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FOOD FOR GOOD

Business Mirror, Philippines

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Three organizations do their hearty share to mitigate hunger in vulnerable communities

BY JOHN EIRON FRANCISCO

BICUTAN, TAGUIG— Since 2022, Allianz PNB Life (AZPNBL), in collaboration with Scholars of Sustenance (SOS) and the Loaves X Fish Foundation, Inc., has provided over 1.2 million meals to over 60 communities in need across Metro Manila, sourced from donated unconsumed food from hotels and restaurants.

The collaboration has experienced growth, starting with an initial output of 200 meals daily, steadily rising to 600, and now reaching a daily production of one thousand meals.

Their combined efforts have resulted in the rescue of 286 tons of food, effectively curbing 779 tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions.

"I think one way of really supporting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the United Nations (UN), being a global company, agenda number two is really to end hunger, provide or achieve food support, and improve nutrition," Chris Cabognason, Chief Distribu-

tion Officer for Allianz PNB Life told the Business Mirror.

Cabognason said that their approach on a global scale adheres to principles of sustainability, inclusivity, and a primary objective of ensuring secure futures. Consequently, the partnership draws inspiration from these principles, extending not only within the Philippines but also across regional and global spheres.

As part of their ongoing commitment, AZPNBL donated a food truck named "KaGat," a Filipino term meaning 'bite,' to their non-profit partners. This food truck has

been instrumental in collecting and distributing meals to communities in need, symbolizing the company's dedication to taking a substantial "bite" out of food waste and hunger.

Mac Florendo, the Food Rescue Supervisor at SOS, told the BusinessMirror that food is a fundamental necessity and highlighted the ripple effect of such initiatives. He noted that individuals suffering from hunger, experience a decline in daily performance, impacting

their abilities in school or at work.

He stressed that hunger, compounded by increasing temperatures and climate change, poses an additional challenge to individuals. He stressed that hunger, compounded by increasing temperatures and climate change, poses an additional challenge to individuals. However, through this initiative, even a simple meal is believed to instill hope in the youth.

Combating Food Waste and Hunger

Meanwhile, John Carlo Perez, the program manager for social services at Loaves X Fish Foundation, Inc., told the BusinessMirror the importance of this initiative, particularly in the context of the current climate crisis that food waste significantly contributes to global warming, as decomposing food in landfills releases methane, a potent greenhouse gas that exacerbates rising global temperatures.

Perez highlighted that conserving food through these rescue efforts reduces waste sent to land-

fills, thereby mitigating environmental impact.

He expressed gratitude to the

partnered non-government organizations (NGOs), acknowledging that their collaboration makes it possible to engage various companies willing to donate unconsumed food, products nearing expiration, or those close to their best-before dates. Instead of discarding this food, Perez advocates for transforming it into nutritious meals for those in need.

"Apart from aiding the environment, we are also helping to alleviate hunger," he said, adding that their programs significantly reduce food insecurity, particularly among children.

Meal Preparation

On Wednesday, May 29, the insurance company and nonprofit organizations invited media and content creators to participate in meal preparation for a community in this city.

Volunteers were briefed on the entire process, from washing raw ingredients to cooking food based on the available ingredients, packing the meals and cleaning the equipment used.

After four hours of preparation, the meals were transported and distributed immediately to over one hundred children at Our Lady of the Poor Parish in the city.

According to Perez, they do this every day, and each day they



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serve different menus to the communities they visit.

He reassured the public that there's nothing to worry about because the unconsumed food referred to here are food products untouched in hotels, restaurants and other food establishments, and they are not yet cooked. Hence, they have volunteers ready to make the magic happen.

Community Shift

Conversely, Florendo observed a shift in perspective within communities where they conduct feeding programs, recognizing the value of initiatives like food rescue and the importance of volunteerism in giving back to their communities. Individuals themselves are actively involved in the distribution of food, demonstrating their commitment to caring for others.

From a business perspective, the food rescue committee believes that engaging in food rescue initiatives offers several benefits, which allows companies to fulfill their corporate social responsibility by contributing to community welfare and environmental sustainability.

By redirecting unconsumed food to those in need, businesses

demonstrate their commitment to social impact and addressing hunger in their communities.

Adding that businesses can potentially improve their bottom line. Wasting food means wasting money spent on purchasing, storing, and preparing it. By minimizing food waste through participation in food rescue programs, companies can optimize their operational efficiency and potentially increase profitability.

When asked if they have criteria or standards for selecting food establishments, hotels, and restaurants to donate unconsumed food, Perez said that they don't have specific criteria as long as "they have the heart and the willingness to help, and have a sense of volunteerism," people are welcome to participate in the food rescue program.*



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WALKING THE TALK. Volunteers and leaders from AZ-PNL, SOS, and I



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...oaves X Fish Foundation, Inc. during one of their many food missions.



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