



Get Ready Food Drive Toolkit

Help your community be more prepared: Organize a food drive

America has long been called the land of plenty. However, each year, millions of Americans go hungry. In 2008, more than 49 million Americans lived in households that didn't have enough food, including 16.7 million children, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. That's a lot of people — many of whom depend on community food banks to make sure they have enough to eat. Also in 2008, about 4 percent of all U.S. households — about 4.8 million — received emergency food from a food bank at least once, according to Feeding America.



American
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Readiness for disasters means having a prepared community



If so many people need food on a regular basis, what happens when a disaster strikes? Unfortunately, history has shown that demand on already-strapped food banks increases when the worst happens.

Food banks can be called on to help with emergency supplies during a disaster, and people who have been displaced from their homes or forced to evacuate may turn to food banks for help. That's why it's important that food banks have enough supplies on hand at all times — no one knows when a disaster may happen.

The fact is that being ready for disasters isn't just about personal preparedness, it's also about preparing your community. And making sure your community is prepared for emergencies means ensuring your local food bank is ready as well. That's where you come in.

One of the best ways to support your local food bank (besides making a donation or volunteering your time) is to hold a food drive. Luckily, holding a food drive — whether at school, at work, at your place of worship or another location — can be easy to do with the right planning.

The American Public Health Association's Get Ready campaign, which works to help Americans prepare themselves, their families and their communities for all disasters and hazards, has created this food drive toolkit to help you plan, promote, organize and conduct your community food drive. That way if the worst happens, your local food bank will be ready to help.



Above, employees with the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Transitional Recovery Office in Mississippi load donated food into a truck for the Twelve Baskets Food Bank in Gulfport in June 2009. Photo by Jennifer Smits, courtesy FEMA.

Getting started: What to do before kicking off your food drive

• Reach out to your local food bank

Before you start making plans for your food drive, locate your local food bank and get in touch with its staff. Food banks are often run by local governments, nonprofit groups or religious organizations. If you can't find one by making a few calls, Feeding America has a food bank locator on its website, www.feedingamerica.org.

While some food banks are happy to accept whatever you can give them, others have specific items they need, whether it's cereal, pasta or canned tuna. They may also have a list of things they don't want, such as expired food or bulk supplies. Once food bank staff have let you know what they need, make a list to share with food drive organizers. Decide whether your organization will accept cash donations and if so, how they will be tracked and collected.



• Pick the right time for your food drive

Decide when you want to hold your food drive. Food banks usually receive their biggest donations during the holidays, which is a popular time to collect food, as people tend to be in a generous spirit. However, it might be more beneficial to your food bank to hold your drive at a time when its food supply might be lower.



A great time of the year to hold a food drive is when people change their clocks for daylight saving time. APHA's Get Ready: Set Your Clocks, Check Your Stocks campaign uses the time change to remind Americans to check that their emergency stockpile is up

to date. That way when a disaster strikes, you'll have fresh batteries, food that's not expired and fresh water in your emergency supplies.

The clock change can also be used as a reminder to stock up your community's food bank supplies. The Get Ready: Set Your Clocks, Check Your Stocks campaign, online at www.aphagetready.org, includes free fact sheets and other materials that you can pass out with your food drive fliers and help make your community even more prepared.

Also, don't forget to determine the dates of your food drive in advance. You can make your drive a one-day event or hold it over a few weeks. Just be sure to send out reminders if the drive is held over a long period so that people don't forget about it.



Assemble your team

If you belong to an organization such as a civic group, seniors group or parents' organization, you can organize your food drive with other members of the group and immediately have team members to work with. Holding a food drive with co-workers, at school or through your religious organization are also popular options.

Identify one or two people who will be the lead contacts for your team so that people know who to go to if they have questions or need more information. Share the contact information of team leaders, including phone numbers and e-mail addresses.



Getting started: Find a location & set your goals



• Location, location, location

Determine where you want to hold your food drive and if you want multiple collection locations. Make sure your collection point is in a highly visible and popular spot, as you want as many people to notice the drive as possible. For example, if you are collecting at school, consider the entrance, the cafeteria or the student lounge. If the food drive is at your workplace, prime collection points may be your lobby or lunch room.

• Setting goals for your food drive

By setting ambitious yet attainable goals, your group will be motivated to meet its target. Some food banks provide trucks for food transportation if you obtain a certain amount of donations. If that is an option, factor that number into your goal. You may want to also set your goal based on your community size and amount of need.

• Promoting your food drive

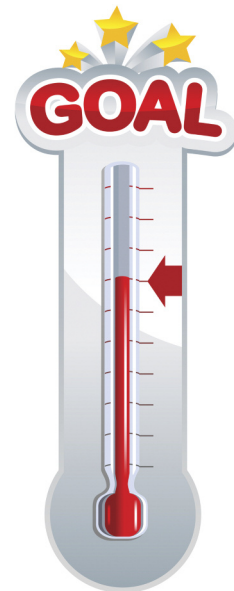
Before starting your food drive, spread the word as widely as possible. Start with handing out posters and fliers, making announcements at school or work or putting an insert in your religious group's bulletin.

