

Mid-Year Report

Grantee: RISE

People present: Leslie Koppel, Juan Cabos, Monica Tarantino, Julie, Tyler Hoff, Susan

Date: 10.5.21

Project: Food boxes for seniors

What problem was being addressed? Food insecurity and poor nutrition

What actions have been implemented? Food box distribution began in September. Packets were created that include pre-surveys, recipes, food information, which will be added to each month. 50 participants.

What went right? Each month have been able to add “extras” – eggs, measuring spoons, spices, oil...

What went wrong? It took longer than expected to get all the pieces in place, create materials, enroll people. Now people are asking to participate. It was a challenge to coordinate pick up days so not all over the week.

What surprises did you encounter/what was serendipitous? How much material was already available from reliable sources, even bilingual. Level of interest.

Leslie noted the benefit of creating a template program that can be used to recruit additional funds for the senior program, or be replicated to focus on other populations (children, mothers...)

How are you measuring effectiveness? # of people, satisfaction, improved knowledge

What changes will you make in the remainder of the year? None

Notes: I was so impressed by the organization and the concept. We agreed that “senior” could start at 60, consistent with Federal Nutrition program guidelines. They told us that the food pantry is serving 420 families (up from 100 pre-pandemic), 45% of seniors are working at low-wage jobs, 75% report relying on the pantry.

Mercer St Friends is a Food Bank, theoretically collecting commodity food, donations and ordering paid food to supply food pantries and schools throughout the greater Mercer Co. area. All the food I have seen there is non-perishable although there has been talk of adding perishables once they had cool storage space. Many of the programs have age or income restrictions. RISE supplements this with their own partnerships with local farmers, food stores, Rotary, etc. Juan said he picked up 8 pallets of food this week. Numerous volunteers make it happen. TASK works with 3 churches in Hightstown to serve 3 hot meals a week to around 200 people.

We are invited to visit and see it in action. They have a new head office opening at the same time as our board meeting.

