volunteers on tasks that they would be performing at Food Finders. Our group focused on making a video that was meant to find out what Purdue students knew about food insecurity.

Food insecurity, or the inability to consistently provide oneself with an adequate amount of food, is a global issue prevalent even in our own community. Not only is Food Finders a local food bank in West Lafayette focused on fighting food insecurity, it is also a nonprofit organization that relies heavily on volunteers. Therefore, our goal was to use the resources we created to bring in and increase the number of student volunteers by making volunteering simpler and more meaningful. Since many students also knew

little about Food Finders or food insecurity, our group created a subgoal to inform students on both topics as well.

One of our main activities was to travel to Food Finders and volunteer for at least one shift throughout the semester to familiarize ourselves with all the different volunteer services that are available. Time spent there was also used to evaluate volunteer training and education to see which aspect of the process different groups needed to address in more detail. The experience from these visits added to the overall quality and informative aspects of the materials created for Food Finders.

While many rhetorical forms were explored after volunteering, our group felt it would be best to create a video. It consisted of interviews of Purdue students to assess their knowledge of food insecurity—what it was, who was affected, how was it being solved, and how they could help. Later, an interview with Stacey Baker, an employee of Food Finders, helped to answer these questions with credibility. While the interviews were essentially a video poll of the student population, they also served as a way to spread information about food insecurity and to debunk common misconceptions of it. Materials collected from these interviews were utilized in the creation of an informational food insecurity video.

The overall outcome of our class service-learning project was a wide range of informative products constructed through a variety of mediums, including posters, flyers, brochures, a video, and online presentations. At the end of the project, all the material was presented to two staff members at Food Finders so that they could add their specific recommendations to further improve and fine tune each product. Throughout the presentation, both staff members expressed appreciation for the value of the products and, at its conclusion, assured us that what we produced would make a meaningful impact on the education of Food Finders volunteers, particularly those coming from Purdue University.