

Fun Ways to Collect Food for Church Community Services

General Considerations

1. Vary the types of collections that you do throughout the year.
2. Allow opportunities for all people to participate. Always include monetary options as well as item donations.
3. You may want to check with Church Community Services before beginning a drive. See if you can match your focus to their current needs. 574-295-3673 ext.116
4. Create a “catchy” title for your food drive.
5. “Advertise” your drive with announcements, skits, poems, etc. Involving children is a fun way of doing this.
6. Give people ample time to collect their donations. However, do not stretch a drive out so long that it loses momentum. (Once it is announced and the actual drive begins, a couple of weeks is probably adequate.) You may want to post reminders in your bulletin, newsletters, weekly announcements, and social media outlets.
7. Show your own enthusiasm and encourage your congregation or group to visit Church Community Services for a tour. This can be an excellent way to generate interest in Church Community Services and is often an eye-opening experience for many people. Even people who have been giving to Church Community Services for many years may not have ever seen the actual facilities.

Theme Drives

Theme drives can be great fun! These can be done at any time of the year. Use the suggestions below or come up with your own creative ideas. The possibilities are endless! Some groups even decorate a collection table or area to match the current theme!

Italian Theme:

Canned spaghetti sauce, spaghetti noodles and pasta, boxed breadsticks, Italian dressing, etc.

School's Out for Summer

Purchase items that kids may like for their summer lunches such as macaroni and cheese, peanut butter, soups, and crackers.

Rise and Shine

Collect breakfast items such as cereals, oatmeal, pancake mixes, syrup, etc.

Souper Sunday

Collect canned soups, soup mixes, soup crackers, etc.

Baby Days

Purchase inexpensive baby bottles. Put a note inside each bottle that describes what this drive is all about. Explain that you would like people to take the baby bottle home and fill it with their loose change between now and the end of the drive. Then, use the collected money to purchase diapers, baby food, etc. for the pantry at Church Community Services. (Be sure to check with Church Community Services to see what their greatest needs are at the time that you do your drive.)

Hygiene Drive

Most people do not realize that personal hygiene items cannot be purchased with food stamps and therefore these items are considered a “luxury” for many families in need. Often the hygiene shelves at CCS are nearly empty and this is an important drive for any time of the year. You might also encourage people who travel to bring home their hotel soaps, shampoos, etc. and contribute them to CCS.

Purchase some kind of small bags for this drive. (Such as white paper bags with handles – similar to gift bags.) Place a list of personal hygiene items inside each bag. (Shampoo, soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, deodorant, female hygiene items, etc.). Each person is asked to fill a bag as a “kit” for one person or for one family. Additional items to supplement the kits can be collected by different departments or groups within your business, school or church. For instance, in a church setting a men’s group could collect deodorant, a women’s circle could collect feminine hygiene items, younger children could collect toothpaste, and older children could collect shampoo.

Popcorn Party

Inside each small container, put a short list of items to collect for Church Community Services. Plan a popcorn party to follow a meeting or worship service. Sell pop and popcorn with the proceeds going to Church Community Services. Sell (or give away) the above-mentioned small containers. Ask those who purchase a small container to agree to bring the items on their hidden list. Perhaps you could even have a “prize” ticket inside some of the small containers for things such as a Soup of Success dip, soup, or cookie mix!

A Basket of Good Eggs

Fill Easter baskets with plastic eggs containing small lists of items needed by Church Community Services. People are encouraged to choose one or more eggs and then are asked to return the following week with the items on their list. For extra fun, some eggs might include the message “You’re a Winner” and those individuals could receive their choice of a Soup of Success mix.

A Bag and a Buck

For this drive people are encouraged to bring a boxed item (such as potatoes, pancake mixes, Hamburger Helper, etc.) for the food collection and a “buck” to place in a special offering plate/box/basket etc. During this drive it is important to “teach” others about how far their money goes when Church Community Services actually uses it to purchase food at the food bank. Cash donations allow the pantry to purchase items at an unbeatable price of 18 cents a pound! However, it is always important to allow people the opportunity to buy and bring in their own contributions because many people really enjoy doing this! It’s a particularly wonderful chance for children to see adults working to help others.

The Red Bags are coming!

Begin by ordering red bags from “Bags and Bows” or a similar catalog. Prior to the actual “drive,” begin announcing that “The red bags are coming!” Prepare the bags by placing inside each one a list of items that you would like people to purchase. A week or two before you would like to receive the food, distribute the red bags. People are instructed to take the bags home, fill them with the suggested items, and then return them. You may also want to consider offering red envelopes to those who may prefer to give a monetary donation.

If your group happens to belong to a church, when the designated day arrives for people to bring back their red bags, you may consider having children bring the bags forward along with the offering at that point of the service. Having the children involved is a wonderful way to teach them the importance of giving and bringing forward the gifts is a visual reminder of our personal abundance and is also a way to bless our giving of these gifts.

Stuff a Van

In order to do this activity, you will need to contact Church Community Services and coordinate a date for your event so CCS can deliver their van. Your goal is to fill the van as full as possible, thus the title “Stuff the Van”. Again, be sure to announce this drive for several weeks ahead of your actual collection date. (It can be helpful to sort the food as it is loaded. Canned goods in one box, boxed mixes in another, personal hygiene in another, etc.). The day after your event, Church Community Services will return and pick up the van full of your donations!

Special thanks to Nancy Tinder of Augustana Lutheran Church for gathering these ideas.