

## Agents of Change Proposal Summary

<b>Project Name:</b>	Regiftcard Program
<b>Student Lead:</b>	Deanna Lentini
<b>Number of Students in Group:</b>	1
<b>Program(s):</b>	Kinesiology and Health Sciences
<b>Purpose of the Project:</b>	The purpose of the Regiftcard Program is to collect unused or partially used giftcards for food and clothing vendors, through the use of drop off boxes around York University campus. When enough giftcards are collected, the lead would compile the gift cards and purchase food, clothing, and other supplies to provide Torontonians needing relief with these items.
<b>Community Partner(s):</b>	<p>Humanity First Club at York University (registered chapter of the charity Humanity First).</p> <p>Humanity First carries out goods distribution projects to residents of the GTA, and have experience in hand-to-hand service in GTA shelters with individuals in need. The Humanity First club will provide willing volunteers to help distribute the items purchased by the Regiftcard Program, while the Regiftcard Program will provide an initiative for the Humanity First members to participate in.</p>
<b>Description of project initiative/intervention:</b>	The purpose of the program is to purchase and distribute hot meals, winter necessities such as hats, gloves, socks, and hygiene products to vulnerable residents of Toronto, through the use of gift cards with remaining credit on them. In order to collect the gift cards, donation boxes will be set up across York University Keele Campus at prime locations, such as administrative offices, college council rooms, and campus residences. Volunteers, to ensure that theft is not an issue, will monitor all donation boxes. After the set time period for gift card collection, Deanna and a set of volunteers will work on purchasing items with the gift cards and distributing to those in need.
<b>Objectives/Goals &amp; Outcomes:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To collect gift cards and purchase food, clothing, and other supplies</li> <li>• To distribute items purchased to at risk Torontonians</li> <li>• To grow the project, by having drop boxes available in a variety of locations for collection (TCDSB schools, Ryerson University, etc.)</li> </ul>
<b>Target Audience:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• York University Students</li> <li>• At risk Torontonians</li> </ul>
<b>Total Cost of Project:</b>	\$2665.00
<b>Request from Faculty:</b>	\$500.00

**Comments:**

**2015-2016**

# **Agents of Change Project Proposal**



## 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The ReGiftcard Program centres on the concept that numerous individuals currently own partially used retail, or food shop gift cards. These gift cards may have less than a dollar credit remaining, and often take up wallet space. In instances where these cards are forgotten about, or thrown away, there is a huge misuse of resources.

The objective of The ReGiftcard Program is to fully utilize every cent remaining on used gift cards to feed, and provide relief for street involved residents of Toronto. The ReGiftcard Program requests York University students in possession of gift cards with a marginal amount of credit remaining to donate the gift card to the program via donation drop boxes stationed throughout campus. The ReGiftcard Program then seeks to make use of donated gift cards by accumulating the donated credit to purchase hot meals, clothing items, and basic necessities to provide relief for Torontonians. By making use of overlooked resources, The ReGiftcard Program unlocks potential to fight hunger, and assist residents in need at no direct cost to the donor.

The target demographic of the program is young adults. Given that only 5% of charitable donors in Canada in 2010 were between the ages of 15 and 24 years old, there is a market of potential donors to be reached by The ReGiftcard Program. This is a demographic largely without a full time income, to who a 'no-cost' donation program would be appealing. Connecting this group of potential donors with the obvious need of the over 4000 Torontonians residing in city shelters or on the streets, The ReGiftcard Program has the potential to anchor a willing audience to make sustainable change in the city.

Project Initiation: March 7 2015

Project Completion: April 29 2015

Budget: \$2664.97

## 2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### 2.1 Identification of group members

#### Primary Group Contact

Full Name: Deanna Lentini

Student Number:

Major/Program: Kinesiology and Health Sciences

Email: [lentini9@my.yorku.ca](mailto:lentini9@my.yorku.ca)

Telephone Number: 647 706 5865

### 2.2 Identification of Community Partners

The community partner I will be working with is the Humanity First club at York University. This club is an established chapter of the registered charity Humanity First. The club is designed to serve disadvantaged members of the community, a mission that aligns perfectly with the vision of The ReGiftcard Program.

The club is established in carrying out successful goods distribution projects to residents of the GTA. The club volunteers in GTA shelters, and are experienced in hand-to-hand service projects in downtown Toronto. Since September 2015 the club has carried out 6 goods distribution projects, feeding over 150 homeless individuals in their most recent project. By working together, upon culmination of the project I will be able to effectively distribute the purchased goods following their lead.

