

# CASE STUDY



## FOOD WASTE PREVENTION

### The Challenge

#### Manage and Control Waste

Gundersen's commitment to environmental stewardship led to the creation of its Envision® Program. One of the key initiatives of the program is waste management and control. Food and Nutrition and Sustainability leaders identified a significant opportunity to reduce pre-consumer food waste, to both lower the organization's carbon footprint and to save money on food purchases. They evaluated their options and determined that the LeanPath Food Waste Tracking System would transform their food waste prevention vision into reality.

### The Solution

#### Pre-Consumer Food Waste Tracking

#### Calculating the Baseline: 24 Tons/Year Wasted

In July of 2010, Gundersen implemented the LeanPath Tracker (automated scale and touch-screen terminal) in its kitchen and trained every staff member on how to use it. They started weighing every pre-consumer food waste item which allowed them to calculate a food waste baseline. They found that they were throwing out an average of half a ton of food every week—approximately 24 tons every year. They saw this as a huge opportunity to tackle the waste issue head on, which is exactly what they did.

### Gundersen Health System

Gundersen Health System is a physician-led, not-for profit healthcare system. The 325-bed medical center in La Crosse, Wisconsin, serves an average of 400 patient meals and 2,300 staff and guest meals every day.

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HEALTH SYSTEM®

“ With the software we can look at what happened one week vs. another and look at what our strategy is to reduce it the next time around.

We download data every Monday morning and print out reports so everyone knows how we did for the last week.”

*Thomas Sacksteder  
Program Manager/  
Executive Chef C.E.C.*

### Simple Changes, Big Impact

They continued tracking food waste daily and reviewed the dashboard reports from the integrated LeanPath software each week. They immediately spotted some key opportunities to reduce waste.

Staff made changes to how vegetables were prepared to encourage less scrap waste, started heating soup in smaller portions, and made many other simple changes that had a dramatic impact on food waste reduction.

### Creating a Culture that Loves Fighting Waste

Another benefit of the program was boosting team morale and engagement—from the part-time college student workers to experienced staff that had been employed for more than 30 years. With the LeanPath system, all members of the team could feel ownership in the program and see their contributions.

“ The staff saw instant results—they could see the ups, the downs, the gains...they could see they were making a difference.”

*Tom Thompson  
Sustainability Coordinator*

### The Results

#### 50% Waste Reduction, \$25,000/Year Savings

Between July 2010 and February 2011 (just seven months), Gundersen reduced its pre-consumer food waste by more than 50 percent by weight. The savings in diverted food purchases equated to \$475/week or \$25,000/year. From 2010 through 2015, they reduced food waste more than 80 percent from baseline saving more than \$30,000/year. Gundersen saw complete return on investment in less than 10 months and they continue to experience ongoing savings using the LeanPath system.

“If you can do something to reduce the waste, you’re doing the right thing for the environment, you’re saving money, and you’re doing something that’s socially responsible. It’s a win-win-win all the way around.” Tom Thompson.