

Service-Learning with the South End Fridge

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Introduction to the South End Fridge

What is the South End Fridge?

The South End Community Fridge accepts donations of food, sanitary products, and small clothing items. They operate under the philosophy of 'take what you need, leave what you can.'

Where is it?

549 Columbus Ave, Boston MA 02118



How can you learn more about the fridge?

Follow them on instagram, @southendfridge!

The South End Fridge is a mutual aid organization.

What is mutual aid?

Mutual aid is when communities take on the responsibility of caring for each other. It isn't the same as charity, which usually involves a one-way relationship between givers and recipients.

In the case of the South End Community Fridge (and community fridges in general), the idea is for the community to care for one another by leaving things that they can. The community supplies and takes from the fridge, instead of an outside giver. This is both on an individual level, and donations from local businesses, who frequently have excess food.

What are other examples of mutual aid?

- Mutual aid funds, where members of a community contribute to a fund to directly help those who need money directly.
- Disability ally projects, which pair up volunteers with those who need physical support (getting groceries, for example)

Fridge Champ Volunteering

You will be put into groups of 2-4 and given a weekly time to travel together to the South End Community Fridge, located on Columbus Ave (in front of MakeShift Boston, 549 Columbus Ave). This should take approximately 45 minutes/week. Each week you will follow the checklist below:



Fridge Champion Checklist

Go to the South End Community Fridge located at [549 Columbus Ave, Boston MA](#).

- Open this google form (bit.ly/fridgechamps) and follow the instructions
- Remove and dispose of any items in the fridge, freezer, and pantry that are expired or too old to consume
- Organize and tidy the items inside and try to group like items together as best you can. Move any items that are nearing expiration to the front of the shelves
- Use cleaning products in the cabinet behind the pantry to wipe down all handles and high touch surfaces on the fridge.
- Collect and dispose of any waste inside the fridge, freezer, and pantry as well as surrounding the shed. You can put it in trash barrels on the street.
- Take a photo of each the fridge, freezer and pantry and send via Instagram DM ([@SouthEndFridge](#)), email (bostonsouthendcommunityfridge@gmail.com), or by uploading into the form google (bit.ly/fridgechamps)

- Inventory needs of fridge to share with rest of team for next stock up
- If you're comfortable - introduce yourself to any fridge visitors! Ask if there's anything they would like to see more of in the future. Hang back if they are in the process of taking food from the fridge.

Student Perspectives on Fridge Champ Volunteering

What did you enjoy about fridge champ volunteering?

I absolutely adored my time volunteering with the fridge because it provided me with a weekly break from my stress and worries to go for a lovely walk and volunteer with my new found friends :)

I enjoyed the walk to and from the fridge every week, it was a nice way to meet new friends and also be productive in community service. The service was not overwhelming and still felt like we were doing something to help the community.

I loved my experience working with the South End Community Fridge. It wasn't too huge of a time commitment, and it was a welcomed break from classes and homework, and when the weather was good it was a nice excuse to take a walk and enjoy the city. It was also a great way to meet people, both in the class and in the community.

Seeing members of the community and feeling empowered to interact and get to know a little bit about them because of my involvement at the Fridge is a great way to familiarize myself with a corner of the South End.



What was challenging about fridge champ volunteering?

Not seeing a lot of food in the fridge when we went to clean, and we often ran out of cleaning products.

It was challenging to see the fridge empty, but also to have to throw out expired food that looked alright. Food waste sucks and I hate that we sometimes had to add to it!

Initially approaching other community members at the fridge was challenging because of worries surrounding reciprocal open-heartedness, but with time empathizing to understand got easier.

It was sometimes hard to feel like you're making a difference, because there is often minimal connection with community members, but when you do make those meaningful connections they are incredibly rewarding.

What advice do you have for future fridge champ volunteers?

- Make sure to let people come grab stuff from the fridge while you are there, don't block the fridge!
- Bring your friends! Get other people involved. I think that way more people would volunteer at the fridge if they knew how easy it is.
- Take a moment aside from tending to the fridge to engage with the community. Re-read that store front sign, say hello to that gaze you caught out of the corner of your eye. Trying to engage with the community is the only way to know what you are helping.
- If you have extra food, bring it with you and donate it!
- Watching food expire in your dorm mini fridge after you dedicate time of your week to helping the fridge is one of the most ridiculous and guilty feelings. Bring your food before this happens!
- Also, don't be discouraged if you go and there is nothing in the fridge sometimes that happens. Also feel free to talk to the people at the fridge if they seem willing to chat, they are fun to talk to. Also **check the weather.**

Community Events

As part of service, students should find and attend an event that is either hosted by a group based out of the south end community, about a topic that relates to this neighborhood, or takes place in the neighborhood. You will be asked to include your reflections on this event in your Final Reflection Paper (Due at the end of the semester alongside your ME Plan Presentation).

Recurring Community Events

Boston Ujima Weekly Meetings

Every Wednesday, 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM

Zoom

Boston Ujima Project is building a cooperative business, arts, and investment ecosystem, by and for Boston's working class Black, Indigenous and communities of color. Their weekly meetings consist of Community Building and Financial and Political Education.

City Live/Vida Urbana Weekly Meeting

Every Tuesday, 6:30 PM

Watch on Facebook Live: <http://www.facebook.com/citylifeboston>

City Life/Vida Urbana is a grassroots community organization committed to fighting for racial, social and economic justice and gender equality by building working class power. They promote individual empowerment, develop community leaders and build collective power to effect systemic change and transform society.

