

Hi, my name is Marina Potrero, and I am a senior at Arizona College studying to get my degree in Ecology with a Business minor. I was born and raised in Phoenix and have three sisters. I live in an off-campus apartment with my boyfriend and a pet field mouse named Mr. Souris. This year I work at the campus greenhouse and garden which provides all of the school's produce at the organic cafe.

Academically, I am interested in sustainability, and I'd like my career around eliminating food waste. This year I received a state grant to start a program called Students Reducing Food Waste (SRFN). SRFN is an initiative to reduce—and hopefully eliminate—food waste altogether. The student group volunteers go to businesses and schools, collecting consumable food that would otherwise be thrown away, and giving it to homeless shelters. We also collect non-consumable food and use it to fertilize the campus greenhouse and garden. If restaurants have used vegetable oil, we take it, filter it, and use it to run machinery on campus.

My vision is for this process to become something that businesses and individuals do automatically—much like recycling. I would love it if every business, restaurant, institution, farm, and grocery store committed to sending all of the food they would otherwise throw away to shelters and orphanages. Food that is deemed non-consumable by human standards would be composted and used on community farms. Anyone inclined to learn to tend the land would be able to sell what they produce and keep the profits.

Last year, 1.3 billion tons of food went to waste. That's a lot. The work of this program won't even put a dent in that number, but my plan is to start a trend that will spread throughout the world. It's ambitious but not impossible. If you've ever been frustrated watching a grocery store throw away perfectly good bread because it's past the expiration date, you'll understand what I'm trying to accomplish here. I think too often students are written off, so this is a good opportunity for us to show that we are perfectly capable of taking our studies and experiences at university and applying them to real life.

If you are interested in more information about Students Reducing Food Waste, please visit our website at SRFW.org.

Thank you.