

Fresh Wheels
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Section 1

Fresh Wheels provides Lehigh Valley communities located in food deserts with access to culturally sensitive fresh fruits and vegetables. Clients have the ability to make purchases through cash and credit card transactions through an iPad App and credit card reader.

Given the community engagement philosophy Fresh Wheels encompasses, businesses and local community members were informed of the project through meetings and local festivals. As a result, KelTom Gutter Services located in New Jersey, donated a van for the project. Additionally, the Moraga Family of Salisbury Township, Pennsylvania, provided parking, office/storage space, a computer, and printer, for long-term usage of the project. The Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley, a non-profit organization, offered assistance in incorporating Fresh Wheels so that the van and project be insured.

Fresh Wheels is presently awaiting permit approval for mobile vending on public streets in the cities of Allentown and Bethlehem. However, direct delivery of produce has begun its initial stages. We aim to serve clients that reside in food deserts, or have lack of access to affordable produce. Clients may place their orders by telephone or in person, and deliveries of produce can be made to their homes directly.

Difficulties encountered during the project have mostly revolved around permit approvals by both the cities of Bethlehem and Allentown. Mobile vending of vegetables and fruits is a new concept to both cities. Most food deserts are located in "residential zones." Mobile vending is prohibited in these locations by both cities. Therefore, Fresh Wheels representatives have met with local religious and community center leaders to established direct deliveries to their localities, instead of street vending (that are located in residential zones).

Continuing, the van is currently being customized to further meet permit standards. For example, the van has some rust on the exterior. Therefore, it is deemed not appropriate for mobile vending, yet.

Much of the information and efforts to alleviate food deserts in our community are managed by local non-profits. Many of the organizations had fragmented information of effective ways to address food deserts, or were hesitate to provide information. For example, some organizations viewed Fresh Wheels as a competitor. That is, they viewed Fresh Wheels as a possible contender for local grants regarding food deserts in the near future. As a result, the Fresh Wheels team conducted food assessments and research in both the Allentown and Bethlehem food deserts. This research has now been shared with community members to bridge community trust to the project.

Fresh Wheels has been sustainable on budget for the purposes of establishing a strong foundation. However, instituting equipment for the acceptance of Women, Infant, and Children (WIC) and Nutrition Assistance Program benefits (SNAP) is at the moment too costly to acquire and maintain.

Fellow members of the project encountered language barriers in conducting research to better serve the community. For example, some Latino ethnicities referred to certain vegetables and fruits in different names, depending on their background. Although our team could communicate in Spanish, which is the primary language in the food deserts, we lacked the ability to communicate in Arabic. Some residents spoke Arabic.

Our strongest asset in the project was building and fostering community trust. Many community leaders, such as the State Representative were encouraging to the vision and goals of the project. Additionally, our team is comprised of people with great communication skills. Fresh Wheels has been

able to promote the project positively throughout the community, and gathered followers on Facebook and compiled an effective client roster.

Unfortunately, our team lacked urban planning/zoning knowledge. We were unsuspecting of the complexity of zoning regulations in both Allentown and Bethlehem. Moreover, we lacked mechanical skills to customize the van ourselves. Nonetheless, we have been able to overcome these hurdles by meeting with city officials.

The project is expected to benefit a least sixty to one hundred people weekly, once it is in full operations. Our clients at the moment are composed of senior citizens and families residing in food deserts, as well as people with disabilities who are unable to obtain fresh produce due to transportation.

Currently, Fresh Wheels intends to remain sustainable through the vending of its produce. The demand of our services is present in the community. Also, Fresh Wheels is in talks of merging with a local non-profit to widen its presence and services in the community. Thus, Fresh Wheels has the potential to become a permanent program serving the community.

Section 2

Popularizations of songs such as, "Fortunate Son" by the American rock band Creedence Clearwater Revival, and "Changes" by American rapper 2Pac express the frustrations of the political system to achieve peace and prosperity. Michael Mousseau (2010) indicates that stable markets are linked to peace¹. From researching about peace in industrialized countries, researchers have established a consensus that links peace to economic stability and education. Peace can be accomplished via peace education, community engagement, and the promotion of a stable economic market. Peace in our viewpoint is defined as an environment of tolerance toward each other, in which conflict resolution is the first phase to solving problems, as long as we foster education, community engagement, and a fair stable market.

Following our definition of peace, Fresh Wheels educates the community on the variety of vegetables and fruits, and how one can cook/eat them. Through food, Fresh Wheels exposes the community of the different produce that our multicultural community consumes. Additionally, we bring the community together via a project they can see has roots in the community. For example, a local mural artist will soon be painting a mural of the Lehigh Valley on the van. Lastly, we stimulate the local economy by purchasing from local and regional farmers/businesses. Since Fresh Wheels intends on becoming a permanent program, Fresh Wheels will become a long-term change agent to foster peace through food.

The project has impacted the perception of all team members in regard to how small the world is. Many view the Lehigh Valley as homogeneous in terms of race/ethnicity, but through this project, we have all witnessed and interacted with a diverse range of cultures. Most importantly, we have built trust among our local community to become more effective change agents.

"Davis Projects for Peace facilitated the shaping of Fresh Wheels to become a strong change agent through food in our community. As ridiculous as many thought our project was in the beginning, Davis Projects for Peace believed in our potential, and today we are impacting one healthy mouth at a time."

-Gelmar O. Moraga

¹ Mousseau, Michael. 2012 "The Democratic Peace Unraveled: It's The Economy."
Koç University-Tüsad Economic Research Forum : 1-27



Fresh Wheels delivered culturally sensitive fruits and vegetables to the De La Cruz family in Allentown, PA. Ms. De La Cruz is a single Mother raising two children in a low-income household. It makes it easier to have her produce delivered directly to her home, so she can look after her children.



Mrs. Rodrigues is delivered fresh vegetables. She has no means of transportation to the grocery store. Additionally, her granddaughter that lives with her suffers from MD.

Delivery of Pineapples to the Doung Family, who reside in a food desert (Bethlehem, PA).