Fenway Community Development Corporation Monthly Meeting

Every second Thursday of the Month, 6-7:30 pm

Zoom

The Fenway Community Development Corporation holds meetings every second Thursday of the month for their Organizing Committee to discuss topics relevant to the Boston community such as rent stabilization or redistricting and the impacts on racial justice. They also engage in local campaigns and communicate with local city officials. Anyone is welcome to join their meetings and discuss!

Student Perspectives on Community Events

I went to the Student Cultural Fair and learned a ton about the cultural groups on campus. I got to learn a ton about the Filipino cultural group in particular, and made friends with a bunch of the students from this group.

I attended a community march in support of Ukraine after they were invaded by Russia. I totally recommend students in this class to keep an ear open for protests and demonstrations in the area, they are incredibly interesting and powerful to observe.

I went to NU Impact's Sustainable Investment Summit and learned about different ways that you can increase representation and opportunities within a community through investments. I learned that this is something I want hands-on experience with.

I was apart of the advisory team here at Northeastern which acted as my community event. For those who do not know what that is, it's a team that meets weekly throughout the semester to talk about the Connections and Decisions curriculum, and where it could be improved. I learned a lot from this experience and was able to develop many leadership skills throughout our meetings. I loved contributing new ideas as well, and definitely discovered a creative side of mine.

Group Project

In addition to weekly service as a fridge champ volunteer, you will be asked to engage in a group project that supports the efforts of the fridge. Below are some examples of past projects and potential project ideas.

Past Projects

Drive for Non-SNAP Eligible Items

We created an Amazon wishlist for non-SNAP items. We then sent the link to that list to friends and family, encouraging them to buy things. What went well is that we did end up with a decent amount of goods and a successful drop off. Some advice we would give to future groups is to try to involve Northeastern more, whether that be putting up flyers, having a stand, etc.

Donations from Businesses

We reached out to local businesses to receive donations of any food they had leftover at the end of the day. We received regular donations from a couple businesses for the fridge. Reaching out to people in person and using personal connections worked the best to receive donations. Going in person to a business would be the most beneficial, and reaching out to places near the fridge or campus is helpful as well.

Other Potential Projects

- **Improve the fridge champ instructions**
- **Improve system for item requests:** Perhaps using a clipboard, QR code with survey, request box or call line/answering machine
- **Make the surveys more user friendly:** Rethinking what the form asks and why it is being asked, such as we are asking what items are missing but how can we know what is missing if you are not a regular volunteer.
- **Organizing murals:** The South End Community Fridge's shed is intended to be a community art, with a canvas rotating as people paint over it. Either painting it yourself or organizing people to paint it.
- **Increased presence online:** engaging on the instagram and other social media with other volunteer groups, answering questions and in general maintaining a consistent presence.
- **Search Engine Optimization:** Creating a google location, putting the website link on google maps

Staying Involved

Continuing with the South End Fridge

If you want to continue volunteering with the South End Fridge after the semester ends, you absolutely can. You can sign up as a volunteer using [this volunteer interest form](#).

Getting Involved in Other Ways

Student Organizations

You can get involved with a club on campus that engages in this work. Some ideas are below:

[Huskies Organizing with Labor \(HOWL\)](#)

HOWL is a coalition of students and groups organizing in solidarity with NU dining hall workers, security workers, facility workers, graduate student workers, and non-tenure-track faculty.

[Northeastern Sunrise](#) @SunriseNortheastern

Sunrise is an **environmental justice** organizing group. They work to encourage Northeastern students to get involved in climate activism and to support other movements in the fight for justice for all!

Northeastern Mutual Aid @numutualaid

Northeastern Mutual Aid is a student network dedicated to the well-being of all Northeastern students, staff, and community members.

Coding for Community @c4cneu

C4C is led by Northeastern students who are passionate about developing meaningful and exciting products. Students have the opportunity to learn the fundamentals of product and software development, while also contributing to the Boston community.

Student Alliance for Prison Reform

SAPR is a club at Northeastern University that works to spread awareness about the injustices faced by prison inmates. Through weekly educational meetings, movie nights, speakers, and other special events, we work to keep college students informed about issues within the prison system.

Community Organizing in Boston

City Life/Vida Urbana

City Life/Vida Urbana is a grassroots community organization committed to fighting for racial, social and economic justice and gender equality by building working class power.

Green Roots

GreenRoots is a community-based organization dedicated to improving and enhancing the urban environment and public health in Chelsea and surrounding communities.

Boston Ujima Project

Boston Ujima Project is building a cooperative business, arts, and investment ecosystem, by and for Boston's working class Black, Indigenous and communities of color.

Volunteering

You can search for volunteer opportunities on [Northeastern's Service Finder](#).

You can also subscribe to **Community Service and Civic Engagement's newsletter**.

Community Volunteers Program

The Community Volunteers Program connects the Northeastern students with consistent volunteer opportunities at local nonprofit organizations in Boston. Volunteers commit to serving on the same day and time throughout the duration of the semester.

Here are some examples of Food System-Related volunteering:

Haley House

You can help prepare and serve food with Haley House. They use food with purpose and the power of community to break down barriers between people, empower individuals, and strengthen neighborhoods.

The Food Project

The Food Project's mission is to create a thoughtful and productive community of youth and adults from diverse backgrounds who work together to build a more just and sustainable food system. Volunteers work on the farms in the spring and in the fall when our youth crews are in school.

Community Servings

Community Servings' mission is to actively engage the community to provide scratch-made medically tailored meals to individuals and their families experiencing critical or chronic illness and nutrition insecurity. You can volunteer to help make those meals!

Saint Francis House

You can volunteer to serve or prepare food at Saint Francis House, an organization that serves hundreds of individuals experiencing homelessness every single day, 365 days a year.