

Expanding Our Outreach

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Katie Noh, Brendan Tomaszewski & Jessica Theis



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About Us



Katie Noh is a first-year student at Ithaca College as a Communication Management and Design major at Ithaca College. She is currently involved in Women in Communications, Theatre Lab, Cereal Ministry, and Guiding Eyes for the Blind. Work experience includes working at Marshall's as a Merchandising Associate.



Brendan Tomaszewski is a freshman at Ithaca College majoring in Communication Management and Design. He is involved with Theatre Lab, and is currently an intern at Truly Reaching You as an invoice and managing assistant.



Jessica Theis is a sophomore at Ithaca College majoring in Television & Digital Media and minoring in Communication Management & Design. Currently, she is a social media manager for Ithaca College Dining Services and a video editing intern for Nvolve.

Executive Summary

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our recommendations to the Friendship Donations Network. We are excited to share our proposal to help out a Non-For-Profit that has already serviced so many people throughout Tompkins County. We have developed a 12-month plan that utilizes online and paper ads and frequent social media posts to increase the awareness and presence of the FDN in Tompkins County. Along with these strategies, we also plan on developing new partnerships through in-person events and building relationships with local businesses to promote the comfortable use of the FDN and to reach the more isolated populations of the target audience. We believe this approach will work for the target audience of low-income rural families who need fresh produce. Through prominent advertising in locations accessible to low-income families, in addition to the use of various social media platforms, this approach will increase awareness of the organization. Additionally, the strategies will aim to comfort individuals nervous about using the service by emphasizing the FDN's personability and accessibility. Through our comprehensive research and analysis of the Friendship Donations Network, we are confident in our carefully created year-long plan for boosting the company's success.



Situational Analysis

From the research we conducted, it is clear that the Friendship Donations Network is a unique non-profit that makes a difference in the lives of many across Tompkins County. It is the only prominent organization that acts as a liaison between those who donate food and food distributors, meaning it is primarily a collector of donations to distribute and provide to other locations (Shipos, 2022). Using its extensive network of large-scale and small-scale businesses, the FDN collaborates daily with large companies such as Aldis, BJ's, and Panera, in addition to its grassroots connections of farmers and local neighbors, to supply food donations (Friendship Donation Network, 2022). Because the organization does not purchase food to donate, they rely heavily on other companies to supply its inventory through donations. Furthermore, the overwhelming majority who work at the FDN are volunteers, so the FDN is constantly reaching out to its local population to gain support to cover the various tasks needed while also working with newspapers and information sites to spread the word about its mission. People in the area know it as a well-established organization in Tompkins County whose services have become increasingly valuable in the past couple of years.

When looking at the state of Tompkins County, food insecurity significantly impacts the population, which has only increased due to COVID-19 (Ithaca Voice, 2021). The annual food budget shortfall in Tompkins County in 2020 was over six and a half million dollars (Feeding America, 2020). As a result, many families had limited access to affordable, nutritious food. Furthermore, Tompkins County is known for being a "food desert" where there is an "absence of a full-service grocery store in a one-mile radius" (Chang, 2021). Unfortunately, this food insecurity has hit the more rural families even harder. For many, the primary places residents can buy groceries are at gas stations and Dollar Stores (Higgins, 2022).

As a result, Tompkins County greatly values the FDN's services, but the FDN still must compete with other non-profits for the public's attention and donors. For example, the Food Bank of the Southern Tier is a much larger and well-established non-profit that serves Broome, Chemung, Schuyler, Steuben, Tioga, and Tompkins counties (Food Bank of the Southern Tier, 2022). These two companies have similar missions in that they both want to help provide food for families who need it. While they may not be directly competing against each other, they are competing for the public's attention and, therefore, the attention of volunteers and monetary and food donors.

Therefore, one of the biggest challenges the FDN faces is finding effective ways to communicate with the public and reach the low-income population, particularly those physically more isolated. According to FDN director Meaghan Sheehan Rosen, most advertising is done through "word of mouth," which is not the most efficient way to get information out to their audience, especially an audience that is spread out. Additionally, their social media presence is not being used to its fullest potential. Since social media is often crucial in gaining audiences' attention and communicating quickly and efficiently, this campaign will address the issues of too much reliance on interpersonal communication and shifting to more forms of advertisements, both in person and online, to expand the FDN's outreach.

