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Introduction

Madeline Goebel

Director, Iowa Hunger Summit and Community Outreach, World Food Prize Foundation

If you'll all take your seats, we'll get started here. Well, thank you. Many thanks for joining us as we commence the 12th Annual Iowa Hunger Summit. My name is Madeline Goebel, and I am the Director of the Iowa Hunger Summit and Community Outreach here for the World Food Prize. And it is an honor to welcome you all here this morning.

Our schedule this morning will include three panels and a special keynote by our president, Ambassador Quinn. Our first panel on "Food Recovery" will look at how food waste undermines food insecurity, and we'll address cross-sector discussion as we focus on food waste and recovery that highlights not only collaboration, but really looking at how our nonprofit and private sectors look to collaborate to create better and more elaborate initiatives.

Our second panel, "The Economics of SNAP," will focus on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and the varying economic and community-based outcomes of the program both in rural and urban areas throughout our state of Iowa.

At 10:45 we'll have a special keynote by Ambassador Kenneth Quinn, who will discuss the Iowa Shares Campaign, and recognize the 1979 efforts to aid Cambodian victims of the Khmer Rouge Regime.

Our final panel this morning will be led by Aegis Trust. The panelists will engage in a conversation on the relationship between nutrition, violence prevention, and mental health.

Now, we will begin these important conversations with Lea Hensel, who will moderate our first panel. She is the Communications and Marketing Coordinator for the Iowa Waste Reduction Center at the University of Northern Iowa. She joined IWRC in 2006 and has taken a special interest in topics of food waste reduction. She also leads the Iowa Food Waste Stakeholder Group. Please join me in welcoming Lea and the panelists to the stage.

FOOD RECOVERY: HOW FOOD WASTE UNDERMINES FOOD SECURITY

Panel Moderator: *Lea Hensel*

October 15, 2018 – 9:00 a.m.

Panel Moderator

Lea Hensel

Communications & Marketing Coordinator, Iowa Waste Reduction Center

Thank you, everybody. So I'm sure many of you know the statistics surrounding the issues we're here to talk about today. Feeding America reports that 1 in 8 Iowans are food insecure. And the Natural Resources Defense Council reports that, of all the food that's produced in the U.S., we're wasting 40% of it. So with so much food being wasted and so many people not knowing where their next meal is coming from, it's created a cross-sector understanding that food waste undermines food security.

So today our panelists are going to be exploring the positive, economic and community-based outcomes that have resulted from partnerships and collaboration, based on recovery and redistributing food nationally, regionally and locally. Our panelists each have different roles in food recovery, so we have the opportunity to hear varying perspectives that highlight innovative approaches, provide insight into collaboration and partnerships, and showcase the outcomes they have achieved since embarking on a path towards zero hunger and zero waste.

Panel Members

Aubrey Alvarez *Executive Director & Co-Founder, Eat Greater Des Moines*

Derek Nelson *Director of Sustainability, Kum & Go*

Denise Osterhues *Senior Director, Corporate Affairs, The Kroger Co.*

Denise Hi. I'm Denise Osterhues, and I lead Sustainability and Community Engagement for Kroger, based in Cincinnati. So for those of you who don't know Kroger, we have 2800 supermarkets across the country. We're in 35 states and the District of Columbia. Unfortunately, we're not here in Iowa, but our closest stores here you may know are Baker's in Omaha. We also operate 36 food processing facilities and 42 distribution centers that serve our stores.

So I wanted to talk for just a couple minutes this morning about how Kroger thinks about hunger and food waste and food rescue. So 135 years in the grocery business have taught us a few things about people and about food. We know that meals matter, and that families that share meals together have children who do better in all aspects of their lives. And yet there's this fundamental absurdity in our food system that Lea just mentioned, which is that we throw 40% of the food we produce away, yet 1 in 8 people struggle with hunger and 1 in 6 children.

So we think that's crazy, and so what we are focused on is ending hunger in our communities and eliminating waste across our company by 2025. So a little bit of that is just our simple vision that we believe we can help solve the hunger problem and solve our waste problem by keeping more food out of landfills, and to its highest purpose, which is to feed people, after all.

So we do have a plan. These are ambitious, huge goals. They sound crazy. They are slightly terrifying, but we do have a plan, so I'll cover that real quick.

So one of the first things we're doing is launching a ten-million-dollar innovation fund to help find and finance innovative solutions to our food waste problem. We're also committed to accelerate food donations. So our goals are to reach one billion meals by 2020 and three billion meals by 2025, which is a pace faster than we're currently on—so we have some work to do. But not just more food, more balanced meals, so trying to focus on healthy, nutritious foods that will nourish our communities. And then we also have committed to be a zero waste company by 2020, and then we added zero food waste by 2025.

