



Project Background

In Silicon Valley, a staggering one in four adults and one in three children are food insecure or at risk of hunger. In Santa Clara County alone, there are more than 200,000 people living under the poverty line. Each year, according to Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties, Santa Clara County is nearly 150 million meals short of feeding its most vulnerable population, while over 34 million pounds of edible food is thrown into our landfills. As part of Santa Clara County's efforts to reduce edible food waste and feed people living with daily food insecurity in the region, Santa Clara County has partnered with Joint Venture Silicon Valley to create an initiative designed to address the issues of hunger and waste. It is called A La Carte.

The Vision

A La Carte is a fleet of refrigerated food trucks that resemble their trendy food truck cousins, but without cooking and washing facilities. Every day the trucks collect surplus edible food from university and corporate campuses and drive directly into neighborhoods where a high concentration of people living with daily food insecurity can have a normal, dignified experience as they select meals free of charge. To alleviate any barriers, no registration is required; no personal information is gathered. Following the pilot program, involving one truck and one campus, additional trucks will be acquired to cover Santa Clara County and beyond.

The Pilot

In September 2018 the A La Carte pilot launched on the campus of Stanford University where one truck collected surplus food from many dining locations on and around campus. During the fall, over 60,000 pounds of food were collected, and much more is still to come. The residents of four cities as well as students from De Anza and Foothill Colleges will be the recipients of the bounty. With the help of Second Harvest Food Bank, the Santa Clara Health Department, the Community Service Organizations of Mountain View and Sunnyvale, and census tract data, distribution locations have been identified. Professional Ambassador Drivers, accompanied by volunteers, follow specific routes five days a week to insure consistent and reliable service.

The Future

This project lends itself to collaboration with large corporations, especially those with company cafes and an interest in local hunger alleviation. After we begin to gather data and experience through the Stanford University pilot in fall of 2018, we are looking for partners interested in not only contributing financially, but those that want a meaningful connection to the immediate needs of their neighbors. By donating food from company kitchens and encouraging staff to participate in the program through volunteer opportunities, A La Carte offers the opportunity to tackle the important issue of hunger in a tangible, impactful, local way.