

IDEAS FOR SCHOOL FOOD DRIVES

Tired of the same old "Bring your canned food items to school and put them in this box" business? Need some ideas for more creative ways to reach your canned food goal? Here are ten fun ways to collect canned food items, but this is really only a start!

1.) Have a Pajama/Dress Down/Costume/Crazy Hair Day

Ask your school ahead of time if they will allow students to wear pajamas to school (or just dress down, or wear a fun costume or have a crazy hair day) if each student agrees to bring in a canned food item. You should be sensitive to the fact that some students might not be able to bring in a canned food item, so it might be a good idea to set homeroom/team/class goals and then if those goals are met, everyone in the group can participate in a pajama day.

2.) Hold a 5K Run/Marathon

Hold a 5K run at your school or in your community. Ask participating students to get canned food sponsorships instead of money. You can ask parents, friends of parents, neighbors, teachers, or even local grocers to donate to your cause.

3.) Host a Movie Showing

Hold a movie showing after school one day in a room big enough to accommodate a large number of people, and charge a canned food item as the admission "price". Want to take the movie idea a step further? Ask a local movie rental store or movie theater to donate coupons or vouchers to your school. To get the coupons or vouchers, students have to bring in X number of canned food items. Make sure you set up the collection at your school so that you're dealing with the canned food items and not the rental store or theater.

4.) Write Letters to Local Companies Asking Them to Donate

Most businesses and companies are more than willing to donate to good causes in some way or another - you just have to know what to ask for and how to ask for it. Writing letters is a great place to start - you can clearly outline your ideas, goals, and future plans and once you have a letter that works, you can use it over and over again for the same cause. You should, however, make sure you personalize the greeting of the letter so that the company knows that you took the time to get their contact info and you're not just sending out mass mailings of the same, generic letter. Here are some other tips on writing a great fundraising letter:

- **Get their attention:** Tell them a fact about child hunger and poverty in North San Diego County or simply tell them "We need your help." You don't want to turn them off by being too pushy or forceful, but you want to get them interested in your cause.
- **Educate them:** tell them a little bit about yourself or your organization or school, and the project you're doing.
- **If they have previously donated to a different cause (or even the same one), thank them before asking for more!** Example: "Thanks for helping us out so much last year, the fundraiser was a huge success and we'd love to get you involved again this year."
- **Be specific:** Tell them what you want from them so they have an idea of what is needed. Example: "Our school has a goal of collecting 4,000 canned food items, and we're hoping to get half of those cans donated from local businesses. With a donation of 100 canned goods or more, we'd be well on our way to making that goal!"
- **Give them a contact:** End it by telling them you would be more than happy to meet with them or answer any questions they have about the fundraiser. This lets them know that you're willing to go a little further than just letter writing to get what you want.
- **Thank you, ma'am!** Thank them for their time, and tell them you'll follow up within the next week to make sure they got the letter and figure out the logistics - what they are going to donate, when, and how you're going to get the goods from them.

5.) Telethon the Night Away

Invite a few of your friends over and tell them to bring their parents' address books or a list of phone numbers of parents' friends. Spend an evening holding a telethon and asking people to donate canned food goods to your school. Tell them they can drop the canned foods at your school, or arrange to pick them up at their convenience and then take them back to your school. Make it fun with your friends there and have snacks and magazines to look at when you need a break from pitching your cause.

6.) Have a school event coming up? Make canned food part of the admission price.

Have a school dance coming up? A talent show? A play or concert? Get in touch with the people organizing the event and ask if you can incorporate canned food donations to the admission price. Maybe students can get \$1 off their ticket price if they bring a canned food item to the event. If there is no admission price, make one! When you make posters or flyers telling students to bring a canned food item to the event that would otherwise be free, make sure that they know they don't *have* to bring something (some students won't be able to), but that it is suggested and greatly appreciated.

7.) Have a Bake Sale: Give Food and Get Food!

Get students to bring baked goods to school one day. Figure out where you want to set up your table and when you will be able to have someone run it. Before school might be a good idea, or during the lunch period, or all day, if you can plan it ahead of time. You'll have to let students know ahead of time that there will be a bake sale and the price is a can of food, otherwise it just won't work - students don't usually bring canned food items to school unless there is a reason to.

Poster idea: "Want some chocolate? Give us your vegetables! Next week's bake sale will provide you with delicious and yummy treats in exchange for your nutritious and equally yummy canned food."

8.) Wash Me! (Me = A Car)

This is something else that takes a little bit more planning than usual, since most people don't expect to pay with canned goods when they get their car washed. Tell students to tell their parents the date/time/place, and how many canned food items it costs to get their car washed. This might be something you push with teachers as well, since most of them have their cars at school everyday and are easy to inform about school fundraisers (they are right there!).

9.) Neighborhood Pantry Clean-Out

Instead of calling neighbors in your telethon, put flyers in their mailboxes, telling them you'll be coming around on such-and-such day at such-and-such time to collect canned food items. Tell them you'll be doing them a favor by helping to clean out their pantry, and they'll be doing a huge favor by helping out families in need! Get a driver, drive yourself, or just walk from door to door if you can (lugging canned food around is GREAT exercise). You'll have to bring the cans to school when you're done, so think about planning that as well.

10.) Create a Raffle- Win Cool Stuff!

When you write to local companies and businesses, you can ask them for free services, coupons, or vouchers instead of money or canned foods. You might, for example, want to involve a gas station in your canned food drive but know they won't be able to donate canned food items. Instead, they could donate gas cards and you could raffle them off. A local pizza place could donate coupons for free pizzas, a flower shop could donate coupons for corsages - the possibilities are endless! Once you get all of the goods from the local companies, sell raffle tickets for the price of canned goods - one canned good for one raffle ticket, three canned goods for five raffle tickets.