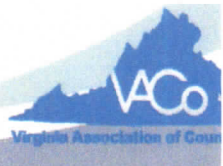




ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2023.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

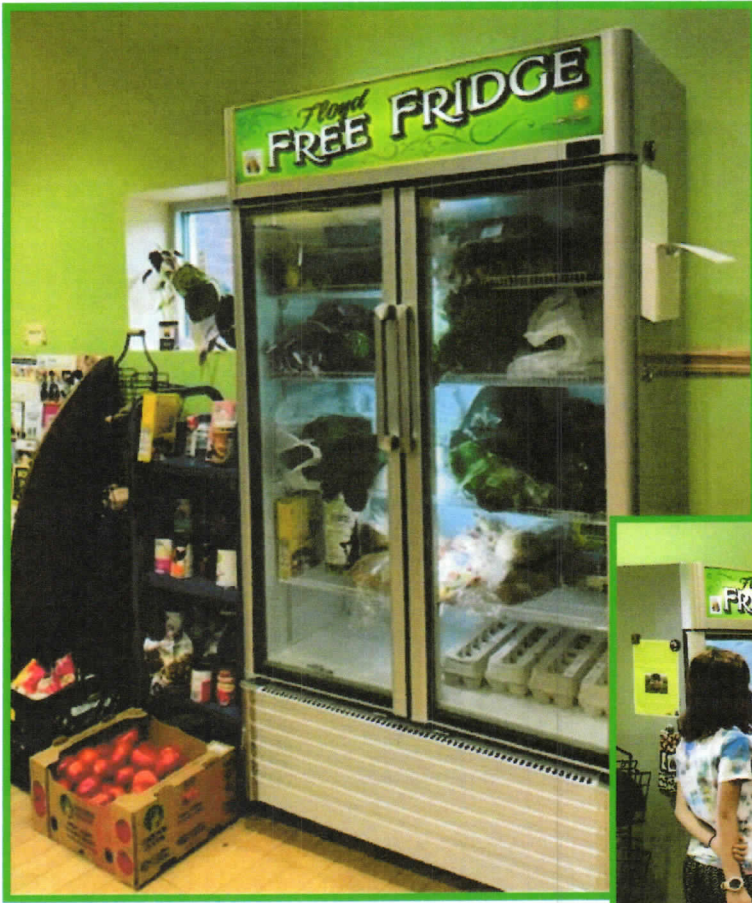
County: Floyd County
Program Title: Floyd Free Fridge
Program Category: Health and Human Services

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Joann Verostko
Title: Branch Manager
Department: Jessie Peterman Memorial Library
Telephone: 540-745-2947 Website: mfrl.org
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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Linda S Millsaps
Title: County Administrator
Signature: Linda S Millsaps



Floyd Free Fridge

Jessie Peterman

Memorial Library

Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library

Floyd, Virginia

The Floyd Free Fridge

Brief Overview

To address the food insecurity needs in our community and to connect people in the community with food resources, Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library staff created the Floyd Free Fridge in the Jessie Peterman Memorial Library in Floyd, Virginia. The Floyd Free Fridge was established in collaboration with our local food pantry, Plenty Farm and Food Bank, and with the generous support of one of our valued library patrons. With the Floyd Free Fridge, the library aims to bridge the gap between the community and essential food resources, delivering access to fresh produce and other nutritious items.

Executive Summary

The Jessie Peterman Memorial Library has expanded its range of services by introducing the Floyd Free Fridge, a fully stocked refrigerator filled with fresh produce for public access. This initiative is made possible through a partnership with Plenty Farm and Food Bank, as well as a generous donation from a library patron. This project aligns with nationwide efforts to combat food insecurity while promoting education, inspiration, and empowerment in making healthy food choices.

Recent data from the USDA reveals that approximately 10.5 percent of U.S. households experienced food insecurity at some point during 2020. Through its Free Fridge, the library hopes to assist those in need, and also inform them about other resources available to them in the community. The Jessie Peterman Memorial Library is one of the first libraries in Virginia to offer this service to its patrons.

Anyone visiting the library during regular library hours is welcome to visit the fridge and help themselves to fresh produce. Nutritional information and recipes for the produce are also available enabling individuals to make informed food choices. Informational brochures about Plenty Farm and Food Bank's services, as well as other relevant resources, are readily accessible to users.