Humanity First will benefit from this partnership as the recipient of a funded distribution event for interested members to participate in. The ReGiftcard Program will benefit from this partnership by having a network of interested volunteers to support the project, and an experienced executive team to advise on tabling events, and coordination of distribution. The Humanity First executive team will advise on distribution for a downtown Toronto street mission, and coordination with the Youth Without Shelter non-profit, and North York Women's Shelter that the club regularly supports.

Humanity First Contact: Waqar Ahmed  
647 779 7604  
[waqar32ahmad@gmail.com](mailto:waqar32ahmad@gmail.com)

### 2.3 Opportunity Statement

The issues addressed by the program are related to an intersection of food insecurity, housing, education, and job security. Past experience in goods distribution by Humanity First indicates that recipients of the program will most likely be men in downtown Toronto, or women and youth at GTA shelters. The goal of the project is to use donated gift card credit for various retailers to purchase food for homeless Torontonians, and necessities for Women's and Youth shelters. This idea is completely unique, and has never been attempted in the non-profit or charitable industry.

The mechanism for collection will use drop boxes stationed throughout York University, Keele Campus, which will be attended by volunteers. With an appearance similar to traditional transparent donation boxes, these distinct gift card collection stations have the potential to become a permanent part of the campus. Pilot collection locations will include College student common rooms, College residences, University administrative offices, and mobile collection stations in student corridors, cafeterias, and at the campus fitness centre.

While the program appeals to all individuals who redeem gift cards, this branch of the project aims to reach out to young adults seeking to make a difference in Toronto by offering 'no-cost' donations. It is this component of the program that makes the project appealing to University students living on a budget.

Beyond youth donors, the project holds the potential to appeal to all gift card recipients. Potential donors include individuals of all ages in possession of gift cards with a marginal amount of credit remaining, or those who receive a new gift card to a shop that they do not frequent, and wish to donate the gift. The broad appeal of the program lends itself to expansion opportunities at retail shops, office environments and beyond to access a more diverse donor demographic.

There is a distinct opportunity for the project revealed in gift card redemption statistics. American statistics from 2014 indicate that households have an average of \$300 of unused gift cards, and that 40% of recipients never redeem the full value of the gift. The ReGiftcard Program sees these overlooked gifts as a unique chance to fund social good.

The ReGiftcard Program has a specific seasonal advantage: collection is likely to be amplified after the holiday season.

## 3.0 PROJECT DETAILS

### 3.1 Detailed Project Description

The objective of The ReGiftcard Program is to purchase and distribute hot meals, winter necessities such as hats, gloves, socks, and hygiene products to vulnerable residents of Toronto by redeeming donated gift card credit.

Goals to reach the objective of the Program are to have donation drop boxes located in every college and residence at York University, and in select administrative offices on campus. Securing drop box placement is pivotal to the success of the program. These boxes must be located strategically to ensure easy access for interested donors, and ensure they are safe and monitored by a volunteer. The equally important second goal is to reach out directly to prospective donors. I plan to initiate contact through personal announcements in lectures of to the Faculty of Health, set up mobile collection locations stationed by volunteers throughout campus, and follow up through contact with donors over social media. The ReGiftcard social media pages must effectively portray the brand to engage donors, and deliver informative content to encourage donation at drop box touchpoints.

Activities to secure drop box locations and start a social media following revolve around the leverage of social networks within the University. Contact and meetings with College Student Government Presidents and Residence Life Coordinators (RLCs) are necessary to ensure project endorsement and support across the campus. These meetings have already been initiated, please see appendix 1 for details. Following meetings with Student Government Presidents' and RLCs, the ideal outcome is to have established drop box locations within each college, and have promotional posters in each of the 10 colleges and 8 residences to support the program.

Conversation with the Student Government Presidents' and RLCs will also open opportunities for promotion at collegiate extracurricular events. The RLC of Stong College has already expressed interest in making the ReGiftcard program an agenda item on the Residence House meetings for March to promote to residence students. I intend to offer message delivery at collegiate coffee houses, movie nights, pub nights or special events to spread the message about The ReGiftcard Program. Personally attending these events with volunteers rather than just having the drop box situated is an important way to actively engage the donor, and distribute promotional material such as stickers and information cards. The Toronto Foundation has also offered promotional 'TO' buttons to distribute at tabling events on Keele Campus.

