

# MiSustainable Holland

## About this series

The MiSustainable Holland column is a collection of community voices sharing updates about local sustainability initiatives.

## This Week's Sustainability Framework Theme:

**Quality of Life:** The community, through governmental, religious, business and social organizations, makes decisions that contribute to its own well-being.

## Hope College student-led project puts surplus food to good use

By Natalie Hammer and Dallas Fisher  
Hope Advocates for Sustainability

“Fighting Waste. Feeding People.” This is the motto for Food Recovery Network, a student-led organization that unites more than 6,000 college students to fight against food waste and hunger in the United States.

Surplus food is recovered by volunteers and donated to local nonprofit organizations that support individuals experiencing varying levels of food insecurity. Since its start in 2011, it has recovered and donated millions of meals.

Hope College is one of 195 campuses across the country that participates in Food Recovery Network. In Michigan, there are current chapters at Hope, Calvin University, Eastern Michigan University, Kalamazoo College, and University of Michigan-Ann Arbor.

Seeing an opportunity to decrease food waste and increase support for local organizations, a few student leaders introduced a Food Recovery Network chapter to Hope's campus in the fall of 2022. Hope students connected with a local community-powered initiative, Lakeshore Food Rescue, to help establish a sustainable system of food recovery and donation.

With the addition of support from Hope Dining Services, Lakeshore Food Rescue, Community Action House, and numerous volunteers, the program has experienced much success.

“None of this would be possible without the training and support we have received from Hope, Dining Services, and Community Action House, especially from Joe Guzman, Community Action House's food rescue coordinator,” said Dallas Fisher, a student volunteer for Food Recovery Network. “They've been the cornerstone of our operation since it began.”

Although the college's dining service seeks to minimize waste by determining its food quantities based on anticipated demand and ongoing experience, there is inevitably some surplus after meals are prepared.

Since it began at the end of January, almost 2,000 pounds of food waste has been recovered from Phelps Dining Hall where the food was packaged and delivered to Community Action House's Community Kitchen hosted by Western Seminary.

Some of Hope's Food Recovery Network volunteers had the opportunity to see the food distribution up close and were grateful to see their hard work making a difference.

“Being able to not only see the impact you have on the community, but also have meaningful interactions with the people you're supporting means everything to us,” Fisher said. “We're all humans sharing the same community, and if I'm able to give my time to others who need it more than I, it's not a question of if, but rather when and where.”

Hope's chapter of Food Recovery Network has been a powerful example of how community members can come together to support one another and breed positive change; the beautiful thing is, it is only just the beginning.

Curious about the work being done? Check out [Food Recovery Network](#) and [Lakeshore Food Rescue](#) online to learn more.

- *Natalie Hammer is a spring 2024 graduate of Hope College. Dallas Fisher is a Hope engineering student as well as a co-president of Hope Advocates for Sustainability.*