SWOT Chart

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong network of donors with a mix of large and small organizations • Positive reputation of being friendly and generous (non-profit award from 2018) • Well known in the Ithaca area→ people are aware of their services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small social media presence (495 followers on IG, 116 on Twitter, 904 on Facebook) • Very dependent on other companies for donations since they do not buy food. • No consistent staff due to most people being volunteers (only paid staff member is the coordinator).
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The local area of Ithaca is interconnected and progressive, allowing more businesses to be open to receive donations and give donations. • Economic recession and aftermath of COVID created a greater need for food donations and FDN services. • Tompkins County is a food desert, so there is a significant demand for places that can provide fresh produce. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larger food banks with more popularity and programs lead away potential growth of donations and volunteers. • Inflation of the market, which makes products more expensive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restaurants and other places may not be able to donate as much if they cannot buy as much fresh produce due to the increased prices.



Audience

The target audience the Friendship Donation Network should focus on is low-income families in the Tompkins county area. Looking at the county's demographics, approximately 12.4% of families are in poverty, with a median household income of \$38,019 (Census Profile, 2022). Additionally, about 23,738 family households, about 53.62% of the population, and 22.4% of those households have children (Tompkins County Demographics, 2022). Typically for low-income families in rural areas, some of the most significant barriers to getting the food they need revolve around financial insecurity, physical isolation from resources, and a lack of transportation options (Rural Hunger, 2022). Additionally, 36.6% of households have a single parent. Research shows that single parents “are less likely to have an education beyond high school and are more likely to be without employment or to work in a job that is not secure” (Farrigan, 2019). Therefore, these low-income families’ daily concerns revolve around caring for their children, maintaining their residences, and finding or keeping a job. Supplying food for themselves will be difficult when balancing their tight schedules.

As mentioned, Tompkins County is known as a “food desert,” so the distance between these families and the nearest grocery store may not be for miles. This adds an additional stressor for isolated low-income families as they may not afford a car and need to rely on public transportation. As a result, their physical location makes it difficult for them to get the food they need. With all of these factors to consider, putting fresh produce and nutritious food on the table may not always be the priority for these low-income families despite it being essential for their well-being and health.

Therefore, what this audience looks for in an organization is one that is close by, cheap, and easy to use. Fortunately, the FDN’s services can accommodate many of these concerns. Based on testimonies from locals, it seems that some of the population is aware of what the FDN offers. For example, locals such as Sara Knobel say that “About 25-30 families come each [Tuesday] and many new people are discovering Healthy Tuesdays” that the FDN sponsors (Higgins, 2022). However, because the FDN typically communicates by word of mouth, information naturally will take longer to get to parts of the community, especially considering that much of the area is rural. Furthermore, it is implied that the public does not receive information from the FDN through mediated communication. This more personable approach to sharing messages aligns with Tompkins County’s community-based personality, which fortunately aligns with the community-focused and family-friendly brand personality of the FDN.

It is clear that the services the FDN provides are both needed and sought after by this specific population of rural low-income families. This status of the Tompkins County area provides an opportunity for the company to gain momentum and popularity, so targeting this specific population should be the priority.

Audience Visual Persona

The Millers



Background / Demographics

- Parents working low-income jobs
- Parents aged between 28-35
- Yearly income \$38,019
- Works paycheck to paycheck
- Accumulated college debt

Goals

- Save as much money on resources as possible
- Afford schooling for their children
- Provide cheap sustenance

Identifiers

- Word of mouth
- Paper advertisements (brochures)
- Billboards
- Public advertisements
- Television advertisements

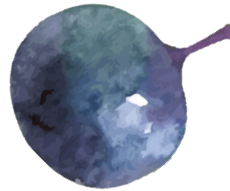
Barriers

- Financial instability
- Physical location is often isolated (rural)
- Grocery stores are far
- Limited transportation options
- Lack of higher education

Personality Traits

- Family oriented
- Hardworking
- Financially stressed
- Community based
- Thankful for services





Campaign Overview

Our campaign, “Expanding Our Outreach,” will aim to reach more low-income families in the Tompkins County area by creating a more significant online presence and increasing partnerships with companies. In order to reach more people, a key component is to have the information and mission of the FDN easily accessible online, so through this campaign, we aim to expand the FDN’s social media following on all current platforms. Additionally, one of the most significant barriers for many rural low-income families is their physical isolation and distance from the grocery stores or markets where they could get fresh produce. So, while FDN is well known in various parts of the county, we understand there is a difference between being known by the people and being used by the people. So, another way we will aspire to reach these low-income families living in the more rural parts of Tompkins County is by expanding our network with companies that may be closer to the isolated populations. By doing this, these people will have better access to the food the FDN provides and the services they can receive.

