

Social restaurant for students in Valparaiso, Chile



The social restaurant (canteen) for students was initiated in 2007, due to Professor Jaime Contreras Paez, Doctor of the Faculty of Humanities of the Valparaíso University, who, observing the poverty of many of the students, decided together with his wife Myriam, to put into operation a social university dining room. Today, in addition, this is open to the poorest community in the area.

The social dining room is established in Valparaiso downtown and today, the organization feeds around 75 people daily (60 students and about 15 people from the area, such as workers, blind and elderly people in at social risk). It mainly helps students who do not have a food grant, or resources to eat in the university cafeteria. Its objective is to offer every day a healthy menu (soup or salad, food, bread and juice) for a very economic value (\$ 700 Chilean pesos), and in some cases, free. It offers a space where poor students can meet, eat and study.



The restaurant is run by a non-profit organization with legal status. It is financed through contributions for menus and some possible donations. Any surplus serves to offer the students in need a small specific support for their expenses in photocopies, public transport or other requirements. The team is voluntary and does not receive a salary.



In 2017 the organization was faced with the absolute need to replace the kitchen equipment, which was in such a bad state that it was not safe, in particular the fridge and cooker, as well as saucepans, etc. It therefore requested help from FdE, which was happy to finance such impressive work. Our help was essential: it has allowed the canteen to buy quality kitchen utensils.



But FdE in fact contributed more than that. The participation of the Association Femmes d'Europe in this project opened new doors to the organization. It gave it more credibility in the eyes of other organizations, and in particular the University of Valparaiso, the institution to which the young students belong.

This led to the offer of the University of Valparaiso to help with the rental of a house for the operation of the dining room.

And the option of having a house permitted the organization to open workshops to work with women, preadolescents, immigrants, thus creating a link between the community and the university.

The funds supplied by FdE thus proved to be a catalyst for the expansion of the role of this excellent organization.

Myriam Villaroel Arenas
Responsible of the Social Restaurant in Valparaiso

