

Summer Food Drive Host Toolkit



Thank You for Joining Us to Fight Summer Hunger!

Thank you for supporting our annual Summer Food Drive in support of the Jacobs & Cushman San Diego Food Bank. Whether you are organizing an in-person food drive, a virtual food drive — or both — your participation plays a direct role in helping children and families across San Diego County access the nutritious food they need to thrive.

This toolkit is designed to guide you from start to finish with proven strategies, helpful resources, and ready-to-use messaging to make your food drive as impactful and rewarding as possible. Your support helps us build a stronger, more food-secure San Diego. Thank you for joining us!

Why Your Food Drive Matters

Hunger in San Diego County

Hunger exists in every ZIP code across San Diego County. More than one in four San Diegans experiences nutrition insecurity, meaning they cannot consistently provide three nutritious meals a day for themselves or their families. Your food drive helps ensure working families, seniors, veterans, students, and individuals throughout our region are not facing those challenges alone.

About Summer Hunger

When school lets out for summer, **more than 470,000 San Diego County students no longer have access to the free breakfasts and lunches available during the school year**, creating additional challenges for families already struggling to afford food. During the summer months, donations to the Food Bank often decline while the need remains high, making community-led food drives like yours especially critical. Summer is also a time when food costs rise for families, grocery bills climb, and child care expenses stretch budgets even thinner.

In-Person vs. Virtual Food Drives: What's the Difference?



In-Person Food Drives

In-person, or traditional, food drives collect nonperishable food items in your workplace, school, neighborhood, or organization. These drives are highly visible, hands-on, and a great way to build community around a shared mission.



Virtual Food Drives

A virtual food drive raises critical funds online so the Food Bank can purchase nutritious food where and when it is needed most. Instead of collecting physical food, participants invite their networks to donate digitally, maximizing impact while minimizing waste.

Many hosts choose to combine both options for the greatest reach and impact. Thanks to our bulk purchasing power, just **\$25 provides 50 summer meals** for our neighbors facing hunger!

Hosting an In-Person Food Drive

Set It Up for Success

- **Choose your dates:** This year's Summer Food Drive runs June 3–July 28. Food drives are especially valuable during the summer months, when warehouse donations typically decline and need remains high.
- **Pick an accessible location:** Front offices, lobbies, break rooms, community centers, and classrooms work well.
- **Select a transportation option:** Dropping off donations at the Food Bank is encouraged, or register for a scheduled pickup.
- **Designate a cheerleader:** Assign one person to register the drive, communicate details, and keep momentum high.
- **Register your drive:** Sign up online to receive official resources and support.

Set a Clear Goal

A defined goal gives your participants something tangible to rally around.

- Take the 200-pound pledge to entirely fill one of the Food Bank's iconic red barrels.
- For first-time hosts, set a realistic starting goal, and for returning hosts, challenge your group to beat last year's total.

Most-Needed Items

Focus your drive on the items our neighbors need most this summer:

- ✓ Canned meats and fish
- ✓ Canned fruits and vegetables
- ✓ Canned soups and stews
- ✓ Peanut butter
- ✓ Cereal and oatmeal
- ✓ Rice

See the full Most-Needed Items flyer in the downloadable resources section below.

Spread the Word

Visibility drives participation. Create buzz by promoting the details of your food drive including dates, how and where others can contribute, and what items are accepted.

- **Print posters:** Display Food Bank posters in high-traffic areas like meeting spaces.
- **Share updates:** Use our sample messages to share kickoff and midpoint reminders through email, social platforms, and text.

Make It Fun

No idea is too big to create interest and enthusiasm.

- Create friendly competitions between departments, teams, or classes.
- Offer incentives such as casual dress days, team lunches, or bragging rights.
- Brainstorm a theme that connects your organization's interests to the food drive.

Celebrate and Reflect

Share the success of your food drive with your team.

- Once your food drive concludes, you will receive a thank you letter sharing the total amount of food collected and the impact of your efforts.
- Consider a [group volunteer opportunity](#) or [warehouse tour](#) to deepen your connection to the Food Bank mission.

Hosting a Virtual Food Drive

Get Started

- **Set a fundraising goal:** For example, pledge to raise \$500, enough to provide 1,000 summer meals.
- **Make the first gift:** Kickstart your campaign by making the first donation. Early momentum shows your personal commitment and encourages others to follow.
- **Share your page:** Send your fundraising link via email, social media, and text.

Tell Your Story

Personal messages inspire action. Share why this cause matters to you.

Sample Message:

This summer, I'm proud to support the San Diego Food Bank's Summer Food Drive. When school is out, students lose access to free breakfasts and lunches available during the school year, creating additional challenges for families already struggling to afford food. That's why I'm raising funds to help provide nutritious meals to children and families across our community. Thanks to the Food Bank's purchasing power, just \$25 helps provide 50 summer meals. Thank you for joining me in helping ensure no child goes hungry this summer.