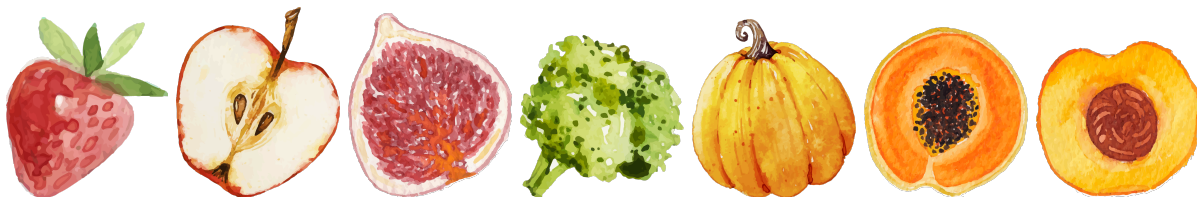
Through this campaign, the key messages we want people to take away are “We aim to provide fresh produce close to you and your family, so you don’t need to stress about getting to us,” “You will easily get fresh produce at no cost to help you and your family get the nutritious foods you deserve,” and “FDN is a friend to your community, so we want you to be comfortable using our services.” The primary goal of promoting these specific messages is to build trust and a connection between our organization and the low-income families we aim to serve. We know that there are many competing factors and stressors they must deal with, so we are striving to help people feel more inclined to take advantage of the food resources we provide and want to create a sense of ease knowing they have access to the nutritious foods they need.

Goals

- Increase the number of low-income families served
- Expand our network through more partnerships

Objectives

It is important we set measurable objectives, so we can see if our plan was successful. These are the objectives we propose based on our understanding of the target audience and our current status in the community of Tompkin County. The first objective is to increase the awareness of the FDN service among low-income families in Tompkins County by 10% over the 12-month campaign. The second is to collaborate with five new companies/non-profits by the end of the campaign. Lastly, the third objective is to increase social media following by 15% on all social networking platforms by the end of the campaign.



Campaign Elements

Strategy 1: Grow our online presence to have a larger outreach.

Tactic #1: Hire a social media manager who will work with social media influencers Kae Audhild (5,500 followers on Facebook), Joshua Eli (42,400 followers on Instagram), and Laura Telischi (12,000 followers on Instagram) to create videos in the form of Instagram shorts and to post photos on Facebook and Instagram to promote the FDN. Each influencer would focus on one of the in-person events: farmers market booths, festivals, and Neighborhood Food Hub events.

For the farmers market and festivals, Kae Audhild and Joshua Eli will film clips that feature the volunteers and what goes into the fresh produce baskets in a “Day in the Life” video style. They will be informal and showcase the friendly faces of the FDN. Additionally, Audhild can post videos on how to use the simple recipe cards in the baskets on Facebook and Instagram for people to watch and see how simple it is while still promoting the idea of nutrition.

For the Neighborhood Food Hub events, Laura Telischi will create short videos on the steps to donate to the NFH and will feature photo posts of the communities she visits on Instagram and Facebook. She will go to the three neighborhoods of Groten, Dryden, and Danby and create a mini-series of what she sees and how the communities are doing. While all these posts will be featured on the individual influencers’ pages, they will also be found on the FDN social media platforms.

The benefit of using these people is that they are some of the most popular influencers in Ithaca, each having thousands of followers. Additionally, these influencers have a particular interest in food sustainability and nutrition; therefore, the ethos of these influencers will closely match the brand of the FDN. This is important because it will help promote the benefits of the FDN’s services and quickly reach a broad audience.



Tactic #2: Start a series of short (1-2 minute) personal testimonies from volunteers, families, and staff who have used and helped out with the FDN’s services that will be posted on various platforms that the company has direct control over (featured on Instagram shorts, Facebook reels, FDN website). The testimonies will either feature short stories of how long they

have been using the FDN or specific ways the FDN has helped them in the past. Including this in the FDN's brand will create a level of relatable and personable appeal to the audience, giving the company a personality of being selfless and family-friendly since there will be faces to attach to the name. The audience will most likely relate to the various stories that the customers of the FDN tell during each testimony and will comfort them if they are anxious about whether to use the services or not.

