Food Finders needs your help to feed hungry Long Beach area kids during summer

Without the benefits of a free or reduced-cost lunch at school, hundreds of students in the Long Beach Unified School District experience hunger during summer vacation.

In an effort to minimize the food shortages that families face over summer, Food Finders, a Lakewood nonprofit dedicated to helping the hungry, is participating in its seventh annual Summer To End Hunger Food Drive.

From now until Aug. 31, participating organizations will leave donation bins near their storefront so local businesses and residents can donate canned and packaged foods. Over 98 percent of these contributions go directly to families and food pantries in Long Beach within 24 hours of volunteers picking it up.

“In my mind throwing away good food is a sin,” Lisa Hoffman, director of fund

By Brennon Dixson, bdixson@scng.com, @TheBrennonD on Twitter

POSTED: 07/10/17, 1:46 PM PDT | UPDATED: 2 HRS AGO | # COMMENTS
development for Food Finders, said. “The smidgen of effort it takes to rescue the food becomes worth it once you see the smiling faces and full bellies of the children.”

The local nonprofit hopes to receive around 20,000 pounds of food donations this summer by using its network of over 650 businesses that make or distribute food in the Southern California region.

“Any food that is untouched or hasn’t expired, like unserved leftovers from meetings or weddings, can be rescued and donated directly to a place like the Boys and Girls Club where a child would be able to enjoy it,” Hoffman said.

Popular grocers like Ralph’s, Trader Joe’s and Gelson’s Markets are already in the process of donating. Despite state and federal laws that protect food donors from civil and criminal liability, many other grocers, food vendors and restaurants are afraid to donate out of fear for lawsuits, officials said.

Hoffman recently spoke at a Christian business luncheon to help dispel this myth.

At the meeting, she said businesses have been shortsighted in seeing the potential that saving food has on profits and the community they serve. Food gets people in the door so you can talk and see how to help them, she said.

“If people took the extra few minutes to rescue the food by packaging and donating it,” Hoffman said, “then the millions of pounds of food currently sitting in the landfill could’ve been used to prepare millions of meals for kids and families in our community.”

Food Finders is now accepting donations of nonperishable food items at its office, 3744 N. Industry Ave., Lakewood, #401.

For those hoping to assist with the donation drive, the organization also needs volunteers to help sort, box and deliver the donated food.

For a complete list of where donation bins can be found or for more information on how to help, visit their website (foodfinders.org) or call 562-283-1400.

For After Hours Food Donations, businesses can text or call 562-233-3247.