

Reston Interfaith Emergency Food Pantry Simulation Activity

Goal:

The goal of this activity is to help young people become aware of how expensive it can be to feed a family in Northern Virginia, and why places like the Reston Interfaith Emergency Food Pantry are needed to help families by supplementing their monthly groceries.

Materials:

Grocery Store (could also be conducted online at a site such as: <http://www.peapod.com>)
Pen, Calculator, My Family Work Sheet and Lee Family Work Sheet for each participant or team

Activity:

Based on the maturity of those involved and the size of your group decide whether to let the students work as individuals or as part of a team. Tell the participants that this activity is to better understand why places like the Reston Interfaith Emergency Food Pantry exist, and need their support.

Tell each team to use the My Family Worksheet and go through the store checking out all the items that would be needed to feed a family of four for a week. Tell them to include things their family normally eats, and not to forget that it needs to be enough for breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks.

Once they have filled in the My Family Worksheet they should return and calculate the average amount their family would spend each month. (multiply the number by 4...give or take)

Then give each team a copy of the Example Client Family Work Sheet and tell them this information is based on a client of the Reston Interfaith Food Pantry. Have them figure out (perhaps making some budgeting decisions here and there) how much the Potential client would likely spend on groceries a month using the prices they found while they were in the store.

Questions for Discussion:

- Were you surprised at how much groceries cost for a family in this area?
- What things do your parents have to buy each month that maybe you didn't factor in for this exercise? (**paper products, prescriptions, detergent, school supplies**)
- What items cost the most money? (**fresh fruits and veggies, meats**)
- When you were figuring out groceries for the client family what items did you cut out in order to meet their budget?
- If you cut out fresh fruits/veggies and fresh meats how could this cause long term costs? (**medical bills, fatigue/lack of energy, long term health problems**)
- Of the money you had left after paying bills how much of it did you spend just on groceries?
- What could happen that would mean you'd have even less to spend on groceries each month? (**vacation, health problem, unexpected bill, long term visitor**)
- What could you/we do to help families like the Client family? (**donate, volunteer, run a drive**)
- What are some of the long term benefits being able to use services like the Emergency Food Pantry could have on a family? (**pay off bills, get healthier foods, save money for a "rainy day"**)