

St. Mary's Food Bank Nutritional Program

In mid-2016, the volunteer team at St. Mary's Food Bank (SMFB) came up with the idea on how to better help its clientele. The impetus for this change was the realization that one in four children in Idaho goes to school and bed hungry. Moreover, low-priced food on the store shelves has little-to-no nutritional value. Unfortunately, not able to afford to buy healthy food negatively impacts the development and well-being of these families. To make a difference, instead of serving *just food*, SMFB would serve *nutritionally-balanced food* in the food boxes.

To take the idea to the next level, SMFB teamed up with the Nutrition Department at Idaho State University. The goal for the team was to develop a process that would consistently meet the "nutritionally-balanced" food box without jeopardizing the operating model SMFB had in place.

Using the federal "My Plate" guide as the standard for "nutritionally-balanced" meals, the team developed an easy-to-use point scheme to confirm that each of the five required nutritional categories (Grain, Dairy, Protein, Fruits and Vegetables) are represented in the box. SMFB strives to offer foods to provide 25% of a person's needs for a month based on the "My Plate" food guide that meet the Dietary Reference Intake (DRI) guidelines.