

Educational Opportunities for Children and Families in Vancouver, Washington Exemplifies the CACFP

Michael Horn and staff at EOCF prioritized uniting their community during the pandemic to best execute the Child and Adult Care Food Program.

ROUND ROCK, TX, UNITED STATES, October 13, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Michael Horn and the nutrition, facilities and maintenance, and education staff at Educational Opportunities for Children and Families prioritized community and connection in their pandemic efforts, to stunning results. Their pandemic response was a who's who of Vancouver, Washington nonprofits, education and family service organizations.



Using the CACFP waivers, Educational Opportunities for Children and Families partnered with its local food bank. Initially, it set out to feed the kids in its program, but it quickly became clear that whole family systems were struggling. EOCF extended that partnership and received pallets of food boxes to serve the families of children within their program. Not stopping there, EOCF further collaborated with its local school district to donate extra goods and support their food service and community mission. EOCF extended its reach to another area nonprofit, Share House, which supports hungry and unhoused members of the Vancouver community.

While CACFP is a food program, the team at Educational Opportunities for Children and Families wasn't focused on just doing the nutrition portion of their job. It was focused on filling all the gaps. The team at EOCF continued aiding its community by providing books and Education materials for children and families during a time that many had lost access to routine, stable education. Beyond that, global supply chain and shipping shortages exacerbated local unemployment issues. Many families had trouble procuring even basic supplies.

The nutrition team at Educational Opportunities for Children and Families stepped in again with toiletries, diapers and other household essentials to support not only its own organization's children but also community members. The team was even able to find cases of gloves, hand sanitizers and N95 masks to supply a local medical center when such supplies were difficult to come by.

If the team had stopped there, they would have been heroes. Naturally, they didn't. Horn's nutrition staff leveraged their knowledge and skills gained from these new partnerships, and they transported it to other CACFP programs in their area. They worked with other centers to keep children, siblings and parents fed through pick-up and home delivery models. Families who were completely unrelated to their programming were able to receive weekly meal packets thanks to their hard work.

The mission of Educational Opportunities for Children and Families is to "connect, empower and transform the lives of children and families." Through its pandemic efforts, it was able to expand and pivot services to provide care to over 1,350 children across three counties for a total of 628,186 meals. Instead of focusing on just their programming, it focused on the whole community. EOCF expanded its reach outside their own four walls to include numerous organizations across Vancouver and filled the gap wherever it identified needs.

For their collaboration across a spectrum of organizations in Vancouver, Washington, the nutrition staff at Educational Opportunities for Children and Families is included as a finalist for the Inspire Collaboration Award. Award winners were named during the 2022 National Child Nutrition Conference.

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