



# Food Waste Diversion Through Indian River County Community Fridge Program

Sue Flak, Recycling Education Coordinator

**FELLSMERE  
FRIDGE**

*Take What You Need,  
Leave What You Can...*

Est. 2022

# What is a Community Fridge?



Simply put, it is a refrigerator used to share food at the neighborhood level.

In practice, it provides much more. The Community Fridge movement aims to reduce food waste, build stronger communities, encourage local artists and promote equal access to healthy food.

There is a new pilot program in Indian River County called the Community Fridge Program. Simply put, it is a refrigerator placed within the community used to share food at the neighborhood level. The motto is “Take what you need, Leave what you can”. The purpose of the program is to reduce food waste, build stronger communities, encourage local artists and promote equal access to healthy food. The Community Fridge is a place where anyone can come and pick up fresh food at any time, without judgment. The Community Fridge concept works both ways: one way refers to the people the fridge supports and the other to those people who ensure the fridge is full.

*“Take What You Need, Leave What You Can”*



# DEAL WITH LIABILITY

or the perception of it

## Additional Resources:

**Food Recovery: Legal Guide -  
University of Arkansas School of Law**

**Keeping Food Out of the Landfill:  
Policy Ideas for States and Localities –  
Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic**

### In the US: The Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act

This law protects good faith food donors and recipient agencies against liability, excepting only gross negligence and/or intentional misconduct. In order to be protected under this law, the recipient agency has to be a nonprofit. Some states, such as California, extend this protection to individuals as well.