Part of our commitment is also focused on public policy advocacy. So we've committed to be a leader, and help lead the way to find solutions and infrastructure where it's needed most. And I think one of the biggest points I would make is—we can't do it alone. We know that, so we're working with our partners to help on hunger and food waste. And those include Feeding America. We are a founding member of Feeding America and have worked with them for a long time. And then World Wildlife Fund, who we've worked with for a long time on things like seafood sustainability, so they're one of our key partners, too, and as well as ReFED. Some of you may be familiar with ReFED, who focuses on food waste.

Our ultimate goal is to transform our communities and improve health for millions—again, big, ambitious goals—but that's really where we think we need to be. And as Kroger, we think we can do something about this, because we are America's grocer, and we have food and we know food. So our focus is partly food rescue and getting more food to the people who need it. So about ten years ago we began working with Feeding America to develop what is now an industry-leading perishables donation program that we call Zero Hunger | Zero Waste Food Rescue. And over ten years we've directed or donated 450 million pounds of food from our stores and our manufacturing plants to local food banks. And currently we have 99 and a little more percent of our stores participating in food rescue. We have a few that aren't, but not very many.

One of the things we've done this year is really rebrand and relaunch our food rescue program to get our associates really emotionally connected to it, and tie it to Zero Hunger | Zero Waste so that they know that every day when they put food aside for donation, they're helping end hunger in their community and keeping food out of the landfill.

Reducing food waste, I would mention we started working with World Wildlife Fund early on to map our food waste footprint. We didn't really know our numbers at the time, and it was really important to us to understand how much we were losing, how much food loss there is. So we have a bunch of different initiatives to reduce food waste and promote food waste recycling. We have a markdown program we're introducing early next year, a new branded product line called "Peculiar picks," which is imperfect produce. So we're going to kind of test how our customers respond to buying more imperfect produce we have. And then we also have anaerobic digestion, and we do a lot of animal feed and composting programs as well.

So that's kind of the big picture of what Kroger does. I'm looking forward to our discussion.

Derek Hi, I'm Derek Nelson, and I'm the Manager of Sustainability for Kum & Go. And we started our food rescue journey just a little over 18 months ago, and so for those of you that aren't

very familiar with food rescue, it's one of those things that you think about it, and ultimately for our business it was the right thing to do.

So to tell our story... And I've been with Kum & Go a little over two and a half years. So one of the first things I did was actually I jumped into a dumpster to understand what our waste was made up of. I know it's a glorious aspect of the job, but I'm sure a lot of you don't get to do waste audits very often. But one of the things that we found right away is about one in five bags of trash that we were producing in our C-stores was food waste that was perfectly edible food that could be put to better use.

And so one of the misnomers that a lot of our store associates had was—could I get sued for donating this and somebody getting sick? And that's where food rescue and knowing the laws and regulations is key. And anybody can donate in good faith and they're protected under what's known as the Bill Emerson Act. So President Clinton enacted this policy in 1996, and it protects any individual or organization from criminal or civil liability if they donate to a nonprofit in good faith.

So when we looked at this hierarchy of—what's the most responsible way of handling food waste? This is what the EPA recommends, and I'm not going to go through this in great detail, but at first you want to eliminate or reduce the amount of food on the shelf or what's coming into your store. With a C-store organization, or a convenience store entity like ourselves, you've got to have a little bit of product on the shelf in order to sell it. And you can't always predict those impulse purchasers or impulse acquisitions coming in by that consumer. So there's a fine balance of what's right from a food waste perspective, but the next piece of that puzzle is donating that food to help people and those that need it. So we're still early on in that progression and our journey, but we're making strides.

So for Kum & Go, why are we doing it? It hits a lot of crossroads, and for us it's the right thing to do. It aligns with our core values and philanthropic give. We give back 10% of our profits to local organizations and nonprofits every year to help from a charitable and philanthropic give. We think it enhances our Kum & Go brand. We stand for something. That's one of the big things that, as our organization continues to evolve, we want to be a purpose-driven organization. And our mission is actually to “Make days better through connecting with people.” And so we think this also lives up to that value and mission as our organization.

And the one big thing for us—we have over 5,000 store associates across 11 states, and this is an endeavor that actually engages all of our store associates. They get bought into the fact that, hey, we're donating food—we're doing what's right in our local communities. And they're a part of the process, and we engage them in that process and make sure that they help us do that.

