Community Pantry

Croton Free Library

Intergenerational

Community Pantry

Dec 22, 2025

Free

Byline

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The Community Pantry at the Croton Free Library is a local resource where people find and donate nonperishable food and hygiene products. Anyone can take what they need, no questions asked and no paperwork. It is located on shelves at the library's side entrance and is available for pickup and donation during the library’s regular open hours.

Advanced Planning

Our goal was to increase the availability of food and hygiene supplies to those in need, in a convenient location. We started planning about a week before we put food on the shelves, researching other libraries that had community pantries and

fridges or freezers, and reading their policies and the details of how they worked. In terms of practical steps, we did one Costco trip and began collecting donations off-site a few days before opening. Volunteers were critical to the initial setup and continue to be the cornerstone of keeping the pantry stocked.

Marketing

As soon as we had the all-clear from the director, we began posting on social media and hanging up flyers (Canva template) in the library and around town, making sure all materials were in both English and Spanish (on a single page when possible). We sent links and PDFs to two local food pantries with more robust and consistent programs, as well as an outreach program in our town. The school district sent out an email about resources for food-insecure families when SNAP benefits were first cut, and information about our pantry was included in that as well.

Budgeting

The pantry is stocked entirely with donations from individuals, and even the shelves were purchased by volunteers. We accept only item donations, not cash donations. The library's expenditures are limited to staff time and paper for flyers.

Day-of-event Activity

We tried for a soft launch because we weren't sure how to gauge demand. It took a few hours to set up the shelves, secure them to the wall, and stock them for the first time. I am the only staff member responsible for the pantry.

Program Execution

We've been surprised by how heavily it's been used. It's difficult to quantify, but we need volunteers to shelve donations and restock every day. I would say between 25-75 items are taken from it per day.

Advice

This is not as hard as you think! If your stakeholders recognize the importance of offering food to your community during this difficult time for so many people, you can do it. Make sure you have a couple of dedicated volunteers so it doesn't solely fall to staff, and make sure your signage is clear (Canva template) that you will accept only new, unopened, nonperishable food. (You'll still get some random things! It happens.) Also, make sure you check expiration dates before restocking your shelves.

Did you try this program at your library? Share your experience using this form.

Supporting Materials

Document
CommunityPantry_Nov2025_Flyers-5.pdf
Document
SHAREDCommunityPantry_Nov2025_DonationsSigns.pdf
Download this Program as a PDF

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