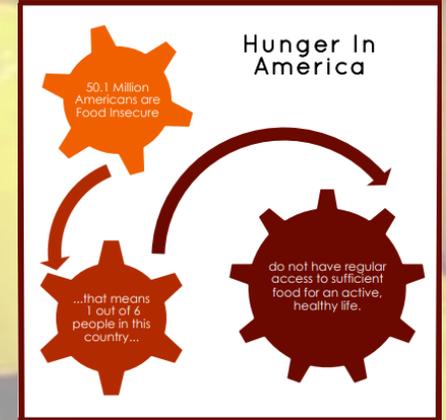
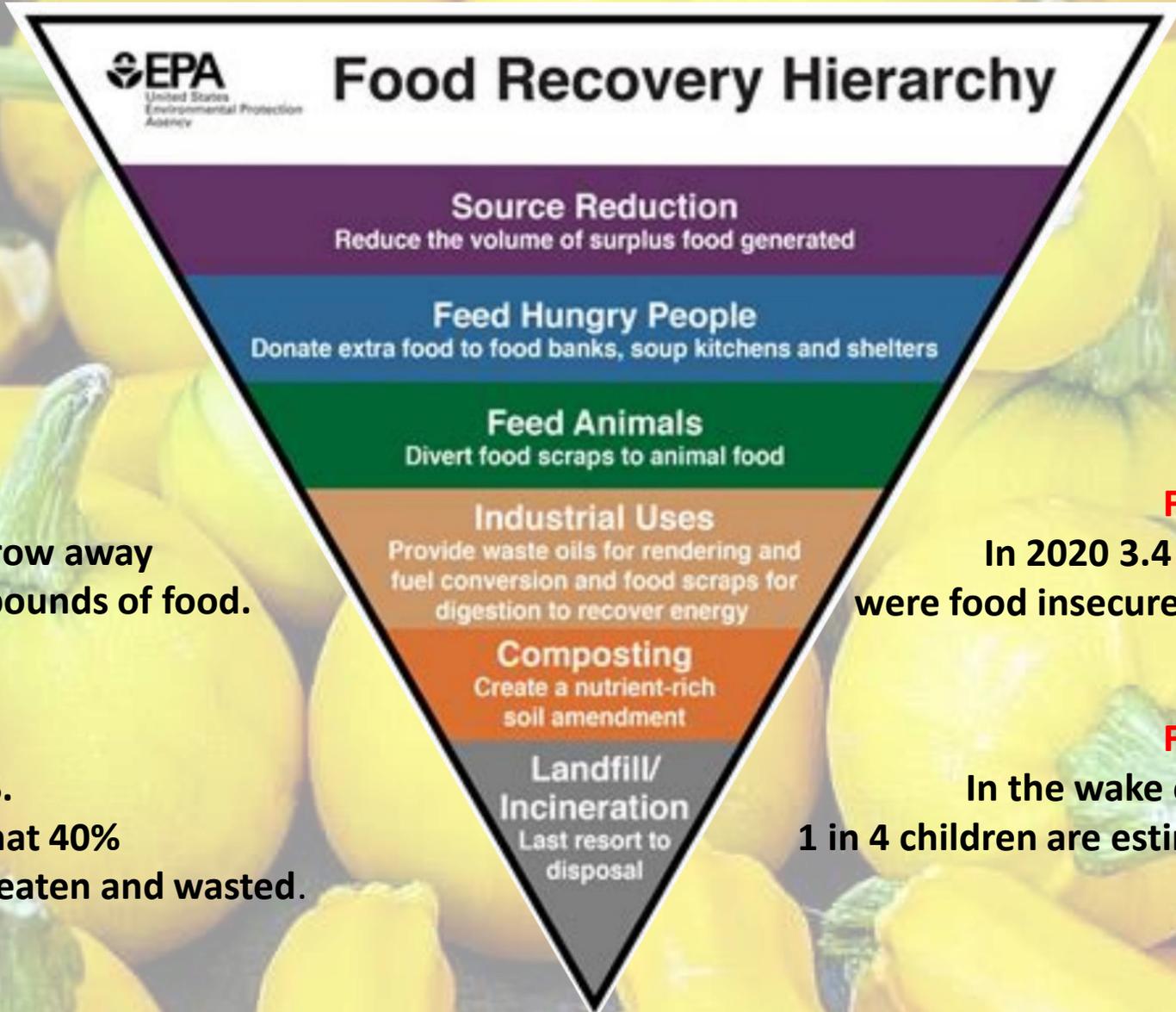
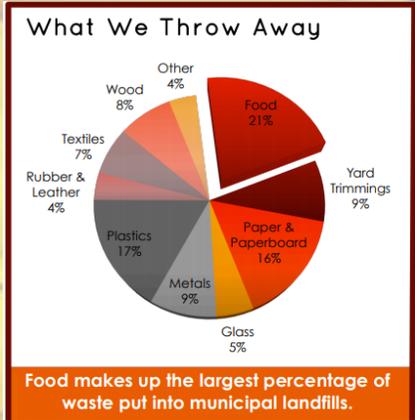
If you are a potential host or property owner concerned about liability, try to partner with local nonprofits that can offer you protection. Or contact the freedge team for legal sponsorship (we are currently working to achieve nonprofit status)

Covered persons "shall not be subject to civil or criminal liability arising from the nature, age, packaging, or condition" of the donated items so long as:

- the donated item is an apparently wholesome food or an apparently fit grocery product
- the item was donated in good faith
- to a non-profit organization
- which distributed the donated items to needy individuals.

- **The Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act (Federal)**
- **FL Statute 768.136: *Liability for canned or perishable food distributed free of charge (State)***
- **FL Department of Health Chapter 64E-11, Food Hygiene: *Community Fridges do not fall under the purview of the Department of Health. DOH codes are made for retail activities not food sharing (Local)***

# Why Do We Need A Community Fridge?



**FACT:**

Every year we throw away more than 100 billion pounds of food.

**FACT:**

In the U.S.

it is estimated that 40%

of the food supply goes uneaten and wasted.

**FACT:**

In 2020 3.4 million people were food insecure in the state of Florida.

**FACT:**

In the wake of the pandemic,

1 in 4 children are estimated to be food insecure.