Following the drop box location and promotion in student accessible quarters, a goal is to have boxes situated in the administrative offices of the Faculty of Health. This would require meetings with the Masters of Stong College and Calumet College to explain and promote the program. I see potential to offer drop boxes in administrative offices because coffee shop gift cards are a common gift in the professional setting, especially after the holidays.

To begin student engagement, I plan to delegate volunteers to make personal announcements at the start of select Faculty of Health lectures to pitch the Program idea to students. I believe that enthusiastic explanation as an introductory point will be an appropriate place to start. This direct informational delivery will be a valuable contact point to guarantee message delivery to a specific number of students. I also plan to allocate a mobile collection box to lecture announcements.

The second point of student engagement with is through tabling events with drop boxes in cafeterias, corridors, and at the campus fitness centre. Here, volunteers will be able to actively speak to students passing by to interest them in donating to the Program. The vision for this component includes attracting students to the drop boxes by playing music, displaying banners, providing volunteers with unique apparel for brand promotion, and offering promotional stickers and buttons to interested students.

Finally, volunteers will establish a social media network. With the permission of Student Government Presidents, students from all colleges will be invited to like and follow social media pages. This will establish a broad base of support across campus, and offer a way to direct students to drop box locations. Social media following will be encouraged at all touch points during lecture announcements, student engagement events, and on posters.

Risk management of ReGiftcard drop boxes will be addressed by having manned drop boxes at all campus locations. At all stations the drop boxes will be supervised by a York University community member – be it a project volunteer at a tabling event, or a porter at a residence. This box supervision will work similar to the honor system that poppy donation boxes use every November. However, any risk of drop box theft is further reduced because the individual gift card donations in each drop box are not valuable in themselves. The donations only amount to a redeemable amount when combined with all corresponding gift card donations at the end of the project.

Agents invested for successful project completion include me, a team of volunteers, and the members of the Humanity First Club at York University. My primary responsibilities will be securing drop box locations across campus by networking with college presidents, negotiating funding for successful project completion, and designing the drop boxes and promotional material. ReGiftcard Program volunteers are responsible for promoting donation via student engagement and social media. The responsibilities of the Humanity First club will be guiding the final stage of the project with respect to the food distribution.

York University, Keele campus is intended as a pilot location for the project. The ultimate goal is to have drop boxes located at various establishments (retailers, high school cafeterias) across the city of Toronto upon successful completion of the pilot.

### **3.2 Evaluation and Success**

The success of this initiative will be evaluated by the amount of goods distributed, which will in turn be determined by the amount of credit accumulated from gift card donations. My objective by the end of this project is to distribute needed items and goods to forty Torontonians. Given that provisions may cost about \$10 dollars per person (ex. providing one meal, shampoo and conditioner, baby food or diapers), I am planning to collect \$400 in donated credit over the four week campaign. I have already collected \$95.00 in donated gift cards from classmates and family interested in the project.

To evaluate difficulties, I will keep a tally of drop box usage measured by cards donated per box. This will allow me to determine the most successful locations for boxes, and how to reposition where necessary for a sustainable future for the project.

I will also monitor social media traffic and feedback via comments, likes, and retweets. I will use this information to tailor the content I deliver to attract more donors to the project.

### **3.3 Sustainability**

The element of sustainability for the project is centered on the idea that gift cards will always result in a marginal amount of credit. This fact will drive the project onwards, as an effective and creative charitable solution to a common problem.

Following successful completion and evaluation of the Agents of Change project, I plan to incorporate as a registered charity, and apply for trademark protection. To acquire funding for expansion of The ReGiftcard Program, I plan to create a gofundme campaign. Currently, the Rotary Club of Etobicoke is reviewing my sponsorship proposal for \$500 funding for the pilot project. I am also currently working with the Toronto Foundation to grow the project to its full potential. The Toronto Foundation is supporting the project so far by connecting me with interested family fund holders who may wish to support the project, and offering promotion for the project over their established social media channels. Support from the foundation thus far has been very enthusiastic. Family fund holders have expressed interest at the potential of the project to grow across Toronto, and the possibility I have to scale-up the project and establish branches in multiple Canadian cities.

