Annual Report 2018
Rescuing Leftover Cuisine, Inc.
I used to wait outside restaurants and wait until they threw it out to eat it while it’s hot,” he said. “It’s good food, it’s just in a dumpster, but there’s no shame when you’re hungry.

Getting a good meal rather than having to eat on the run—he said he was often chased away from restaurants—sparked him to want more. He wanted a place to sleep. He started to fight his addiction to crack.
“You get that sense of dignity when you get it on the plate,” he said, speaking warmly of salads and nuts and fresh bread. “What I like about the Rescuing Leftover Cuisine people is they don’t know they’re giving peoples’ self-respect back to them. ... They’re rescue angels putting food in people’s bellies.”

---Charles B. NYC Rescue Mission
Dear Supporters,

Rescuing Leftover Cuisine (“RLC”) volunteers are making this story a reality every single day. 90 billion pounds of food goes to waste every year while 42 million Americans, including 14 million children, are food insecure.

In 16 cities across the nation, RLC has now rescued over 3 million pounds of food cumulatively, feeding 2.5 million meals for the hungry. In 2018 alone, RLC has rescued 1 million pounds of food, a record amount in one year for RLC and triple that of two years ago.

We are thankful to the food donors, monetary supporters, and volunteers working in every weather imaginable who do not know that their cumulative efforts are making this impact possible and that they are bringing dignity to those in need. As we move forward in continuing our growth to expand our services to other areas, we hope to inspire more to live the mission of Rescuing Leftover Cuisine.

Best,
Robert Lee
Co-Founder & CEO
Rescuing Leftover Cuisine was initially created to fill in the gaps left behind by larger food rescue organizations that did not go by for food donations below 50 lbs of food. This niche gap that RLC focused on was tackled using technology built with Ruby on Rails so that a web application could allow the public to sign up as volunteers to transport the excess food to where it is needed most. After being incubated by the Robin Hood Foundation’s Blue Ridge Labs Catalyst Program, RLC started to scale. Over 100 food donors now donate their excess food on a regular basis.
RLC’s goal for 2019 is to further scale operations to rescue more food and feed more meals. Specifically, RLC plans to double in 2019 as part of a larger goal to work with every single food business in ten years. This ambitious goal will need double the funding, volunteers, and food donors.
RLC’s Lead & Seed Strategy is the primary way to scale RLC’s impact across the United States. With the NYC operations, RLC is leading the way for other branches to learn best practices and RLC HQ can see firsthand the challenges and opportunities in scaling an operation. Armed with this knowledge, RLC is seeding branches using the same technology to start making impact in other areas of the nation below:
Matt Kang is a dedicated volunteer of RLC who goes on multiple food recovery missions in a single day. A high school junior, Kang is an intern who sometimes leads other rescue volunteers on pick-up/drop-off jobs and sometimes operates solo. On his mission today, Kang is equipped with a sturdy folding metal utility cart – known fondly in New York City as a “granny cart” – which he now begins loading. RLC has securely locked 11 of these carts to bike racks in strategic locations throughout the city for use by its volunteers.
His RLC shift might span three to five hours, and he could cover almost five miles, transporting more than 150 pounds of food. The Hunter College NYC Food Policy Center joined Kang in lower Manhattan one day to experience how RLC fights food waste and food insecurity first hand. Here is the continuation of Kang’s three-hour shift.

2:46 p.m. – Corporate leftovers in hand, Kang makes his way to the New York City Rescue Mission, about a mile northeast of AIG, at the corner of Lafayette and Center Streets, on the outskirts of Chinatown. RLC provides volunteers detailed instructions, including the addresses and walking directions between all pick-up and drop-off points. Kang, however, has made this trip several times and knows exactly where he’s going.

3:08 p.m. – Kang arrives at the NYC Rescue Mission and introduces himself to the receptionist, who nods and produces a metal scale from under the counter, then turns to retrieve a pre-printed triplicate receipt form for Kang to fill out.

