

# CASE STUDY: San Carlos Youth Center



## BUSINESS PROFILE

### Name:

San Carlos Youth Center

### Business Type:

After School Program/  
Drop-In Center

### Locations:

San Carlos, CA

### On-site Dining

Snacks and cooking class

### Warewashing:

Mechanized dishwasher

The San Carlos Youth Center is a free, supervised after-school program featuring a full-size gym, game room, homework assistance and staff-led activities. A popular daily cooking class is enjoyed by an upwards of 130 kids each day between the ages of 8 and 17 years.

## Packaging Practices prior to ReThink Disposable:

- All foods served on paper plates and bowls
- Single-use plastic forks, knives, and spoons
- Lined paper popcorn bags and napkins for snacks

## Recommendations Implemented:

- Durable plates to replace single-use paper plates
- Stainless steel forks, knives, and spoons to replace plastic utensils
- Bus tubs and cart to transport foodware
- PlateScrape to replace pre-wash step of used dishes



With **ReThink Disposable's** support, food created during the cooking class program is no longer served on paper plates, bowls, and napkins. Now kids enjoy a non-disposable option with "camp-style" metal enamel foodware and stainless steel utensils. Imparting cooking skills to young people is a rich life lesson. Now, the youth center imparts an even bigger life lesson about the connection between healthy food, healthy bodies/minds, and a healthy planet.

San Carlos Youth Center has a big impact on how young people think about food service. Because the Youth Center is an after-school service provider, they are uniquely positioned to impact the future actions and attitudes of the young people they work with. By providing a safe and fun after-school space, the youth center can influence the decision-making and purchasing decisions of impressionable young people.

After an initial investment of \$984 in durable, non-plastic, PFAS-free\* foodware, San Carlos Youth Center prevents **18,898** pieces of single-use items each year, weighing **214 pounds**, and saves **\$719** in annual net cost savings.

The reusable foodware expense and payback period are both above average when compared to other ReThink Disposable participants. However, because children are involved, avoiding toxins that are found in most foodware (i.e. plastic, linings) is number one, and goes without saying, worth the investment.



*Before and After: Paper and plastic single-use foodware were replaced with reusable items.*



**“Working with ReThink Disposable was such a great experience! With their help, our Youth Center staff were not only educated but provided the resources to eliminate single-use disposable foodware and significantly reduce our daily waste. Thanks to ReThink Disposable we will be getting our after school participants into the habit of doing all we can to reduce our impact on the planet.”**

— Caitlyn Matoso, Recreation Coordinator



\*Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a group of man-made chemicals that persist in our bodies and the environment; they have been linked to cancers, reproductive and developmental harm, and impaired immunity, including decreased vaccine response in children.

## Results:

Disposable Product Replaced or Minimized	Recommendation Implemented	Percent Disposable Reduction	Annual Quantity of Disposable Product Reduced	Payback Period (months)	Annual NET Cost Savings After Payback Period (\$)	Annual Waste Reduction (lbs.)
Sunny Select Heavy Duty Cutlery Combo	Replace with stainless steel cutlery	100%	4,608	11.3	\$119	80
Dixie Ultra Paper Plate, 6-7/8"	Replace with reusable plates	100%	1,050	10.3	\$318	72
Pacific Blue Select C-Fold Paper Towels	Replace with reusable plates	100%	8,640	18.3	\$180	30
Stock Your Home 1 oz Popcorn Bag	Replace with reusable plates or bowls	100%	1,000	48.6	\$40	4
<b>TOTALS:</b>		<b>AVERAGE % Reduction of targeted foodware: 100%</b>	<b>TOTAL # Reduced: 18,989 pieces</b>	<b>AVERAGE Payback Period: 17.7 months</b>	<b>TOTAL Net Savings: \$719</b>	<b>TOTAL Waste Reduction: 214 lbs.</b>

### THE BOTTOM LINE

- 18,898 disposable items reduced per year
- 214 pounds of annual waste reduction
- % disposable reduction: 100%
- Annual savings (after payback period): \$719



*Before and After: Kids switched from paper plates to durable non-plastic foodware.*

ReThink Disposable is a program of Clean Water Action and Clean Water Fund conducted in partnership with local businesses and government agencies. Generous support is provided by a changing list of public and private funders. To learn more about the program, its partners, and funders, visit: [www.rethinkdisposable.org](http://www.rethinkdisposable.org).



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