

Campus Kitchen Aims to Tackle Food Insecurity

By: Meredith Lawrence

GC recently launched a program called Campus Kitchen that will help cut food waste and feed people in the Milledgeville community, but Baldwin County's food security crisis affects one out of every four citizens.

"There is an estimated 11,000 individuals in Baldwin County who are considered food insecure," said Cameron Skinner, organizer of Campus Kitchen at GC. "A lot of families don't have access to three square meals a day."

Food insecurity can be caused by different factors, such as access to grocery stores, restaurant density, farmer's markets, health, food stamps, income and poverty levels.

Roughly 40 percent of food in the United States is wasted each year.

In 2016, 83 percent of Baldwin County public school students received free or reduced lunch; 75.8 percent of students were on free lunch, while 83.4 percent of students were on free or reduced lunch.

"Last year we served almost 48,000 meals at three schools, 20 community sites and drove two school buses all over the county making 11 stops on each bus to serve meals" said Susan Nelson, director of school nutrition for Baldwin County School District. "Kids currently receive free meals, breakfast, lunch and an after school snack."

The school district also provides meals during summer.

The per capita income in Baldwin County in 2015 was \$18,611, and the median household income was \$32,460. 26 percent of Baldwin County citizens are in poverty. These numbers correlate with the high number of students on free or reduced lunch.

"I'm confident that Campus Kitchen will help bridge a gap between students and the community," said Julia Steele, organizer of Campus Kitchen at GC, "

According to the Census Bureau, “if a family’s total income is less than the family’s threshold, then that family and every individual in it is considered in poverty.”

The USDA defines three types of food insecurity, one being general food insecurity. This type of food insecurity is the most common among residents of Baldwin County.

The Chard Wray Food Pantry is located in Milledgeville, and it provides nutritious groceries to families and elders in need. It operates Tuesday through Thursday from 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.