Each of the 13 containers is weighed individually. The total is 59 pounds of food. Kang records the information and enters appropriate identifying codes on the receipt, which he then photographs. He sends the photo to the RLC office, where the information will be compiled and passed on to the supplying partner (in this case AIG), who will receive a tax deduction based on IRC Section 170(e)(3).

Having made the trip from AIG to the NYC Rescue Mission in less than 30 minutes, Kang easily meets the food safety standard set by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, which mandates that any potentially hazardous food cannot be left out in the temperature danger zone of between 41 degrees to 140 degrees Fahrenheit for more than two hours. RLC volunteers complete a rescue in about 30 minutes on average, and the organization has set a one-hour maximum to ensure their deliveries are made well below the legal limit.

Other regulations to which RLC and its partners adhere include making sure that containers are properly sealed. If any food containers are leaking, or if the food is spilled on its journey, it must be discarded.

3:22 p.m. – Just five blocks from the NYC Rescue Mission is Baz Bagels at 181 Grand Street, where Kang typically starts his shift. For this leg of his route, he is joined by a new volunteer, Tamme (pronounced ‘Tommy’) Garvin, a student at SUNY Stony Brook where she is majoring in political science and environmental studies. Garvin proudly announces that this is her 10th job for RLC since joining.

She and Kang both know that the amount of food picked up at any given location will vary from day to day. On previous rescues from Baz Bagels, she has received as many as 40 pounds of bagels for delivery to the Bowery Mission. “It’s usually fine, but toward the end of the walk, you might have to take a break,” Garvin says.

Kang is recovering from a weight-lifting injury to his back, which forced him to miss his shifts for RLC the previous week. Therefore, he has kept the cart from his previous pick-up at AIG, sparing him and Garvin from having to carry too much weight and allowing them to chat en route to the drop-off.

“You get to make new friends.” Kang says of his experience with RLC. “I’ve met a lot of interesting people while leading rescues.” Many of them are students, recent graduates or young professionals who might volunteer for a pick-up on their way home after work.
The Bowery Mission is just a quarter of a mile from Baz Bagels. Kang and Garvin arrive at the same time as another food rescue operation with a large delivery of food. Garvin takes the lead on coordinating the Baz Bagels weigh-in with the front desk.

The bagels weigh in at 20 pounds, and because Bowery Mission’s staff is busy unloading the larger delivery, Kang carries them from the front desk into the kitchen.

When they’re done, Garvin heads north to meet some friends, and Kang organizes his next pick-up.

“RLC is one of the volunteering experiences that really shines when rubber meets road,” Kang says later. “It’s pragmatic and easy for people to get involved. It’s a volunteering opportunity I’d recommend to anyone. Deliveries take no longer than an hour; it’s quick, it’s easy and the payoff is immense. The difference you’re making is tangible, concrete, and leaves you with a sense of satisfaction.

“My internship experience with RLC team has not been easy – not that they claimed it would be,” he says. “But some days I’d be sitting on the subway after a long day of spreadsheets, deliveries and tracking down carts, and I’d feel great pride in knowing that I have made a tangible difference in the lives of the food insecure.”

By Claire Anselmo Keady
2018 FINANCIALS

Financial Snapshot

Total Income: $2,297,972.52  Total Expenses: $2,269,057.55

93.9% in Program and 6.1% in Administrative Expenses. See audited financials on website.

List of Staff:

Amanda Bryant, Food Rescue Operations Director
Catherine Smiley, Program Director
Clara Son, Human Services Agency Director
Margarita Simon, Office Manager
Melinda Alfano, Partner Outreach Director
Robert Lee, Co-Founder & CEO
Tom Cardamone, Volunteer Recruitment Director

List of Board of Directors:

Aditi Davray
Ashish Contractor
Bob Frenchman
Carrie Goldin
Colin Kim
Ed Casabian
Erica Toth
Hoi-Ling Wong
Jill Greenwald
Jon Spiegel
Kevin Garvey
Lia Simeone
Louisa Chen
Miles Pincus
Palak Patel
Paul Sun
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Soraya Depowski
Sunit Shah