Tactic #3: Pay for Facebook ads that promote FDN events and service locations.

Facebook is a social media platform with the largest population of the targeted audience, with 48.9% of its users between 25-44 years old. This means that compared to other popular platforms, Facebook is the one that will appeal the most to our targeted audience and have the largest chance of reaching them. The ads will primarily focus on appearing friendly and inviting while also displaying information about upcoming events and locations. Going to a food bank or a charity for their services can be overwhelming and defeating.

However, the point of the ads will be to quickly communicate information about FDN events and locations that will have fresh produce to make them more comfortable and familiar with how the FDN can address their food needs.

**Sharing our food
Saving your money.**

Find your nearest hub event on
friendshipdonations.org.



Strategy 2: Be involved in more events throughout Tompkins County

Tactic #1: Pay to have booths at farmer's markets, downtown festivals, and local events.

From food donations, we will give packages of produce for free to the people who attend. Each bag of produce will come with a recipe card for using the food in a meal. The farmer's markets and festivals also create an opportunity for people to easily pick up produce to take home right from the booth. Additionally, giving out cards with simple recipes made from donated produce will encourage families to continue seeking the FDN services since they know what to do with the food they have received. Furthermore, the point of having in-person events is maintaining some of the interpersonal communication the FDN values while also advertising to the general public in Tompkins County to increase people's awareness of the FDN.

Tactic #2: Partner with Tompkins Weekly, Cornell Sun, and the Ithaca Voice to cover the farmers market features and Neighborhood Food Hub Events. Even though the FDN is not directly involved in the events themselves (other than the Neighborhood Food Hubs), having the FDN brand and logo associated with the event will give the idea that they are involved more in

Tompkins County and make their name more well-known. The stories will mention when and how much the FDN has donated to certain hunger relief programs so people can see where the FDN is present in their community. Additionally, it will ideally include a brief message from the coordinators of the hunger relief programs regarding how many families benefit and depend on the FDN's donations. Focusing on these factors will highlight how frequently the FDN is involved. These articles and paper ads will be a way of advertising the FDN to families who may not have or depend on social media ads to access information.

Tactic #3: Host more Neighborhood Food Hub (NFH) events in Dryden, Danby, and Groton (3 new neighborhood sectors that were not previously associated with the FDN). Neighborhood Food Hubs are events that the FDN holds once a week. The company will set up food distribution stations that give away produce directly to anyone who comes, without using a local food distributor. The station's food inventory will come from the FDN and people in the neighborhoods who donate excess food from their gardens. The FDN will invite people to bring their extra produce about an hour before the hub goes "live" for people to drop by. This will be the FDN's way of making their services more accessible for those who do not have an easy way of finding transport to food distribution services by being right in the neighborhood. Since neighborhoods, especially low-income ones, are prime locations for our target audience, having more NFH services will make the company more present in the lives of families.

Strategy 3: Reach isolated populations by partnering with new companies

Tactic #1: Create a hashtag (#FDNdonates) for food banks to post when the FDN hosts events and donates food. This hashtag will be used on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook to emphasize how many companies trust and rely on the FDN to appeal to future partnerships. By having these local services send out this hashtag advertising the FDN, there is a two-way benefit for both parties involved: the FDN gains advertising from the business and potential new families utilizing their services, and the company gains viewership for themselves from whatever they post. After companies release social media posts relating to the FDN, this could inspire other companies to also go to the FDN to either host events or help with food donations, increasing their viewership.

Tactic #2: Ask Ithaca Kitchen Cupboard at Salvation Army, Tompkins Community Action Pantry, and Loaves and Fishes to create testimonies and statements of how the FDN helped them and post them on their websites. Individuals from the company may write testimonies, but