And then at the end of the day it's also profitable. So what we get on the back-end is pretty nice tax benefit for having a charitable write-off. So what's interesting is, as a for-profit organization, we're actually able to take advantage of what President Obama enacted in aligning the tax laws for all organizations. And so we're able to actually take advantage of an additional 5% tax charitable write-off due to that, that passed in 2016.

So what's our program look like? These are pictures of marketplace store for those of you that have been in one of our marketplace stores recently. We started this store in 2016. If you look

at our categories in the C-store space, all of them are declining. You talk about cigarettes, tobacco, even fossil fuels that we sell. With more fuel-efficient vehicles coming online, every category that we sell in our C-stores is declining. So one area that we can do better is an area of offering fresh and healthy food options. So if you go into one of our new marketplace stores, it has that emphasis—it's right there when you come in. And so it also produces that food waste, and like I said, we have that balance that we're trying to achieve.

This is our process—it's a one-pager. So going back to—is this hard?—no, if you make the process simple and engage everybody in that process. So we've got it down to one page, and with associates, 5,000 of them across 11 states, it's hard to keep training and make the process easy. So that's why you make the process easy. So it's one of those things, as long as you continue to educate and formalize that process, you can make a difference across that footprint.

So this is our footprint. We operate a little over 400 stores across 11 states. Everywhere we've launched Food Rescue has a heart, a blue heart that keeps populating as we go here. We're in 215 stores as of today, and we started this journey in January of 2017. So you think about food rescue and the impact that it has. We've now, just in 2018 alone, donated more than 1.4 million individual items, which at a retail value is over \$4 million worth of food. So you can start with one C-store and grow it pretty fast with the right partners, and Eat Greater Des Moines is certainly one of them. But that's what it's about. It's engaging and collaborating with others, and that's why we've been successful. It's a community. It takes a community. It takes organizations. It takes people with compassion and caring hearts, and if we didn't have that, we wouldn't have the success we had. And I just want to say thank you to all those organizations.

So this is the list that we are currently working with. Like Denise had mentioned, we looked at scaling this on a large scale, and Feeding America has helped us as well. We haven't formalized a partnership with them yet, but a majority of these organizations are Feeding America affiliates. And so we're trying to get there, and that's the biggest takeaway that I hope you all can walk away with is—It takes a family. And thank you to all those partners. So with that I'll turn it over to Aubrey.

Aubrey Well, thank you. I am Aubrey Alvarez. I'm with Eat Greater Des Moines, and I will say it's been a pleasure to, one, learn from Denise, too, about how exciting everything that's happening at Kroger, and getting to personally work with Derek with Kum & Go—so just to see kind of what opportunities there are for us as we kind of work to grow food rescue and recovery within our communities. So just as a kind of little heads-up.

So Eat Greater Des Moines, we really are a small nonprofit that's focused right here in Central Iowa, and our work is to really facilitate connections that strengthen our food system, and our work is really trying to unite the community through food by making it easy to access quality food.

So with that, when we got started working, we went around and talked with various individuals and groups and said you know—Where are things going really well, where are things that we can build upon, and then where are there gaps, where are there opportunities?

And food rescue and food recovery was one of those areas seen as an opportunity, because we had plenty of donors who were wanting to give the excess food that they had. They knew that

it was still healthy and edible. They just didn't know where it could go and how to get it there. At the same time, we have tons of recipient organizations, whether that's a Boys and Girls Club, a school, a food pantry, whichever, who could use food, but they didn't have the capacity to go and develop all of those relationships. So that's really where the work for Eat Greater Des Moines kind of came in, is to be that connection piece.

So kind of like Derek had mentioned, really food rescue is just capturing any of that healthy and edible, but not saleable food and getting it to an organization that can put it to good use. So that's really... We had this discussion at dinner last night about—I think sometimes when people picture food rescue or any of that, you picture what's left on your plate at the end of a meal, or you picture someone digging in a dumpster. That's not it. This is all the perfectly good, healthy stuff that wasn't put out yet or those box lunches or those packaged sandwiches that any one of us would eat. So it's still really great quality food. It just has to move quickly, because it doesn't have much life left.

So when we've been working through this, our model has always been to play matchmaker, so very similar, we just find who has the food and how can we connect them with someone who could use the food. So that's been our process for really the last five years. We did add a smartphone application called Chow Bank that again was trying to make that process simpler, and make it easier for a donor and a recipient to connect without having to necessarily go through us.

But really even through all of that, there are some challenges that have continued to come up that we are seeing within the system. So really one of the biggest challenges that we've seen is transportation. So there are a lot of groups that could use food, but they don't have the capacity to go and get it, or they don't have the capacity on a regular basis to go and get that food. So that's been leaving a lot of opportunities there on the table.

