

2026 Holiday Food Drive

Host Toolkit



Thank You for Joining Us to Fight Holiday Hunger!

Thank you for supporting our 46th annual Holiday Food Drive benefiting the Jacobs & Cushman San Diego Food Bank. Whether you are organizing an in-person food drive, a virtual food drive, or both, your participation helps more of our neighbors across San Diego County gather around the table and share a nourishing holiday meal.

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. Feel free to use any messaging or facts from this toolkit, including our Fast Facts page, in your outreach. 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.

Hunger During the Holidays

The holidays are a season for sharing meals with loved ones, but for many San Diegans, those meals are increasingly out of reach. **In September, consumer prices in the San Diego-Carlsbad area rose 4.7% over the previous year**, the second-highest in the nation, according to the [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#). For families already stretching every dollar, rising costs can make the holidays one of the hardest times of year to keep food on the table.

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 meals** for our neighbors facing hunger during the holidays!

Hosting an In-Person Food Drive

Set It Up for Success

- **Choose your dates:** This year's Holiday Food Drive runs October 28-January 1. Food drives are especially meaningful during the holidays, when rising costs stretch family budgets even thinner.
- **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.

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.

Most-Needed Items

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

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



Download the complete Most-Needed Items flyer [here](#).

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 holiday theme, such as a festive sweater day or cookie swap, 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 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 holiday season, I'm proud to support the San Diego Food Bank's Holiday Food Drive. Rising costs are making it harder for many local families to keep food on the table this time of year. 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 meals. Thank you for joining me in sharing the joy of the season with our neighbors facing hunger.

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

Most donations arrive in a campaign's final two weeks, so keep communicating until the very end.

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

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 Holiday Food Drive. Feel free to make them your own by adding personal touches and drawing from the information in this toolkit.

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 / ANNOUNCEMENT

The season of giving is here!

We're proud to support the [@sdfoodbank](#)'s Holiday Food Drive by collecting nonperishable food donations to help our neighbors across San Diego County.

Join us in spreading holiday cheer by dropping off your donations at **[location]** through **[date]**.

Together, we can make a difference for families, seniors, and children this holiday season!

POST #2: MOST-NEEDED ITEMS / MIDPOINT REMINDER

We're halfway through our Holiday Food Drive, and there's still time to give back!

Help us stock the shelves at the [@sdfoodbank](#) with nutritious, nonperishable foods like peanut butter, canned proteins, beans, rice, and pasta.

Drop off your donations at **[location]** by **[date]** and help provide much-needed food to our San Diego neighbors.

Every item counts, and your generosity makes a difference!

POST #3: FINAL PUSH

There's still time to share the joy of giving this holiday season!

Our Holiday Food Drive benefiting the [@sdfoodbank](#) is coming to a close, and we need your help to finish strong!

Bring your nonperishable food donations to **[location]** by **[date]** and help support families, seniors, and children throughout San Diego County.

Let's come together to make this holiday season a little brighter for our neighbors!

Virtual Food Drives

POST #1: KICKOFF / ANNOUNCEMENT

This holiday season, we're making giving back easier than ever!

We're hosting a virtual Holiday Food Drive benefiting the [@sdfoodbank](#), and you can join us in helping provide nutritious food to our neighbors across San Diego County.

With just a few clicks, you can make a meaningful difference for families, seniors, and children this holiday season.

Join our virtual food drive today: **[fundraising link]**

POST #2 — MIDPOINT REMINDER / IMPACT

We're halfway through our virtual Holiday Food Drive, and there's still time to make an impact!

Your support of the [**@sdfoodbank**](#) helps provide nutritious food to San Diegans facing hunger during the holidays and beyond.

No grocery shopping or drop-off needed! Simply visit our virtual food drive page and make a donation from wherever you are.

Thanks to the Food Bank's purchasing power, just \$25 provides 50 meals. Give today: [**\[fundraising link\]**](#)

POST #3 — FINAL PUSH

The countdown is on! Our virtual Holiday Food Drive benefiting the [**@sdfoodbank**](#) is almost over, but there's still time to spread some holiday cheer.

Every donation helps the Food Bank provide nutritious food to families, seniors, and children throughout San Diego County. Help us finish strong and make a difference before **[date]** to help us reach our goal of **\$(amount)!**

Make your gift today: [**\[fundraising link\]**](#)



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1080x1920



1080x1350



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

Fast Facts

Use these facts in your emails, social posts, newsletters, and conversations to help supporters see the difference their gifts make. Feel free to share them as written or adapt them to your own voice.

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.

The Impact of Your Support

- Thanks to the Food Bank's bulk purchasing power, every \$1 donated helps provide two meals.
- A \$25 gift helps provide 50 meals for neighbors facing hunger.
- Collecting 200 pounds of food fills one of the Food Bank's iconic red barrels.

About the Food Bank

- The Jacobs & Cushman San Diego Food Bank is the largest hunger-relief organization in San Diego County and has served the community for nearly 50 years.
- The Food Bank serves an average of 400,000 people every month through its direct service programs and more than 450 nonprofit partners.
- In fiscal year 2026, the Food Bank distributed nearly 52 million pounds of food and resources, equivalent to 42.5 million meals
- This year marks the 46th annual Holiday Food Drive, a San Diego tradition of neighbors helping neighbors.

Downloadable Resources

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

- San Diego Food Bank fact sheet
- Holiday Food Drive social graphics
- Holiday Food Drive flyer
- 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 2026, the organization distributed nearly 52 million pounds of food and resources — equivalent to 42.5 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!