In the United States, it is estimated that 40% of the food supply goes uneaten and wasted. Food waste makes up the largest percentage of waste put into municipal landfills. Of greater concern, one in four children are estimated to be food insecure. As a result, community fridges are popping up all over the place. Locations include neighboring counties like Miami-Dade, other states like Illinois and New York, and many other countries including the UK, India and Canada.



# Success!

## Hometown News

### Community Fridge opens in Fellsmere

Mike Winikoff Feb 24, 2022



The first community fridge in Indian River County opens Feb. 26 in the parking lot of Fellsmere City Hall, directly east of the Boys and Girls Club.

Photo courtesy of Fellsmere Fridge



The Boys and Girls Club helped paint the Fellsmere Fridge, which will provide free food to the needy.



FELLSMERE — The first community fridge in Indian River County opens Feb. 26 in the parking lot of Fellsmere City Hall, directly east of the Boys and Girls Club. The public is invited to a 10 a.m. ribbon cutting ceremony.

The Fellsmere Fridge is the result of a community collaboration led by staff of the Solid Waste Disposal District. The motto for the program is "Take What you Need, Leave What you Can."

"We came to the board (of county commissioners) about five months ago and brought up the idea of a community fridge," said Solid Waste Disposal District Managing Director Himanshu Mehta. "Community fridges are set up in Miami, Orlando, Tampa, and we wanted to bring that concept here. The goal of the program is for food diversion, to divert good food from just winding up in the landfill, keeping good food out of the landfill and getting it into the hands of folks that could use it. That was the ultimate goal."



### First Local Community Fridge Opens in Fellsmere

The ribbon cutting for the all-new Fellsmere Fridge was held February 26<sup>th</sup>. The Fellsmere Fridge is part of a new local pilot program called the Community Fridge Program, where a refrigerator is placed within a community and is used to share food at

the neighborhood level. The motto of the program is, "Take what you need, Leave what you can." The purpose of the program is to reduce food waste, build stronger communities, encourage local artists, and promote equal access to healthy food. Located next to Fellsmere City Hall at 21 South Cypress Street, the Fellsmere Fridge is maintained by a communal collective of partners from various communities, officials, businesses and individuals. Those interested in volunteering to help stock and clean the fridge can email [fellsmerefridge@gmail.com](mailto:fellsmerefridge@gmail.com).

*Pictured here: Himanshu Mehta, Joseph E. Flescher, Joe Earman, Joel Tyson (Mayor of Fellsmere), Peter D. O'Bryan, Susan Adams, Laura Moss, Chief Keith Touchberry, Jill Brown, Jason Brown, and Sue Flak at the ribbon cutting ceremony of the Fellsmere Fridge on February 26.*

**LEMMON BURST:** Take what you need, leave what you can... a pilot project in Fellsmere

The concept of "you get what you give" is reflected as well in a pilot project in Fellsmere called "The Fellsmere Fridge". It is a community pantry/refrigerator where you can take the food you need and leave what you don't (kind of like the "Little Libraries" you see around town). It is located next to the Fellsmere City Hall at 21 South Cypress St. You can't miss it when you pull up. There is an eye-catching mural on the outside

The fridge not only helps with food insecurity but also will help cut down on food waste. Interesting tidbit: About 40% of the food we produce ends up at the landfill. Fellsmere has been very welcoming to the program, according to Sue. It relies on donations and is run entirely by volunteers. "I would like to open more community fridges," Sue said. "We have two more ready to go, if anyone would like to pilot one."