Plan Who to Ask and How to Reach Them

WHO TO INVITE

- Friends and family
- Colleagues and classmates
- Professional, volunteer, and faith-based networks
- Social and recreational groups

HOW TO REACH THEM

- Email
- Social media posts and stories
- Text messages
- Mailed notes
- One-on-one conversations

Keep Supporters Engaged

Share progress updates regularly.

- Celebrate milestones (25%, 50%, 75%, and goal completion).
- Thank donors publicly, with permission.
- Encourage supporters to invite others.

Most donations arrive during the final two weeks of a campaign, so keep communicating until the very end.

Follow Up

Friendly reminders matter. Many people intend to give and simply forget.

Say Thank You

Gratitude builds lasting partnerships.

- Send personal thank you notes or emails.
- Share final totals and the impact of the funds raised.
- Remind supporters they are an essential part of the solution.

Corporate Matching Gift Programs

Inspire generosity with a corporate match or donation.

Research shows **84% of donors are more likely to give when their gift is matched**, significantly amplifying your impact. Our fundraising platform can be customized to showcase your gift.

Social Media Posts

Customize the following social media posts to help amplify your Summer Food Drive. Feel free to make them your own by adding personal touches and drawing from the information in this toolkit.

 Download social media graphics and more [here](#).



Don't forget to tag us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [X](#), [Threads](#), and [TikTok](#) at [@sdfoodbank](#), and find us on [LinkedIn](#) at [@San Diego Food Bank](#).

In-Person Food Drives

POST #1 — KICKOFF

School may be out for summer, but hunger doesn't take a break. We're hosting an in-person food drive now through **[date]** benefiting [@sdfoodbank](#)'s Summer Food Drive. When the school year ends, many students lose access to the free meals they depend on. Drop off nonperishable food donations at **[location]** and help us be Hunger Heroes for our neighbors this summer. Every item counts. ❤️

POST #2 — MOST-NEEDED ITEMS

We've joined the [@sdfoodbank](#)'s Summer Food Drive to help stock shelves and support neighbors facing hunger. Wondering what to donate? Here's what the Food Bank needs most this summer:

- ✓ Canned meats & fish
- ✓ Canned fruits & vegetables
- ✓ Peanut butter
- ✓ Cereal & oatmeal
- ✓ Canned soups & stews

Drop off donations at **[location]** through **[date]**. Thank you for your support!

POST #3 — FINAL REMINDER

There's still time to drop off nonperishable donations at **[location]** by **[date]** in support of [@sdfoodbank](#)'s Summer Food Drive. Local families are counting on the Food Bank this summer, and every can, box, and jar makes a difference. Thank you for being a Hunger Hero for our neighbors in need! 🙌

Virtual Food Drives

POST #1 — KICKOFF

I'm proud to support the [@sdfoodbank](#)'s Summer Food Drive by hosting a virtual food drive, and I'd love for you to be part of it. When school ends, thousands San Diego students lose access to the free meals they depend on during the school year. Hunger doesn't take a summer break, but together, we can make sure our neighbors don't go without. ❤️

Thanks to the Food Bank's purchasing power, just \$25 provides 50 summer meals. Every gift makes a real difference: [\[fundraising link\]](#)

POST #2 — MIDPOINT REMINDER

There's still time to support my virtual food drive benefiting [@sdfoodbank](#)! Your donation helps provide nutritious meals to children and families across San Diego County during the summer months, when school meal programs are paused and families feel the extra strain. We're **[X]**% of the way to my goal of **[\$amount]**. Every donation helps. Thank you for being a Hunger Hero for our neighbors in need!

Give what you can before **[date]**: [\[fundraising link\]](#)

POST #3 — FINAL PUSH

This is the last chance to support my [@sdfoodbank](#) virtual food drive, we have until **[date]** to reach our goal of **[\$amount]**. Summer is one of the hardest times of year for families facing hunger, and every dollar goes a long way. Just \$1 helps provide 2 meals to a neighbor in need. If you've been meaning to give, now is the time. 🙌
[\[fundraising link\]](#)

Downloadable Resources

Visit our [toolkit webpage](#) to access the following resources and more:

- San Diego Food Bank fact sheet
- Summer Food Drive poster
- Summer Food Drive social graphics
- Most-Needed Items flyer

We're Here to Help

Our team is honored to support your efforts. If you need guidance, materials, or encouragement at any stage, please reach out.

In-person food drives:

donatefood@sandiegofoodbank.org

Virtual food drives:

virtual@sandiegofoodbank.org

About the Jacobs & Cushman San Diego Food Bank

Established in 1977, the Jacobs & Cushman San Diego Food Bank is the largest hunger-relief organization in San Diego County. Serving as the countywide food safety net, the Food Bank provides nutritious food to people in need, advocates on behalf of the hungry, and educates the public about hunger-related issues. Through a network of direct service programs and more than 450 nonprofit partners, the Food Bank serves an average of 400,000 people every month. In fiscal year 2025, the organization distributed over 52 million pounds of food — equivalent to more than 43.3 million meals. Learn more at sandiegofoodbank.org and follow us [@sdfoodbank](#).

Thank you for standing with our community and helping ensure every neighbor has access to the food they need to thrive!