Equity is another place. So when you think about food access and food recovery, if it's based on proximity to the donor, which is what makes it easier for the donor and the recipient, if you're already living in a food desert, you're equity is lessened right here because there isn't something close. So that's really been a challenge.

We've seen as well among food recipients or food rescue organizations that sometimes just because of, just like individuals, when there is a concern that you might lose the food, you would rather take more than you can use than, say, we can only use half of this—is there another group that could use the other half? So hoarding and ending up with waste is a real issue within even nonprofit organizations where it's very competitive, and we have groups that don't want to lose their relationship, so they sometimes take more than they need and end up tossing some of it.

And then consistency. So again this is a piece even for those that have, whether it's a consistency of donation, which is great for the recipient partners—they know they always are going to get the same type of food and they can plan meals around it. But consistency is also great for the donor—they know someone's going to be there same time, same place, you know, who they are, what they look like, and that's really what helps build those relationships. Because again, like everyone has said, the relationships are what keep this moving forward. So with those challenges came an opportunity.

So I don't know if any of you from the area recognize these little Mini-Coopers kind of tooling around town. They're very cute. So we have our partner with Wesley Life, Meals on Wheels. They use these Mini-Coopers every day from 10 A.M. to 2 P.M. to deliver food to seniors around the community. So those vehicles are only in use from 10 A.M. to 2 P.M. So in our partnership with them, we thought, hmmm, that seems like there's some capacity. Maybe we could use some of that open time to help us with some of this food rescue, these challenges that we've been seeing.

So at the same time we had another opportunity. Derek mentioned that Kum & Go was expanding their food recovery program. So again our partnership with the Food Bank of Iowa, they had done a phenomenal job matching as many of the Kum & Go stores in our area as possible to go and pick up, through[inaudible] the usual model of the recipient going,[inaudible] agency enabled, going and picking up that food and taking it back. So through that, there were about 22 stores that were on more of the outskirts of the community so more of the suburbs—so the Waukee, Johnston, Ankeny—just a little too far for any of these recipient partners to go on a regular basis. So that's where we tried to put the two together.

So our initial idea was we were going to use Wesley Life, so we're paying Wesley Life drivers to pick up food from 22 Kum & Go's three days a week, every Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and then dropping it off at 15 locations around the metro. So that was our idea and that was what we initially raised money to support and just tested out to see how it goes.

Then we actually ran into another challenge. Again, because Food Bank had done such a great job and we have similar partners, we actually had a hard time finding places for the food to go. So, one, they needed to be able to accept it three days a week, 150 to 200 items, so you need to be open at least three days a week. And a lot of our regular partners were already getting some of this great food, so they didn't need anymore.

So that pushed us to again look out for who else could be a partner and who else is out there. So, thankfully, through our relationship with the Community Foundation, I had that conversation to say—who are we missing? We know there's still at least 30,000 people out there who don't have enough food. How do we get food to them? And they came up with the great idea of reaching out to J.B. Conlin with Conlin Properties, who allowed us to do a pilot with them to put food in some of their affordable housing communities. So that was new for them. Their property managers—this isn't usually their job, but they were happy to do it, and we were happy to try it out. So we did it.

We kicked it off on April 8th. So we had four Mini-Coopers traveling to 22 Kum & Go's and then delivering to 15 locations. So we had affordable housing communities, but we also have Boys and Girls Clubs, school pantries, really a mix of anyone that can use food. And it's been working. So they've provided, since April, 76,000 meals, saved over 50,000 pounds. When we surveyed the clients, 60% of them have said that they're using this food two to three times a week, so it's really filling a gap for them. And because of that, there were a lot that had been skipping meals. So you see 65% of clients had been skipping meals because they didn't have enough to get through the week, and they were skipping meals pretty regularly. So that's really the definition of hunger is not only that you skip meals but you skip meals regularly.

So because of the timing of this program, it was over the summer, 80% of this was going to children and families, so it was really filling a gap, and that was something that we were

hearing from a lot of our clients when we went and did some surveys with them was just how thankful they were that they knew they would always have food available, sandwiches, salads, wraps, the chicken strips, any cut-up fruits and vegetables that was not only delicious but always available and that they could count on it.

So we're hearing, and it was one of those things that was also great to know that we were filling a gap but also still heartbreaking to know that there are so many that were going days without food and having empty refrigerators. So really knowing that this food had been going in the dumpster, even though it was still perfectly edible, that by providing this partnership—so it's a partnership with Wesley Life, with Kum & Go, with Conlin Properties and all of our recipient partners—we've really been able to kind of fill that gap.