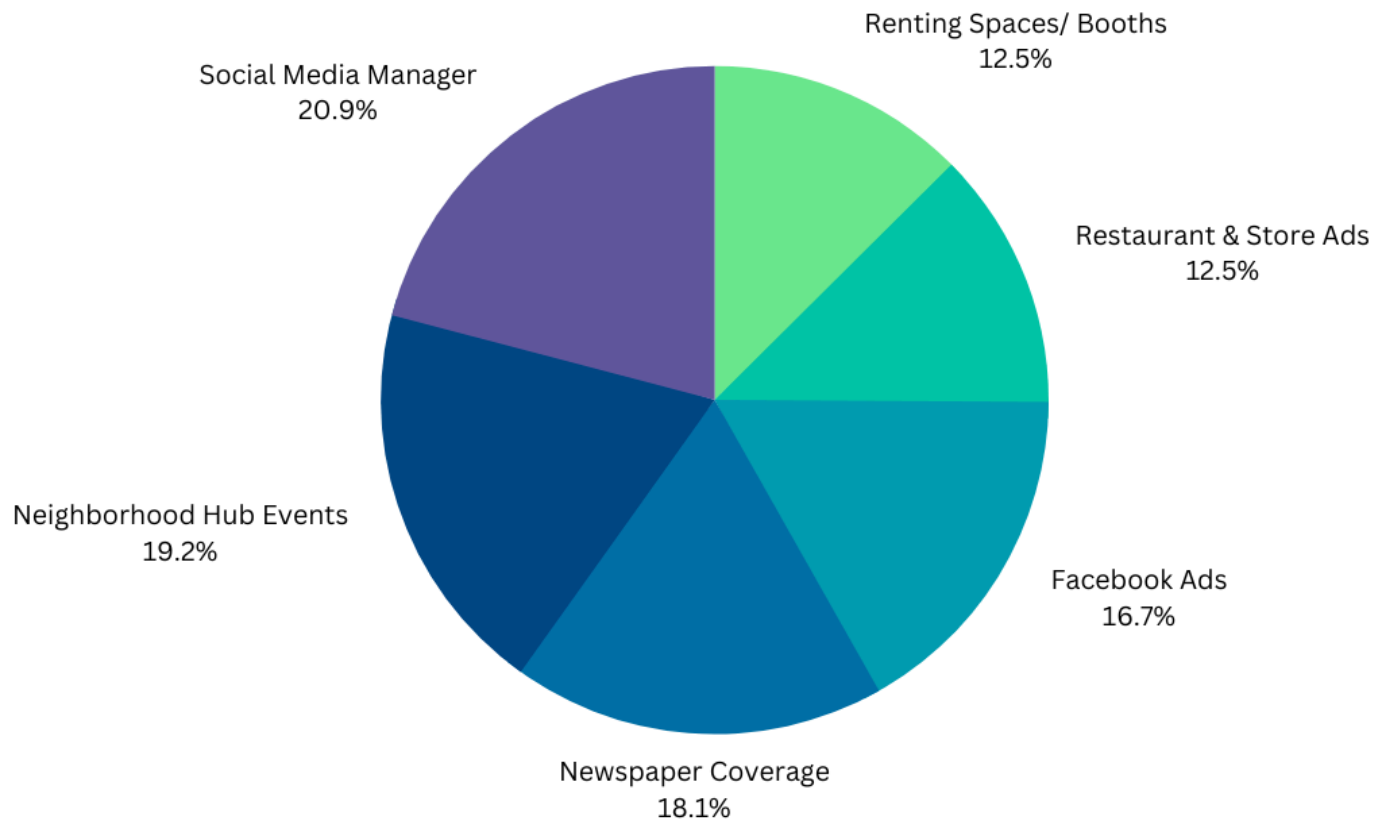


ideally, they will be 2-5 minute videos in a conversational interview form. These testimonies will differ from the personal testimonies from volunteers/users of the FDN because the partnered companies will state how FDN helps their businesses and the food service industry in Tompkins County. This will highlight the strong and sustainable relationship between the FDN and its partners to enhance the community-based image the FDN greatly values. The benefit of having these personal testimonies is that they can inspire and be used for future meetings with future partners as part of the pitch to get them to donate.

Tactic #3: Pay for ads in restaurants, local stores, and public transportation that promote the FDN's service. The restaurants we will reach out to put the ads in include Casablanca Pizzeria, Ithaca Bakery, and Panera. The local stores include Wegmans, Aldis, and Trader Joe's, and the public transportation locations will be on the TCAT. This tactic relies on the fact that Tompkins County is a tight-knit community. So, suppose a company sees that the FDN is crediting another company for being generous donors who aid in the fight against food insecurity. In that case, it is more likely that they will also want to fulfill their social responsibility to their community. This is part of the tactic is specifically for grocery stores and restaurants. Much like newspaper ads, paper posters will be a way for the FDN to be present in everyday life for people who may not use social media as their central means of consuming media. The purpose of selecting these specific locations is that they are convenient places the target audience may visit frequently.



Budget Allocation



Timetable

