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Spring 2019

Taylor Ehrhardt - Food Bank of Iowa

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University of Northern Iowa

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Recommended Citation

Ehrhardt, Taylor, "Taylor Ehrhardt - Food Bank of Iowa" (2019). *Robert and Yvonne Koob Fund for Student Community Engagement Recipients*. 11.

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Taylor Ehrhardt - Food Bank of Iowa

Robert and Yvonne Koob Fund for Student Community Engagement

Instructions: Please work with your internship supervisor to fill out this form. Once completed, return to Julianne Gassman [REDACTED]

Name Taylor Ehrhardt **Agency:** Food Bank of Iowa

Intern's Phone Number and E-mail Address [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Organization Contact Person and Phone: Michaela B. Devaney [REDACTED]

Academic Advisor Person and Phone Julianne Gassman [REDACTED]

Future Plans for student [REDACTED]

What did you accomplish during your internship?

The main project I worked on was the Food Bank's Food Rescue Pilot. The goal of this pilot was to get nutritious perishable products from local grocery stores to partner agencies and in turn hungry lowans. Since this food has a shorter shelf life it must get to people as quickly as possible. We utilized teams of volunteers who picked up the food in the morning and delivered it that afternoon to agencies. The volunteers used a refrigerated van, so that the product would remain safe for consumption as well as maintaining the maximum shelf life. For my role in this project I assisted with the day to day management. I would communicate with the volunteers after every shift to get feedback on how it went and any issues that came up. I would answer the volunteer's questions and look for solutions to these issues. An example of an issue that came up, was the organization and identification of the totes. They were blank totes, so there was no way to identify what type of food was in each. This made it difficult for the afternoon volunteers to know what food they had. I designed a labelling system with the use of Velcro that would hold up in refrigerated environments.

I also designed two educational activities to highlight what the food bank does and why it is necessary. They are both flexible to different audiences and are a mixture of educational and interactive. One focuses on poverty and some of the ways it can impact someone's life. The

other activity focuses on the various parts of the food bank and the challenges they face. These challenges are a mixture of scenarios that have actually happened as well as ones that could occur. The participants will also discuss the ripple effect that is caused by these issues. These activities will ideally be used with volunteers, community members, and other groups the Food Bank interacts with.

How did the internship benefit the student?

I was able to apply my knowledge and skills I have learned in the classroom to a real world environment. This internship helped me realize how much goes into a pilot program of this scale and how time consuming simple projects can become. When creating the educational activities I did not expect them to take up nearly as much of my time as they did. This is an important lesson to think of going forward, so that I do not bite off more than I can chew. I had to learn how to balance multiple projects at once to combat this. It also showed me other areas that I need to work on going forward. I learned the importance of evaluating your own ego and being self aware of it. Since nonprofit work is passion driven it is extremely easy to let your ego play into things. This is something that will be beneficial for me as well as something to keep in mind when working in a team environment.

This internship experience has also showed me a new side of the nonprofit world. Going into this I only knew a little bit about food banks and food insecurity. I did not understand the full scope of food banking. It was eye opening to see just how much a food bank does and all the avenues that food comes in. The most interesting part was the scale of some of the donations that come in. A good example of this is the truckloads of product that is donated by Barilla. For various reasons this pasta does not meet their quality standards. This could be anything from pasta that cracks at a slightly lower temperature to dented boxes. This experience has opened up a new option in terms of my future that I may have not considered otherwise.

How did the internship benefit the agency?

The intern stepped in to the launch of our first food rescue pilot at Food Bank of Iowa that only had one month of planning under its belt. While FBOI staff focused on launching the next stages of the pilot, Taylor was able to finesse the daily steps and needs of the program in

its delicate pilot stage. It would not be possible for anyone to focus on next stages without this support. He was able to check in before and after every volunteer shift, and problem solve many of the unexpected challenges independently. Details such as organizing the food and coming up with processes that worked for retail stores, homeless shelters/pantries/etc while also being easily communicated to a team of over 30 volunteers.

Taylor used his knowledge learned from his time with Food Bank of Iowa to develop two hands on and interactive learning activities to showcase the operations of the Food Bank and its role in the community. This allows community members to connect with the feeling of being food insecure in a way that a verbal explanation alone never could. He brought this concept to us from his experiences with student org leadership at the University of Northern Iowa.

How does the internship benefit the community?

From January to March 32,850 pounds of food was rescued from local landfills and put on the shelves of a spectrum of partner agencies (meal sites, residential facilities, school pantries, and more). This allowed Iowans experiencing food insecurity to access healthy fresh food items such as milk, yogurt, produce, meat and more. These are all products that are cost prohibitive to purchase with donor dollars, but they also prove to be staples in client households.

With Taylor's involvement and dedication to this program he has helped build this program in a way that makes it sustainable in our community leading to more household in need receiving fresh foods rescued from retail stores. This program was tasked to prove this concept of food rescue to a large network of donors who may have otherwise been hesitant to donate product. We foresee this program as a scalable infrastructure across our 55 county network.

(Student to complete) One quote that describes the experience gained from completing this internship (to be used for promotional materials; please specify author of quote)?

"This internship with the Food Bank of Iowa has shown me a new side of the nonprofit world and I am excited to see where that will take me!"- Taylor Ehrhardt

(Intern supervisor to complete) One quote that describes the impact the intern had on the community (to be used for promotional materials; please specify author of quote)?

“This internship program helped Food Bank of Iowa move the concept of Food Rescue into a scalable practice providing us the opportunity to approach new donors that will ultimately allow us to move closer to our vision of a hunger free Iowa.” -Emily Shearer, Acquisition Program Manager

Please provide:

- **A reproducible photo of the intern in action at their internship for media purposes**
- **If applicable, a copy of materials created by the intern including but not limited to: books, program materials, videos, promotional materials etc.**