

# Food For Thought





*Be it sizzling fried chicken, a colorful salad, or a spicy taco, everyone has a definition of good food. And one professor's quest of over five years to define good food for the next generation has led to more than 15,000 pounds of food being donated to those who need it.*

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Collin College professor Shiva Davanloo was teaching nutrition and wanted her students to think about food critically.

"I wanted my students to carefully read nutrition labels on food and be able to define the meaning of good food for them," Davanloo explained. "I wanted them to ask, 'What is nutritious for me and for others?'"

To get her students thinking, Davanloo started a service-learning

project that would involve them with local cities and residents. Service Learning at Collin College is service-based experiential application of knowledge in real-world situations in which the service benefits the community. For the project, students started food drives in the towns that they lived in at locations ranging from daycares, churches, workplaces and even on Facebook.

"The people who receive the food

are generally at a lower-level income, so the students had to take a social and economical view of food in addition to its nutritional value," Davanloo said. "The students had to look at the shelf life of food, which foods would be the most filling and how calorie-dense foods were good options for people who might not know where their next meal is coming from."

For the first several years of the food drives, students partnered with

Meals on Wheels and collected hundreds of boxes of donated food items.

"I wasn't sure of exactly how successful the food drives would be initially," Davanloo said. "But in the first few years, I would store the boxes in my office and I was absolutely buried under them. The drives were an absolute success."

In the most recent years, Davanloo and her students have partnered with Frisco Family Services in food drives. Originally, Davanloo had been driving all of the food to the donation sites, but that ended last year.

"Starting in 2014, we had such an overwhelming response, that I had to call Frisco Family Services and say, 'There's no way I can move all of this,'" Davanloo said. "Frisco Family Services sent a truck capable of transporting 5,000 pounds of food each semester. We completely filled those trucks for three semesters, resulting in more than 15,000 pounds of food donations."

The food drives counted toward the students' grades, and they were required to write a paper about how they defined "good food." But the lessons learned reached far beyond the classroom.

"The students now really have a global perspective of what good food



is and are raising awareness in their communities. One of my former students was a mother of three and when her kids heard about the project they set up a lemonade stand that asked for canned food donations. We're really making an impact in the community," Davanloo said.

For more information about service learning at Collin College, visit [www.collin.edu/academics/servicelearning/](http://www.collin.edu/academics/servicelearning/).

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Photos courtesy of Shiva Davanloo.