So now our focus is on—how do we replicate what we're doing, scale it up, build it out, and expand to additional convenience stores and really look beyond just the convenience store. Because this transportation piece is a barrier for all of our recipient partners. So there's still more that we can do, but we're excited that we took this first step to get it going and now we can continue it. So now we're planning on continuing what we've been doing and growing it from here. And we're excited to see that happen. Thank you.

Lea So I'm wondering if each of you can provide some advice for a company that wants to get started in food recovery. They're not doing anything yet, and they really don't even know where to begin. What would you guys give them?

Aubrey Just do it. They were waiting for me to say that.

Denise I think that's a good point, and I think it's—just get started and maybe start small. Pick something that's a little maybe easier to donate that you think you can get your arms around, and then work with local partners. So we in every one of our communities, around every store there's maybe different groups that pick up. We get pickups about two or three times a week. One of the easiest items for us to donate, frankly, is meat because we can freeze it. So sometimes it's easier to donate something that can be frozen and set aside versus produce or something like hot foods that are a little bit harder to donate. But I would say just start with something small.

Derek I would echo that to some extent. When we launched our food rescue program back in January of last year, we sought out a lot of information first. And we looked at who's doing this really well, and it was actually Kroger's, Loaf 'N Jug, a C-store chain out in Colorado that we modeled as our first pilot store. And then we contacted partners like Aubrey, and we worked with the Food Bank of Iowa very early on in our process. But we leaned on them to help us get going, because they had more experience in this space. So lean on others and trust that they know what they're doing, and then as you learn yourself, grow it and expand it.

Aubrey I would just like to say, too, how exciting it is to hear someone say, "Start with meat" from the donation side. That is not something that I think we have seen that has been my experience in the food rescue space—is anyone starting with proteins, and that's a huge gap in the system. So if you take anything from this today, take—Start with your protein area and freeze it, because that would go really quickly in the recipient network.

Denise I would say one thing on top of that. So we also, depending on what your organization is and how big you are, you may have a food safety team, who is all over it. And so they are our biggest partners probably when we think about expanding our food rescue program and adding

new categories of foods. So we have gone to them actually through Zero Hunger | Zero Waste. It's given us a perfect platform to go to our own business units and say—"Hey, this is a donation opportunity that we have in produce or in seafood. And food safety team—we need you to help us figure out a way to say yes." And that has been kind of powerful. So they've given us kind of a few tips on what to start from and a few more categories that we haven't traditionally donated, and that's been pretty exciting, too.

Lea Now, are there any barriers that you guys hit, or obstacles when you got started that you guys were able to overcome? And you can kind of share how you did that.

Derek I'll take this one out of the gate, I guess. I think the biggest barrier was people, because there was so much apprehension about—Oh, somebody's going to get sick, somebody's going to die. And you take a step back and say—okay, look at the products and look at the process, and make sure that there's something that could be used or done better with this food. We can do something better. And I think people are very hesitant to change, and so overcoming that change is like—take a step back, ask the right questions, but make sure that people are aware of all of the education.

I mean, the biggest misnomer that we saw was—we're going to get sued. Well, as long as we're doing everything from a food safety standpoint... I mean, our brand, we don't want that tarnishment on Kum & Go's behalf from a food safety standpoint of somebody getting sick. So if we're covered from that, that liability piece, from the Emerson Act, what downside is there? And so that's the way we looked at it and the approach we took, but, yeah, I think people were the biggest hurdle out of the gate.

Aubrey Ours is a different challenge. It's just the sense of competition within the food rescue space, and that was something that I didn't anticipate really when we got started. And it's not everywhere, but because of limited resources and this viewpoint of scarcity, there's always... Sometimes it's perceived as a lack of wanting to collaborate and share. And that's something that I think Eat Greater Des Moines has really tried to do a lot of is, one, we don't serve anybody directly. We can't use any of this food. So if we're successful, it's because our organizations have more food and they're doing more of what they need. But it's really hard to build a better system if we can't have honest conversations with each other about what's working and what's not working, where are we getting food from, where are we not getting food from, what's going well at those places? Because I think once we can come together and start to really look at things big picture about how is this working, you know, what tweaks could be made, really we won't be able to do that until we can guarantee. Because I understand that nobody wants to lose food, and we're not in the business of taking food from people. So we've really been trying to approach this from the fact where we have to first get more donors in so that we can promise that these organizations will still have what they need to serve their clients, but it's really hard sometimes just to... It seems like it would be simple, but it's surprisingly more challenging when everyone's feeling there's just not enough. And there is tons. There's too much. There's plenty. Forty percent of the food is wasted. But if we can just do a better job of capturing it and getting it out, everyone will have plenty. But we have to do a better job and a more efficient job of capturing it and getting it out before that trust will really start to build.

