



## Perry Farm's community-built food pantry

*This article is part of our series profiling our members' response to the COVID-19 pandemic.*

While social media does not replace our need for in-person contact while in pandemic isolation, sometimes surprising communities can arise from it. Dave and Kim Perry's community-built food pantry started when Kim saw a few Facebook posts early in the pandemic of people who were in need.

Community is a large part of the Perry's farming style. Dave is the President of the Frontenac Beef Farmers Association, and they've been actively involved in Local 316's projects such as Food Down the Road and Feast of Fields. The Perrys feel the NFU-O supports family farms over factory farms and, through its active membership, contributes to the local community. On their farm, 20 minutes north of Kingston, they have around 100 head of Maine Anjou cattle along with Berkshire pigs, meat chickens, and turkeys, all of which they sell through their store, Local Family Farms. True to its name, the store also buys from other family farms in the area.

When the pandemic shut things down, Dave and Kim asked themselves what they could do with the ground beef they normally donate to summer camps for children. They decided to move an extra industrial fridge to a secondary entrance on their farm and filled it with ground beef. The Perrys then sent out a Facebook message that invited those in need to help themselves. If you build it, they will come.

Those who had food and resources to share also arrived. Soon neighbours contributed home-baked bread and banana bread. Fellow farmers donated eggs – at one time they were going through 10-15 dozen eggs a day. Beef Farmers of

Frontenac covered the cost of purchasing ground beef beyond what the Perrys could supply. Overall, the community-built food pantry went through approximately 500 pounds of ground beef in the four months it was open. Their son's friend's ice fishing hut was repurposed to accommodate the pantry's expansion.

In addition to donations of food, local residents donated money either through a bottle drop-off program or via e-transfer. Funds were used to buy items like flour, sugar, laundry detergent, and the elusive yeast in bulk that they repackaged into family-sized portions. They also provided formula, diapers, and children's games.

Everything in the pantry was free for the taking; no questions asked. A neighbour who had previously provided donations ended up with car trouble and relied on the pantry until she could get her vehicle fixed. The pantry also served those who couldn't take their children into grocery stores which had limited entrance to one person per household.

Then there were the lucky ones who, if they timed it right, could get one of Kim's fresh-baked pies!

As our long food supply chains are strained during this pandemic and

countless families are precariously employed and struggling to bring healthy food to their tables, the Perrys and their supporters offer a local and personalized antidote. Family farmers, like the Perrys, remind us that community-building starts with compassion and generosity.



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