Ideally as first steps I would like this project to have established drop box locations in various locations throughout Toronto – be it retailers, small restaurants, secondary schools or Universities. Upon completion of the project on Keele campus, my next point of contact is securing retail locations in the core of Toronto for placement over the summer months. Following the retail branch, I plan to approach secondary schools in the TCDSB with the idea to offer drop box placement in schools in the 2016-2017 school year. I currently have a



network with the official charity of the TCDSB - The Angel Foundation for Learning, and the board wide secondary student leadership group the Catholic Student Leadership Impact Team. I see expansion to the TCDSB by the upcoming school year a very realistic possibility. Finally, I would like to approach Ryerson University with the idea to follow the template used at Keele Campus. By the end of 2016 I would like to have a working portfolio of successful and potential drop box placements across the city, and be able to modify the campaign as necessary to continue to grow in 2017.

# Appendix 1

---

## Drop box locations Keele campus: secured, and pending

### Drop Box Locations: Keele Campus

- Boxes numbered alphabetically will be mobile and have brief periods of stay. These boxes will be shared between residences, tabling events, lecture halls, coffee house nights, pub nights etc.
- Boxes numbered numerically will be stationed for a 2 week or full 4 week collection period
- Boxes that are listed are the minimum required for project completion. If possible, additional boxes would be used to extend collection period time in the already established locations (ie. all colleges would have a 4 week collection period instead of sharing boxes for 2 weeks each)
- Current total of boxes = 11. Total of boxes for maximum collection period = 17
- Contact with college student councils was been made in-person through a presentation at the monthly student government presidents meeting at SCLD on December 4<sup>th</sup> 2015 where a summary of The ReGiftcard Program and it's goals was distributed to all presidents. I have followed up in person with the council offices, and am waiting for the councils to re-convene in the new semester for confirmation that they are interested in having a drop box. While written confirmation is pending, all the student councils expressed enthusiasm and interest in the program.
- Matthew Harris, Residence Life Coordinator of Stong Residence presented a summary of The ReGiftcard Program to all Residence Life Coordinators at the weekly meetings in the first two weeks of December 2015. The residences are interested in supporting the program either through stationing a drop box with a porter, or by posting ReGiftcard Program posters in the residence to direct students to the college student council offices to donate. This program is seen as beneficial for the residences as an opportunity to encourage residence students to become part of the student life in the college by approaching student council offices to make donations. Matthew Harris also suggested the program be made an agenda item on the residence house meetings for the month of March to promote the program to students.

Week 1	March 7 - 11
Week 2	March 14 – 18
Week 3	March 21 – 25
Week 4	March 28 – April 1

Box Number	Box Location and contact method (if applicable)	Week of placement	Check if contacted	Check if confirmed
A, B, C, D	Tabling in Central Square Cafeteria Promotion Lecture Promotion Tait McKenzie Promotion	Week 1 and Week 4		
A	Undergraduate KINE office	Week 3 (or all)		
B	Calumet College Faculty of Health office	Week 3 (or all)		
C	Pond Residence Porter Office Via maharris@yorku.ca	Week 3	✓	
D	Tait McKenzie counter	Week 3		
A	Stong College Residence Porter Office: maharris@yorku.ca	Week 2	✓	✓
B	Bethune College Residence Porter via maharris@yorku.ca	Week 2	✓	✓

C	Calumet College Residence Porter Office via maharris@yorku.ca	Week 2	✓	✓
D	Winters College Residence Porter Office via maharris@yorku.ca	Week 2	✓	✓

Box Number	Location and contact (if applicable)	Week of placement	Check if contacted	Check if confirmed
1	The Absinthe Pub: 416-736-5441	All	✓	✓
2	YFS Office main floor Student Centre: president@yfs.ca	All	✓	
3	Stong College SG Council Office: stong.president@gmail.com	All	✓	✓
4	Bethune College SG Council Office Via SCLD meeting and personal follow up	Week 1 and 2	✓	
4	Calumet College SG Room 100 Via SCLD meeting and personal follow up	Week 3 and 4	✓	
5	New College SG Council office via SCLD meeting and personal follow up	Week 1 and 2	✓	✓
5	Bethune SOS office bcpeermentor@my.yorku.ca	Week 3 and 4	✓	
6	Winters College SG Council Office Via SCLD meeting and personal follow up	Week 1 and 2	✓	
6	Schulich SG Council Office	Week 3 and 4		
7	Vanier SG Council Office Via SCLD meeting and personal follow up	Week 1 and 2	✓	
7	Founders SG Council Office via SCLD meeting and personal follow up	Week 3 and 4	✓	

