

What world problem are you concerned about?

Hunger is a worldwide issue that needs to be addressed. It not only affects people in third world countries, but it also affects people here in the United States. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 14.8 percent of American households in 2008 had low or very low food security. To say that in another way, almost 50 million Americans struggled to get enough to eat in that year [1].

Why is this problem important?

Hunger is an important issue for several reasons. First, undernourishment from hunger has adverse effects such as contributing to mental retardation, hindering fetal development, and stunting growth. Second, the undernourishment that comes from hunger also weakens the body, especially those of children, to where a common illness like diarrhea can be fatal. Third, over 1 billion people in the developing world are undernourished [2].

What aspect of this problem seems particularly important to you?

Food is an essential part of life. However, many people in the world either cannot afford to purchase food or are unable to purchase enough food to satisfy the body's basic nutritional needs. A solution needs to be found that can get food to those who cannot afford it, either through other people or through helping them to become able to buy enough food.

How could a new software system help to solve this aspect of the problem?

A new software system could make it possible for people who do not have the monetary resources to buy food to find local food kitchens. For those people that just have a limited budget and cannot afford to purchase enough food, the software system could help to find ways that the individuals can afford to buy more food. Also, the software system could provide ways for individuals to donate food to those who need food but are in situations where the before mentioned aspects of the software system would not apply.

The software system would contain a website that either individuals needing food or individuals willing donate food can go to meet their specific needs. For the needy individuals, one of the options provided on the website would be to search around that individual's current location for nearby food kitchens. The food kitchens would be sorted so that the closest food kitchens to the individual's position could be listed first. Also, the software system would be used to pull information for the food kitchens, such as phone numbers and serving hours, so that the individual can be sure that he is not turned away from food kitchen on arrival.

Another option provided on the website would be to search for deals on certain food items to found in local grocery stores. For this to work, the software system would need to retrieve contact information from grocery store chains. These stores would then need to be contacted to ask for their assistance in providing information on current deals to the server. The software system would search the database for a specified food item and display items that match that description with prices in ascending order. The name of the store and the distance it is to the individual's current location would also be displayed so that the individual can choose where to

buy the item. In the same way, links to printable coupons could be provided to the server and searched for by keyword to the individual and sorted with the best coupon values at the front of the search along with the name of the store and the distance to the store.

Another option to be provided on the website would be for individuals to donate food. Organizations from around the world that take in food for the needy would have their information pulled by the software system in a similar fashion to that of the grocery stores, and the organizations could then be contacted and asked if they wished to participate. If they do, then they can post what they require on the website. If an individual goes to the website and finds that he can and will donate to that organization, then he will have the opportunity to set up a shipment of his items through the website to the organization. In order for this, shipping will be set up through a company such as FedEx or UPS. A minimal shipping rate would be negotiated and the individual donating would be charged that plus some extra for purposes of such as maintaining the website and possibly another purpose mentioned below.

To make the website known, the software system would place advertisements on search engines and other websites periodically. These advertisements could be paid for by part of the shipping costs of individuals who donate food. During high volumes of donations ads could be placed on a larger number of websites than during low volumes of donations. The software system would be set to monitor and regulate the number of ads in circulation. Initially, a number of ads would be circulated out of pocket if this idea is implemented.

Why do you think that this idea will make a big impact on the world?

For one thing, it would help those who are able to find food for themselves in a way that is easy and convenient for them. Also, as mentioned previously, almost 15 percent of people have been shown to struggle with hunger in the United States alone. That means that around 85 percent of Americans have enough food. There is enough potential there for a large number of people to donate some of what they have to help others. This software system would make it easy for individuals to reach out and help their fellow men and women of the world live a longer and better life.

What sources did you use in writing this Vision Statement?

[1] Amy Goldstein, "Hunger a growing problem in America, USDA reports", *The Washington Post*, Nov 17 2009,

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/11/16/AR2009111601598.html>

[2] "Hunger Information", Freedom from Hunger, 2009,
<http://www.freedomfromhunger.org/info/>