To enhance the impact of the initiative, the library has delivered programs focused on seasonal produce, healthy eating, gardening, and related topics. An example of such programming is "Fantastic Foods," a partnership with the Virginia Cooperative Extension, where children learn how to prepare nutritious meals.

Problem/Challenge/Situation

Food insecurity is a serious problem affecting individuals within Floyd County, who may struggle to access consistent and nutritious meals. This past year our local food bank, Plenty Farm and Food Bank, saw a 40% increase in the number of people visiting them. According to Plenty, 9.2% of Floyd County residents lack access at times to adequate food. The United States Department of Agriculture reports that 10.5 percent of U.S. households were food insecure at some time during 2020. Recognizing the pressing need within their community, the library sought to bridge the gap between individuals grappling with food insecurity and the essential resources they require. A community fridge was an innovative approach that could connect these community members with food insecurity to the necessary support systems.

Description of Program

Assistant Branch Manager Lisa Thompson and Branch Manager Joann Verostko were intrigued by the concept of Free Fridges being implemented in public libraries. Given that the Jessie Peterman Memorial Library already served as a drop-off location for food donations to Plenty Farm and Food Bank, a pre-existing relationship was already established. The library's central location in the Town of Floyd made it an ideal site for a Free Fridge, offering Plenty an additional food access point – one that had longer hours of operation and was not located 3 miles outside of town. Additionally, it provided a platform for promoting the services offered by Plenty.

From the inception of the program, Plenty demonstrated unwavering support, and committed to restocking the fridge twice a week. Funding for the refrigerator itself was obtained from a community sponsor who has been a great source of support to the library for many years. When they were approached about this program they thought it would be a wonderful added resource to the community. So, with the support of Plenty and the funding for the refrigerator in place the library was on its way to providing fresh produce to the community.

An alcove just inside the library was selected to house the Fridge. This space was visible, accessible from the rest of the library, yet also offered a certain amount of privacy so that people would feel comfortable using it. The location is well-suited to an inclusive community resource as it is adjacent to the library's community bulletin board and community services brochure rack. Staff painted one wall of the alcove a cheerful green to reflect the theme of fresh produce and to

make the area more inviting. The Floyd Friends of the Library provided the funding for the Fridge sign. A free-standing basket stand was purchased to hold non-refrigerated produce such as potatoes and onions. Staff researched and printed out recipes and Plenty Farm and Food Bank provided brochures on nutrition which are displayed on and near the fridge.

Anyone visiting the library during regular hours is welcome to visit the fridge and help themselves, without any registration, means test, or monitoring of items taken. This gives people a freedom that is in line with the library's striving to make its resources available to all. The contents of the fridge are primarily fresh produce, but Plenty also brings eggs, dairy, baked goods, some prepared foods as well as some shelf-stable items.

On June 26, 2022 the Floyd Free Fridge was stocked for the first time. From the start community response has been very positive and use of the fridge use is steady and robust. The first full month the Free Fridge was open, July 2022, 932 pounds of food was shared out to the community. It has met or exceeded that number for every month since. As of June 1, 2023, almost 15,000 pounds of food has been shared with the community.

In addition to nutritional information and recipes the library has conducted various programs focusing on seasonal produce, healthy eating, gardening, and other related topics. For example, "Fin-Tastic Foods", a program promoting healthy eating, was offered in the summer of 2022, in partnership with the Virginia Cooperative Extension. This multi-part program taught children how to make different healthy meals. Another 2002 program, "Literature in the Garden," was delivered in collaboration with the local Master Gardeners as an eight-week program designed to

educate children about gardening, healthy eating, and foster a love for literature. Participants who completed the program were honored as Junior Master Gardeners. This program will be offered again from June to July this year.

The Floyd Free Fridge stands as one of the pioneering initiatives of its kind in Virginia. Through partnering with Plenty Farm and Food Bank, the library was able to offer a new and unique way to connect people with local resources as well as fresh produce. Although the Free Fridge does require a certain amount regular attention, the maintenance demands are manageable, and with a similar partnership, other libraries could replicate this model. Libraries have always sought out innovative and relevant ways to serve their communities. Free Fridges are at once heirs to that tradition, and innovations that address needs of today's communities. Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library is proud to have served the Floyd community with the free fridge as part of our mission to empower and connect the people we serve.