

Library Pantries Feed Communities!

By the CSLP Child & Community Well-Being Committee and participating libraries

Last month's CSLP newsletter featured the story of [the Public Pantry at the Woodstock Public Library](#) in Illinois. We asked readers to submit a photo if they host a Little Free Pantry or have a pantry shelf in the library. Here are some creative and caring ways libraries are feeding their communities around the USA.



Webster Library in Kingfield, Maine hosts a beautiful and well-used matching set: Little Free Pantry and Little Free Library. Photo: Morgain Bailey



Laurel Public Library in Delaware added a community food distribution basket outside of the library this summer.



FARM TO PATRON TABLE COMMUNITY CART

GIVE WHAT YOU HAVE
TAKE WHAT YOU NEED
SHARE THE BOUNTY

Vegetables
Fruits
FRESH Eggs - unwashed
Herbs

Thank you to @WalmartGiving for their
generosity in funding this project



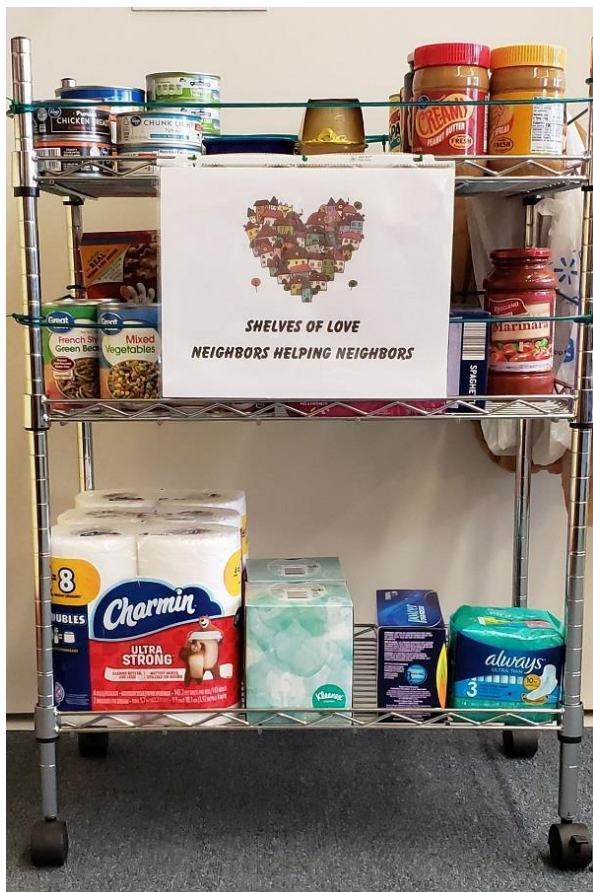


Pataskala Public Library in Ohio set up its Little Free Pantry this summer.



McCracken County Public Library in Paducah, Kentucky. Area Little Free Pantries have their own Facebook page:

www.facebook.com/Paducahminifoodpantry



Kincaid Community Library in Kansas has hosted a pantry since April 2019 for its small, rural town.



The Little Free Pantry at Johnston Public Library in Iowa



The Blessing Box in front of the Danbury Public Library in North Carolina



Close-up of the Blessing Box at Danbury Public Library, North Carolina



Pantry shelves at the George Culver Community Library in Sauk City, Wisconsin



Left: Library manager Christina demonstrates proposed placement of a Little Free Pantry at Deale Library, part of the Anne Arundel County Public Library in Maryland.

Right: the permanent LFP at Deale Library. LFPs are being placed at all Anne Arundel County Public Library locations in partnership with local anti-hunger organization [Caring Cupboard](#).

Many libraries participate in the Summer Food Service Program or provide afterschool snacks. Hosting a Little Free Pantry or pantry shelf is another way that libraries can increase their capacity to meet community needs. Food distribution is certainly a non-traditional library service, yet libraries and food are a great fit. Everyone is welcome at the library, and no one pays admission or is expected to buy anything. The library has always given stuff out for free. There is no stigma to the library. Think about these attributes in terms of providing food to people in need. And think of what libraries gain by participating in food distribution: we directly address hunger and support vulnerable populations, attract new user groups, increase our visibility as a community asset, and position ourselves as an important stakeholder in community well-being.

Interested in hosting a Little Free Pantry or pantry shelf at your library? It can be as simple as setting aside a space in your lobby, or other accessible area, for a shelving unit or basket. If you would like to establish a permanent outside structure, the Little Free Pantry website offers a [helpful FAQ](#) covering location, building, and stocking, and a [resource page](#) that links to plans, supply lists, publicity materials, and more.

Before you set up your pantry:

- If appropriate, confirm with your governing authority that your plan meets building and zoning codes. You may also need approval of your library Board, and even if this is not required, it's smart to communicate your plan to the Board, all library staff, and other stakeholders, talk through any concerns, and generate support before you get started.
- Decide how the pantry will be stocked. Will it rely exclusively on community donations? Or will it be stocked by the library, or the Friends group, or an outside partner such as a food pantry, nonprofit organization, or school? Who will monitor the pantry for cleanliness and to ensure it is appropriately stocked?
- Decide what items are acceptable: nonperishable food only? Produce? (community members who garden may be happy to share their surplus!) Personal toiletry products? School supplies?
- Develop a plan for initial and ongoing publicity. The Little Free Pantry website [resource page](#) includes sample publicity items. The [CSLP Libraries and Summer Food guide](#) includes ideas and talking points for summer meals which can be adapted to support a pantry.
- Consider inviting your community to help establish the pantry. Depending on current social distancing guidelines, you may not be able to have a group work together, but under pre- or post-pandemic circumstances, building a Little Free Pantry could be a great project for a Teen Advisory Group, a makers club, or even a book discussion group (in conjunction with reading a book on building/architecture or on food!). You may think of creative ways to involve your community and connect to library programming even with social distancing guidelines in place.

Please let us know if you establish a Little Free Pantry or pantry shelf at your library. You may contact the CSLP Child & Community Well-Being Committee via jdwyer@library.ohio.gov. Thank you for all the many ways you support your community!