

**What does ‘Building a Future’ look like?**

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A group consisting of the Middletown Mutual Aid Collective (MMAC), the North End Action Team (NEAT), a collective of university students, and several Middletown community members answered that question during the Covid-19 pandemic.

MMAC discussed what the future looks like for building a community where love and care are the foundation. While coming from different backgrounds, group members share the goal of creating a world where everyone has their basic needs met. From this foundation, a collaborative project bloomed, first imagined by two young adults and realized through collaborative effort. Behind the scenes, MMAC meetings fueled hard work, research and planning. On November 16, 2020, the group was instrumental in opening The Middletown Community “Fridge”.

The Fridge is located at 33 Ferry Street under the stairs of the Community Health Center (CHC), next to the Ferry Street Community Garden. The group started it to increase food accessibility among Middletown residents. The Fridge is accessible 24/7/365 with no limitations: a “take what you need, leave what you can” philosophy. For information on what can and cannot be donated please visit <https://www.middletownmutualaid.org> The Fridge remains stocked daily by donations from the community, from young adults themselves, from businesses and farms, as well from reimbursed shoppers. The long term goal is to have the Fridge stocked by donations alone, without the need for shoppers. Judging by how quickly food is accessed, the Fridge was greatly needed. There is also a small pantry nearby for dry goods and other items. The Department of Health has been in consultation the group.

MMAC’s Community Fridge addresses the basic needs of access to food without barriers such as identification or income qualification. This community asset is the very foundation of wraparound care philosophy. Without access to quality, nutritious, fresh food, adults, children, young adults and communities as a whole suffer. The young adults and community members involved in MMAC, saw this need and acted. As a behind the scenes support, I was blessed to collaborate with these young adults to help make their vision a reality.