Denise And I would add, too, from our perspective. So we are a national grocery retailer, so our size and scale is also huge, and that brings complications as well. We have a big company and a lot of things to work out. But the other thing that we do is we support our local food banks, and

some of what we hear... Sometimes we looked into milk donations, because people said they wanted more milk, so we kind of did a deep dive into that area. And what we found is a lot of it can be sometimes capacity building at the local, not even the Food Banks. So our Feeding America food banks typically have a lot of the right equipment to keep food cold if it needs to be cold. But some of our local agencies and pantries and maybe a church, they may not have the refrigeration capacity to handle gallons and gallons of milk. So some of that, we've helped with capacity building, too, and buying equipment or refrigerated trucks to try and get more food to the people who need it and increase... Really, our goal is to increase the access and affordability of food in our communities. Some stores may be in more remote locations, and take longer to transport to where it needs to go. So there are a lot of big things to figure out sometimes, but it can be done. You just have to take it one step at a time.

Lea So each of you kind of hit on collaborating between nonprofits and corporations. So can you tell us a little bit about why it's beneficial on both sides and how you guys see the benefits of that?

Aubrey As a staff of two, that's the only way any of our work gets done, so our entire work is through collaboration and partnership. So any of this stuff getting done is done because we have great partners all along the way. We have great funders who believe in this work. We have great organizations like Wesley Life and all of our recipient partners who were willing to take a chance on this kind of project and see, you know, trust us that we were going to do what we said we were going to do.

So I would say the partnerships—whether they're with businesses, with churches, with recipient organizations, with growers—all of those are valuable, and really that communication and being open and honest, and talking about when things are going well, but also being able to say when things aren't going well. That's been a big part of our... Especially with this project, when we got started, we actually had a couple of schools that were part of the route. And as we got going, because of the time of day—you know, these are all being dropped off from 7 A.M. to 10 A.M.—school drop-off time was right in the middle, and it wasn't working. It didn't work. But thankfully our partner at that school was able to... We had that dialog to say—this isn't working. You know, we tried to figure something else out and said—you know what? That's okay. We'll find another partner to fill this gap for now, and it's not like we're not ever going to work with you again.

So you have to be able to talk about when things are going well, but it's most important that you can talk about it when things aren't going well. Because if no one says anything and all of it just kind of falls apart and everyone's mad, then you've got a huge mess. So the partnership is being partners through the good and the bad, and that's been really the key for all of our work and probably my favorite part of our work.

Derek I think for us, being a purpose-driven organization and the vision of making days better by connecting with people, I think food is that connector. We can all relate to food. If we sat down and placed a platter of food on any one of your tables, I think the conversation around what's on that plate can be had. And so for us it's food is a connector for us, and it aligns with what we want to do philanthropically and from how we want to be a business in our community. We want to be a good community partner, and that just aligns with our organizational aspirations. For us, as long as the nonprofit that we're helping support aligns with what we want to do, I think it's an easy win-win.

Denise And I would add to that and just say we've been working in the last two years but especially the last year to really align our philanthropy and giving to our Zero Hunger | Zero Waste social impact plan. So in 2017, of the 358 million that we directed toward communities and charitable grants, half of that went in hunger and to programs that help with food access and affordability. And with our innovation fund we'll do the same thing. And the key is to find partners who are doing amazing work already and then support them.

And what we've learned, too, is there are a lot of innovators in the food waste space too, that have great ideas and maybe just need a little funding to get their idea off the ground or to scale it. So we're looking for partners, too, and they may be different partners in different communities, who can help us get to our vision of zero hunger zero waste. And we're not going to do it alone, so we do need our community partners to help us.

Lea So I know Derek highlighted this a little bit, but do you have any idea or scope on how much food has been recovered from your organization or how much you have recovered as a recipient?

Derek Yeah, for us just in 2018, I think through September we have donated or I guess reduced the amount of waste going to the landfills by over 200,000 pounds, so I think that's a little over 150,000 meals. But we're only... So this is through 215 stores. We've got over 400 that we still are trying to get to, so we're not fully launched yet, so that we know the impact can be much greater. And every month when we come out with our food waste reports, it grows. And that's a good thing, I guess, because it was going to the landfill. But, yeah, that's the biggest piece as we try to track it, and we're still working out some of those systems and processes. But like I said, we rely on a lot of our partners to help us with that, too.

