

McMaster Community Fridge – Creating Consistent Community Donors

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The McMaster Community Fridge located behind Mills Library on campus.
Photo credit: Ankush Sharma



Overview

Pre-COVID, 2 in 5 students experienced daily food insecurity.¹ Since the COVID-19 pandemic, food insecurity has reached record breaking numbers.² The McMaster Community Fridge is a fridge, freezer, and pantry complex that offers food to anyone who needs it at any time. Aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, the goal of the Fridge is to provide free, healthy food to students and other community members experiencing food insecurity.³ The goal of our project was to partner with members of the McMaster and broader community to create consistent donations to the McMaster Community Fridge.

Objectives

1. Contact local businesses and organizations for food donations
2. Create a food donation guide for interested on-campus groups
3. Engage campus groups to collect and donate food

Reporting

To achieve our first objective, we contacted 38 local businesses that sold food and personal care products and that were located within a 20-minute drive from campus. In addition to calling, and to maximize potential donations, we emailed each business with a formal letter outlining the goals of the Community Fridge and how they could help.

For our second objective, we met with and learned from staff and faculty in McMaster's Kinesiology department who had been organizing small-scale food drives in their area. Working with our Project Champions, we created an instructional guide for other groups wanting to support the Community Fridge through their own food drives. We disseminated this guide to over 100 departments, societies, and offices on campus, including all 6 McMaster faculties. The guide was also posted publicly on the Community Fridge's website.*

For our third objective, and to inspire uptake in small-scale food drives and donations, we helped organize a 'Winter Food Drive' event during the month of December. We publicly recognized groups who had already established drives in their areas as inspiration for others. We invited everyone on campus to participate in the event through disseminating information on social media and through a university-wide email. We are grateful to the 19 groups who took part and have also committed to continuing their support by keeping a donation bin in their office year-round, therefore helping to secure consistent community donations and tackle food insecurity in our communities.

Collaborators

We would like to extend sincere thanks to our Project Champions, Zeinab Khawaja and Chitrini Tandon, who have given us immense guidance, community connections, and constant support throughout the process. A special thanks to Zachary Nott, the Community Fridge Liaison, who assisted with writing formal letters and contacting required sponsors. We would also like to thank Katie Luong from the Kinesiology department for teaching us how to positively impact the community by offering materials and insights into securing food donations from other faculties and departments. In addition, a huge thank you to all the individuals who took part in community donations.

See a full list of references [here](#).

* <https://wellness.mcmaster.ca/program/mcmaster-community-fridge/>.