*Sophie Jatta*

[Click here for Local News Coverage of Fellsmere Fridge](#)

# Take Away.. Be prepared!!!



## What can go in the fridge? Nothing you wouldn't eat yourself!

- ✓ Whole fruits and vegetables
  - ✓ Packaged cut fruits
  - ✓ Bread and pastries (in original packaging)
  - ✓ Frozen food/veggies (no meat)
  - ✓ Pre-packaged foods sealed in original packaging
  - ✓ Commercially prepared meals (labeled and pre-packaged)
  - ✓ Milk, Cheese, Butter, Yogurt (with best by date)
  - ✓ Non-dairy milk
  - ✓ Eggs (with best by date)
  - ✓ Juice
  - ✓ Bagged salads (with best by date)
- ❖ All perishables must be dated and labeled  
❖ All fresh fruits and vegetables and all perishable food should be kept in the fridge or freezer, not on the pantry shelves.
- ❑ No meat, poultry or fish (shelf stable is OK -- ie: cans of tuna fish)
  - ❑ Nothing expired or within 2 days of expiry
  - ❑ Nothing opened or unsealed or partially eaten
  - ❑ No home cooked meals
  - ❑ No alcohol
  - ❑ No medicine



If you wouldn't eat it, don't give it to us!

## FELLSMERE FRIDGE Cleaning Protocol

### Daily:

- ✓ Remove expired foods.
- ✓ Wipe handles and contact surfaces.
- ✓ Take trash to dumpster.

### Weekly:

- ✓ Remove all food from fridge.
- ✓ Inspect quality, toss anything expired or inedible.
- ✓ Wipe all surfaces of the fridge inside and out with disinfectant.
- ✓ Return all labeled and edible food back to fridge.

Please secure cleaning supplies when finished.  
Add any needed items to list.



## FELLSMERE FRIDGE

What can go in the pantry? NON-Perishable/hygiene ONLY

- ✓ Canned goods
- ✓ Cooking oils
- ✓ Jarred goods (peanut butter etc)
- ✓ Water bottles
- ✓ Personal hygiene items (shampoo, soap, etc)
- ✓ Cleaning supplies
- ✓ Diapers
- ✓ Dried beans
- ✓ Rice (uncooked)
- ✓ Spices
- ✓ Cereal
- ✓ Dehydrated milk
- ✓ Coffee
- ✓ Pasta
- ✓ Pet food



- ❑ No meat, poultry or fish (shelf stable is OK -- ie: cans of tuna fish)
- ❑ No produce or perishable food in pantry
- ❑ Nothing expired or within 2 days of expiry
- ❑ Nothing opened or unsealed or partially eaten/used
- ❑ No homemade items
- ❑ No alcohol
- ❑ No medicine



## FELLSMERE FRIDGE

### BEFORE YOU DONATE, PLEASE CHECK THAT

- ❑ Food is clearly labeled with allergens and ingredients.
- ❑ The expiration date is visible and circled.
- ❑ The food has not expired.
- ❑ The food you are donating is accepted by the Fellsmere Fridge.
- ❑ You are putting donations in the proper place. (ALL perishable food must be in the fridge.)
- ❑ The packaging is unopened.
- ❑ No meat or seafood. (Unless canned)
- ❑ No half-eaten leftovers.
- ❑ Donate only what you would personally feel comfortable eating.
- ❑ Do not leave food or trash on the ground.
- ❑ Please discard food that does not meet our guidelines, if you see any.
- ❑ Make sure the fridge/freezer is properly closed.
- ❑ Door should remain closed but unlocked.

Have a question, comment or feedback?  
Email us at [FellsmereFridge@gmail.com](mailto:FellsmereFridge@gmail.com)



# Collaboration and sponsorship is KEY!!!

## Current Sponsors/Supporters of the Fellsmere Fridge

City of Fellsmere  
Indian River County  
Sunrise Rotary  
Haller/Loja Families  
Jetson  
Cutting Edge Signs  
Heather Kramer/Luz De La Hoz  
Boys and Girls Club (Fellsmere)  
United against Poverty (UP)  
Treasure Coast Food Bank  
Interact Students  
Ag Extension of IRC  
Lowe's of Vero Beach  
Marsh Landing  
Complete Electric





***“Food donation is not charity, but mutual aid.  
In other words, solidarity, not charity.”***

**For more information contact:**

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**772 226-3206**

**[sflak@ircgov.com](mailto:sflak@ircgov.com)**