Denise You bring up a good point with measurements, so one of our key learnings too is you have to have a person who's managing it. So we do have one point person at our corporate office who leads the Food Rescue Program, and then she works with people in each one of our retail divisions across the country. And she does a monthly report where we talk about, you know—are we up or down for food rescue for the year? This year so far Zero Hunger | Zero Waste has helped us really be clear about our message and our purpose to feed the human spirit. And we've been telling our associates day after day that what they do, the decisions they make every day in the stores, do help end hunger and reduce waste.

And so I think it's just an important point that measuring and tracking and knowing your numbers can make a big difference. And so even this year we're up 16% in food rescue, which is about, I think, 6 million pounds or 5 million meals above what we did in 2017. So last year we donated... Well, I'll say rescue... So food rescue was about 91 million pounds from across the company; 74 million were from our stores. And we do more, and in addition to just donations, we fund a lot of community partners, and we donate a lot of food that isn't food rescue. So there are a lot of other things. And we're trying innovative solutions, like we have a mobile market in Milwaukee that actually takes food into underserved areas, and it's food for sale. So there are mobile pantries, there are mobile markets, a lot of really great ideas out there.

Aubrey Well, we've shared, I think, so the data and the tracking is obviously really important to us. And one of the places that we've struggled the most with, because up to this point we've really just relied on our partners sharing what they've been recovering, so twice a year we ask our partners to share—how much did you recover in the past six months. And that's how we get

our aggregate numbers that show about 5 million pounds of food were recovered in the last year.

One of the bonuses and kind of exciting pieces of this transition into providing transportation is that allows us to have a little bit better handle on the data. And so we are really trying to move in the place of, one, when we're providing that transportation, we can do a better job of not just tracking pounds but also tracking what's been donated. So we're really trying to... I was just having a conversation with the Food Bank and the Des Moines Area Religious Council about—we'd really like to start to shift the percentage makeup of what's being donated. Unfortunately, right now a lot, a lot of what's donated is bread, baked goods and sheet cakes. And nobody needs that many bread and sheet cakes every day.

So we would really like to shift that to having a smaller portion of what's donated being those bread, baked items and a larger portion being the produce, the protein, the perishable items, the dairy, some of those meal things, so that we can start to shift what those donations look like.

But in order for us to do that, we have to do a better job of measuring where we're at right now. So once we are able to provide that transportation, then we have a much easier—probably not easy either but easier—time tracking some of that. So that's why part of the project that we're working on is also working with Polk County, their IT Department to help with building software that would not only help with just routing efficiency but also the data and the tracking piece that is really important. So we're excited that again partnerships, smart, smart people doing what they do best to help us focus on what we do best.

Lea You know, it's always interesting to talk to people outside of the food waste and food recovery industry and sector, because they are always amazed at how much food we're wasting and actually how large the hunger issue is. So it becomes a strong component of awareness. So from each of your perspectives with what you're doing, what are you guys doing to increase awareness within your communities of what you are doing and how you are impacting hunger?

Denise Yeah, I would say off the top of my head, so the whole point of creating a platform like Zero Hunger | Zero Waste is awareness. We've been doing this for 135 years. We've been donating food. Barney Kroger gave bread to the neighbors, day-old bread to neighbors even from his first store on the banks of the Ohio River long ago. And throughout the whole time since then, we've been donating food. But again not a lot of awareness. And so creating a platform like Zero Hunger | Zero Waste really solidifies what we stand for and who we are as a company and what we're going to do together. And that has really raised awareness inside the company with our associates and outside. Because we used to give a little bit to a little bit of everything, and now we're trying to really strategically align our giving and our community service and our corporate social responsibility work to exactly what we want to achieve, which is Zero Hunger | Zero Waste.

So I think being really clear, sometimes a name sounds like a frivolous thing, but it can be important, because if it really shows what you're trying to do, you can bring people along. And we've had so many people raise their hand, whether it's associates, customers, and shareholders, but also our community partners, our vendors and suppliers, people throughout the supply chain who want to be part of it. And it's fantastic.

Derek I would say education is at the forefront of our responsibility as a retailer and as a nonprofit, I'm sure. People need to understand what the needs in the communities. I mean, we hear it

every day with the partner agencies that we work with. And Meg, who's somewhere out there, she handles the... She's my boots on the ground launching these stores. But the stories that she comes back with, I almost cry almost weekly to hear the impacts that it's having in the communities. And that's the biggest thing is knowing what those needs are, trying to be able to help serve in whatever capacity that we can, but just understanding how can we help build that community to be stronger and meet those needs. So I think that's the biggest thing is education and learning. We're always learning and trying new things and growing, and I think that's the biggest thing for us.

