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Accomplished Entrepreneur to Advise Tech Solutions in County Fight Against Hunger

Webs co-founder, Idris Mohktarzada, counsels Collaborative to efficiently connect food donors and recipients

BETHESDA, MD. – February 3, 2015—The Montgomery County Food Security Collaborative has joined forces with Idris Mohktarzada, one of the area’s leading tech innovators, who will guide the Collaborative in its work with the County on tech solutions to strategically fight hunger impacting 80,000 residents.

“Despite the ambitious food distribution efforts already being made in the County, there is too much food being thrown away in a time of chronic need,” says Andy Burness, chair of the Montgomery County Food Security Collaborative and president of Burness, a Bethesda-based, mission driven communications firm supporting non-profits and the people they serve around the world. “One major issue is that too much food that could be consumed by our neighbors is simply wasted. Our methods for connecting donors and recipients are stuck in the twentieth century. County efforts to create an efficient, easy-to-use Community Food Rescue system powered by state-of-the-art technology will be realized with Idris’ assistance.”

A lifelong resident of Montgomery County, attending Montgomery Blair High School, Mohktarzada is an entrepreneur with expertise in web development and architecture, as well as experience with mobile technology. With a degree in Computer Science from the University of Maryland, Mohktarzada joined his two brothers to develop Webs, a do-it-yourself website building platform. In 2011, the business was acquired by printing company, Vistaprint, to enhance its online presence and social media capabilities.

“I’ve decided to move on from Webs and use my expertise to empower others to improve our world through technology,” says Mohktarzada. “Working with existing organizations through the Collaborative, we have the opportunity to improve distribution and get food to those in need.”

There are currently several non-profit organizations recovering food and distributing it to pantries, shelters and families around the county. “We’re relying mostly on word of mouth for pick-ups right now, which leads to inconsistent deliveries,” says Linda Hanson, Executive Director of Gaithersburg HELP, one of several non-profit service providers involved with the Collaborative. “We don’t have the luxury of waiting, especially when it comes to perishable food. We need a system to coordinate immediate notification of donations and a quick response.”

Due to the cost of refrigeration and long distances between donors and recipients, organizations are often forced to reject donations because they are unable to keep the food fresh. With Mohktarzada’s guidance, Montgomery County is now better positioned to introduce a matching-based platform that connects donors and recipients based on location, need and other determining factors.

“While more resources – like refrigerators – are needed, use of those resources as well as distribution can become a lot more effective through better logistics,” explains Mohktarzada. “Technology is driving change in logistics all around us, and we want to ensure that those most in need in our communities benefit from these advancements.”

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The Montgomery County Food Security Collaborative is a non-profit organization dedicated to significantly reducing hunger in Montgomery County by 2020 by redistributing fresh, perishable food and increasing collaboration among businesses, non-profits, food providers, and families in need for this purpose.