



Quote of the Month

“It’s so nice to come in here on the extra days you’re open because I know I can get fresh produce.

It really helps me feed my family and stretch the budget.

Thank you!”

- Food Shelf Visitor,
NECKA, St. Johnsbury

Are you interested in becoming a VT Fresh partner? Please contact us!

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VT FRESH is a Vermont Foodbank program that celebrates fresh food and helps to transform community food shelves with beautiful displays and cooking demos.

Strategy: Produce only distribution days, events and hours

As we all know, summer is filled with a bounty of fresh produce. At times, this can be overwhelming, especially to a food shelf that is open just a few days per month or has limited hours. What can a food shelf do to increase access and encourage visitors to take more fruits and vegetables home with them?

We’ve heard from many of our VT Fresh partners that they offer unlimited produce when it’s available while also encouraging people to take only what they need. Additionally, many food shelves across Vermont offer client choice, giving their visitors a chance to choose what they would like. Others have found ways to distribute more produce in the summer months by offering special “produce only” distribution days, extended hours or flexible rules so visitors can access produce more frequently.

On Friday afternoons, when the food shelf is closed, **BROC Food Shelf in Rutland** sets out any produce that’s left from the week. Anyone can come in to pick up produce in the main lobby, even if they have already been to the food shelf their allotted number of times in that month. People don’t even need to sign in to get this extra food. **NECKA Food Shelf in St. Johnsbury** has a great system throughout the week where fresh produce is available in the main lobby to whomever needs it. These methods help distribute fresh produce to visitors that really need it and helps these food shelves reduce their weekly waste.

The **Sheffield Food Pantry** offers an extra day each month for clients to access produce. Sheffield is only open one day a month so it’s difficult for clients to have enough food to last them for the month, especially fresh produce that doesn’t have a long shelf life. The food pantry typically goes to the monthly produce drops offered by the Vermont Foodbank, and they open their doors that extra day each month to offer a “fresh produce only” food pantry to their clients.

The **Fairfield Community Center** also opens its doors an additional day each month to distribute fresh fruits and vegetables. Like Sheffield, they pick up produce at a local produce drop and later open their doors for a produce “party”. They make it very festive where there is often food to sample and music playing!

These extra produce only events, extended hours or convenient access points assist many clients in obtaining fresh, healthy food. It also assists the food shelves to eliminate waste.

Let us know if you are doing something like this or have any great ideas in handling excess summer produce!



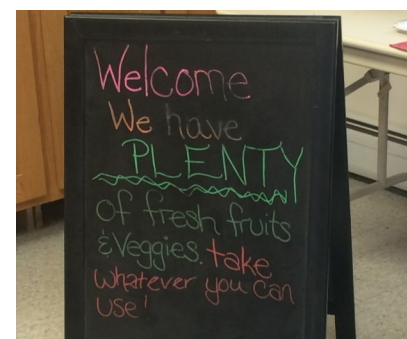
BROC Food Shelf, Rutland



NECKA Food Shelf, St. Johnsbury



Sheffield Food Pantry



Fairfield Community Center Food Shelf