Write a press release about the food drive and contact your local weekly or community newspaper and other news organizations. Ask them to help promote the food drive, or to come take a picture of the donations as they are delivered to the food bank.



And don't forget the power of social media and electronic communication. Facebook, Twitter and other tools are great ways to spread information in your community. E-mail and blogs can also help you promote your event.

As you publicize the activity, be sure to mention who is holding the food drive, what foods and materials are needed and where and when they are being collected. Let people know the last day that food will be accepted. You should also include contact information of organizers.



Holding your food drive: Ideas for success

Now that you've got your plans down and are ready to start your food drive, you'll need some ideas on how to increase participation and get people motivated. Luckily, APHA's Get Ready campaign has collected the best pointers all in one place to help you out.

- **Make it a competition**

Competitions excite people, so make your food drive a contest. If you're holding the food drive at your school, make it a competition between grades or homerooms with the winner earning a pizza party or other recognition. At work, you can pit departments or floors against one another.

- **Incentivize your food drive**

Incentives can also fuel your food drive. If it's at your school, offer discounts to things like sporting events, dances, homecoming or even prom by donating to your cause. If it's at a place of business, talk to your human resources

department to see if you can offer workers a casual dress day if they contribute to your food drive.

Work with a grocery store

Get in touch with your local grocery store and ask if you can set up a donation site at the store. Your donation site could be inside the store or next to the entrance. (Just make sure it's located somewhere that shoppers can see it.)

Pass out shopping lists of things the food bank needs to customers as they enter the store. Also, ask if the grocery store will make a



contribution. For example, the store might donate money, food or gift cards for every \$1,000 worth of groceries they sell that day or for every 100 pounds of food you collect.

food you collect. If you secure a commitment, you can also use that to promote the food drive. Mention the matching donation challenge on your posters and fliers to drive up participation.

- **Skip a meal and raise money for the food drive**

Get your friend or colleagues involved by asking them to skip a meal and donate the money they would have used to buy their meal to your food drive. Even if they choose not to skip a meal, it may motivate them to make a donation.



Holding your food drive: More ideas



- **Pay by the can**

You can ask people to show their support for your food drive by paying for entrance or attendance at an event via a food donation. For example, if you are having a school dance or community movie screening, ask attendees to donate canned food at the door. If your food drive happens at Thanksgiving time, have guests bring donations of cereal or pasta for the drive instead of food for the meal.

- **Vote by donation**

A neat way to get people involved in your food drive is to ask them to vote for something fun by donation. For example, put up a display of pet photos and ask your club to choose who has the cutest pet. Participants cast their votes by donating cans in support of the entrant they favor, and whomever gains the most cans is named the winner.

- **Show your artistic side**

Canned food makes great art! Host a competition for the best

canned food sculpture. Create categories, such as funniest, scariest or biggest. Leave the sculptures on display in a public area such as a mall, library or office lobby to serve as a reminder about the food drive.



- **Raffle**

Encourage people to give by offering them a chance at getting something in return through a raffle. The more food they donate, the more tickets they receive. Ask local businesses to donate prizes for the raffle, such as store gift cards.

- **Stuff a truck**

Some food drive organizers challenge givers to “stuff a truck.” Participants are encouraged to bring their donations to a specific location where a truck is parked, with the goal of providing a truckload to the food bank.

Make it a theme drive

After talking to your local food bank, organize a theme based on what’s needed. For example, if the food bank needs pasta, make it an Italian-themed food drive, with requests for sauce, pasta and canned vegetables. If they need canned tuna, make it a “Gone Fishing!” theme. You can even give each day of your food drive a new theme.



- **Track your goals**

Make a poster or sign shaped like a can showing how many pounds of food you plan to gather. Color in the can to mark your progress in meeting your goal. If you have a website, post the graphic online as well.

- **Stamp Out Hunger through national food drive**

Coordinate your food drive with the Stamp Out Hunger campaign, organized each spring by the U.S. Postal Service and the National Association of Letter Carriers. The campaign, online at www.helpstampouthunger.com, encourages Americans to leave food drive donations by their mailboxes for pick-up by mail carriers.



Finishing it up: What to do when the food drive is done



Your food drive is over and you've collected a mountain of donations. Congratulations! Here's what you need to know now that you are finished:

- **Arrange transportation**

If your food bank provides pick-ups for donations, let the staff know when your drive will be completed. If pick-up is not offered, arrange in advance who from your team will be able to transport the food. Determine how many cars — or trips — will be needed, who will be able to help move the donations and when you will make the delivery

to the food bank. (Chances are the food you collect will take up more room than you anticipate!)

Call ahead to confirm that the food bank will be open and able to receive your donation. Some food banks have specific hours for donations.

- **Earn some attention**

Publicize your results! Let the media know you met your goals and encourage them to meet you at the donation center when you make your delivery. If they can't come, take a photo and send it to your local news organizations, along with a press release summarizing the results.

Create posters thanking everyone who was involved and hang them at the collection sites. Make sure to give credit to everyone who helped in setting up, collecting donations, and donating food and supplies.

- **Plan ahead for next year**

Now that your food drive has been a success, consider making it an annual event. Set a date and begin planning a few months or weeks in advance. Use the lessons you've learned to make next year's food drive even better.