Aubrey Well, I would say we're actually looking for a name for our food rescue transportation program. It doesn't roll off the tongue. So if any of you have some ideas—we have a booth right out there—I'd be happy to take them. But marketing and communication is one of the challenges as a small nonprofit. You know, we are a staff of two, and my favorite is to do the work. So the marketing and communications piece is a challenge. And thankfully we have an amazing board. We're accepting more new board members right now, and that's something that I lean heavily on our board to help us with, is, you know we just were going through an update with our logo, and what can we do to not only raise awareness about Eat Greater Des Moines but the work in that.

The biggest piece and the biggest value that we can have is just letting people know that food rescue is happening, that there is huge opportunity here, and that we want more partners to get involved. So that's something that as a small nonprofit with limited resources, that is always a challenge, is just trying to get the word out, not only about you but about the benefits of what's happening collectively. Again, Eat Greater Des Moines is the sum of all of our partners, so we want to raise awareness about all the great work that's happening here.

And in order to do that, we need help with some of those marketing and communication things. Because that's where I'm always happy to come out, and I do a lot of presentations and meetings with groups. And that's one of my favorite things is just talking to groups who have never even heard of food rescue before. So getting out in front of them, and my book club, you know, anybody who will listen to food rescue, I'll talk to you about it. And if you ever invite me to an event and you have food, I will ask you—What's happening with your leftovers? So you can invite me anywhere.

Denise One other thing to keep building on that is we use our data and insights team, which is called 8451, and they have all of our loyalty data, all of our shopper cart data. And so we're working with them to better understand which of our customers, really where this message really resonates and which are maybe socially conscious shoppers, maybe those who like natural organics or who care about issues like hunger and see it happening in their community. So we're also looking at who this message kind of resonates with so we can communicate with them on a more frequent basis.

And then we're also working with Xavier University back in Cincinnati on a design thinking study, where we're looking at people who are food insecure and those who struggle with hunger. And those who actually are food insecure, but know how to get stuff done, and they know how to work the system, and they have it figured out—to try and understand and talk to them personally and individually and say, “What would really help? So what do you use on a regular basis? How do you feed your family? And what of the thousand solutions out there that we hear about all the time would actually help you?” Because at the end of the day, we really want to move the needle and get more food to the people who need it so that we don't have as

many people struggling with hunger and going to bed hungry. So we're trying to apply some of our learning and our super smart team at 8451 to help us tackle this challenge too.

Lea So with our last couple minutes, what is the biggest need for your organization right now to achieve where you want to go with your goals?

Aubrey I'll say it—funding. That's what our biggest need right now is. We have two great projects that are working on scaling up not only the Meals on Wheels part of it, but looking beyond and getting larger vehicles, so that's going to take funding to, one, we need to hire someone who could manage that completely and really expand the relationships, and then also working at getting more. So part of that funding is, I would count food—we would love to get a few more convenience stores in our area involved in this process so that we can cover that part and then start working on the bigger things?

Derek I think for us it's probably more partnerships and more relationships, because we're still at the midway point of our journey. And so we've got a lot of area yet to cover. We're not to 99% like Kroger, and we've kind of chipped away at kind of the low-hanging fruit, and so now we're starting to get out to some of those remote locations. And for us it's going to require more partnerships, more people that can help us get this food out of the landfill. So for us it's more people and more partnerships for sure.

Denise So I would say we're actually at the stage now where we're starting to get in there and tackle more of the work. So we spent our first year with Zero Hunger | Zero Waste. We just celebrated our one-year anniversary. We spent that first year really digging into understanding food loss in our company, and did that work with World Wildlife Fund and used the Food Loss and Waste Standard to do that, the WR I created. And that was really informative, and it helped highlight where we are doing well and where we have additional donation opportunities. And then we are right now going to each of our teams, like the produce merchandising team and the meat and seafood team, and the dairy team and saying—Here are the things that we need to work on next. So we're trying to tackle new things and add and expand our food rescue to include more categories and more items, again in partnership with food safety. And then we are also trying to advance the other parts of our Zero Hunger | Zero Waste plan.

So we have a lot of work to do. It's really exciting, though, and we're thrilled that so many people want to join us. But we do have to really dig in and look at, beyond donations, what else happens to the food that leaves our store. In a perfect world, everything we brought in the back of the store would go out the front of the store—but it just doesn't always happen that way. So our work is going to be to try and increase donations, and then reduce the rest of our food loss so it's not going to landfill.

Lea Unfortunately, that's all the time we have, so please help me thank our panelists for sharing with us today.