Food & Fund Drives:
A Coordinator’s Guide

Here’s why you’re coordinating a donation drive:

In Washtenaw County, 1 in 7 people suffer from food insecurity. Our neighbors have to make choices between paying bills and having enough to eat, and **they need your help**. As a publicly-funded 501(c)3 nonprofit, Food Gatherers depends on your donations of food and funds, and your volunteer efforts, to supply agencies and programs that feed people in Washtenaw County with food equivalent to around **15,000 meals every day**.

Your donation drive can happen at any time of the year, for as long or as short a time as you want to administer it. Every year, hundreds of local organizations and individuals host fund-and-food-raising drives that benefit Food Gatherers in our mission to alleviate hunger and end its causes in our community.

Here’s how you’ll do it yourself (It’s easy!):

We’ll give you everything you need! Register your donation drive at [www.foodgatherers.org/fooddrive](http://www.foodgatherers.org/fooddrive). If you have questions or need pickup or delivery, we’ll contact you to confirm details. We’ll provide printable posters and brochures, and you can pick up boxes or barrels to collect the food. We’ll also help you set up a donation webpage online, sharable through social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter, so you can raise donations without having to handle cash and checks yourself. We’ll tell you what the most-needed food items are, and give you information about hunger, Food Gatherers, and our programs, so you’ll be ready for questions that you’ll get from your friends and coworkers.

Or, here’s how you join in with an existing donation drive:

You don’t have to do it all yourself. Add the food or donations you gather to an existing food drive—here are some of our biggest food drives, but check our website for other drives all year long:

- **Busch’s Season of Sharing**: At the end of November, donate funds or food, including pre-packed bags of nonperishables at any Busch’s store in Washtenaw County.

- **Rockin’ for the Hungry**: We’ll be live on the radio with ann arbor’s 107one, broadcasting from Kroger stores for the whole **first week of December** in an effort to raise one million meals for our neighbors in need. Food and financial donations can be dropped off at any Kroger store in Washtenaw County anytime during the event.

- **Rotary Fights Summer Hunger Food Drive**: The Rotary Club of Ann Arbor teams up with Food Gatherers in March to hold a donation drive with multiple convenient drop-off locations at local businesses. See their website for a complete list and details ([www.annarborrotary.org](http://www.annarborrotary.org)).
Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: How do I start a donation drive?
A: Start by going to www.foodgatherers.org/fooddrive. Fill out a quick form to register your donation drive with Food Gatherers, set up a webpage for online donations, get containers from us to hold the food you collect, and print out useful documents, like a list of most-needed items, information about Food Gatherers, hunger facts, and other materials. We’ll work with you to make your donation drive successful and simple for you.

Q: How should I promote my donation drive?
A: Ideally, start at least a couple of weeks before you begin collecting donations.

- Read up on hunger facts on the Food Gatherers’ website and the marketing materials that we’ve provided, and the most-needed items list. Set up your online donation page ahead of time, and put a personal message or your company logo on it.
- If the drive is at your workplace, get senior staff involved, and make sure they’re aware of your efforts. Ask your company if they will match the donations you raise!
- Print donation drive posters and other materials to put up and distribute. We recommend that you start promoting the collection at least a week before you start collecting, to give people time to plan to donate or pick up items during their usual shopping trips.
- Make sure everybody knows all your contact information as the donation drive coordinator, and where and when the donations will be collected. Thank-you letters and tax receipts will be sent to each donor for whom we have an address and donation amount.
- Set specific goals: i.e. “we’re going to raise 5,000 meals!” Some quick conversions we use are: 1.2 pounds of food = 1 meal, and $1 = 3 meals.
- Be friendly and persistent, and make sure the message gets out several times! The more you spread the word through your networks, the more successful your donation drive will be.
- Plan to do it again every year! The people that you repeatedly engage will start to look forward to your donation drive and promote it, building on your success and growing your impact.

Q: Can I use Food Gatherers’ logo and artwork to promote my donation drive?
A: Sure! Our logo is available for download at www.foodgatherers.org/fooddrive. We do ask to review any promotional materials that use our logo or artwork, to keep our messaging consistent, so please send any materials you make to the Manager of Food Donor Relations, at sebastian@foodgatherers.org before you circulate them. Donation drive posters are downloadable from our website, too!

Q: Would you rather have food donations or financial donations?
A: We need both!

- **Donating Funds:** Financial donations allow us to purchase lots of food at bulk rates. For every $5 donated, Food Gatherers can provide 15 meals to our neighbors in need. By purchasing food at wholesale costs, we get lots more pounds of food per dollar than you can shopping at the local grocery store. Monetary donations also allow us to support our direct service programs (like our Community Kitchen and our Healthy School Pantry Program) and organizational expenses (like fuel for our trucks, staffing, and facility costs for our warehouse).

- **Donating Food:** Food donations allow you to choose high-quality, healthy, specific items that you want your neighbors in need to find at their local emergency pantry. It’s a personal way to give people the exact foods that you think they’d like and need.

Q: Is there a season for donation drives?
A: Not really! Hunger takes no holidays. The fall and winter holiday season is when we see the most donation drives, but we could use your support at any time!
Q: How long should my donation drive last?
A: It’s up to you! Some organizations have donation drives for a month at a time, and others have one-week or even one-day events. Keep in mind that people sometimes will bring things in for a day or two after the event is over, so you might want to plan to drop off donations several days after your donation drive ends.

Q: What kind of food should I gather?
A: Good, non-perishable food, full of proteins and nutrients. Download our list of most-needed food items at www.foodgatherers.org/fooddrive so you can collect foods that will provide the most help. If you’re interested in donating fresh produce, meat or dairy, call the Manager of Food Donor Relations at 734-761-2796 or email sebastian@foodgatherers.org to be sure to comply with crucial food safety requirements.

Q: Can I get containers to hold the food?
A: Here are your options: You can collect food in your own sturdy copy paper-size boxes, or sturdy bags, if you’re having a smaller food drive. Please keep it to 50 pounds or less per copy paper-size box. For larger food drives, you can pick up a Food Gatherers Big Box or Barrel (The size of a big trash can: boxes fit in any car, barrels fit in the back seat of most SUVs), or for huge food drives, we’ll deliver GIANT PALLET-SIZED BOXES to you. Please see our online registration form for more information on container options.

Q: What if I get more donations than I expected, and I need more containers?
A: Call our Transportation Coordinator, Dan Calderone, at (734) 761-2796, and he’ll arrange to pick up the containers that are full and bring you new, empty containers. Sometimes it can take a couple of days to coordinate our trucks to make those exchanges, so give him as much notice as you can.

Q: Do you accept non-food items?
A: Our primary focus is on hunger, but we can take some limited personal care items, like diapers, soap, shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrushes, and disposable razors. Please make sure they are in unopened packages.

Q: Can you accept opened packages or expired items?
A: No, containers must be sealed, the packaging has to be intact, and the foods can’t be past their printed expiration dates.

Q: What other items can’t you take?
A: We can’t take anything homemade. Prepared foods must be produced at a licensed, inspected food business. We can’t take anything without a printed ingredient list. We can’t accept alcohol or energy drinks. We can’t take any medicines, not even the over-the-counter kind, and we can’t take non-food items like clothing, pet food, detergent, furniture, toys, chemicals, etc.

Q: Where do I drop off my donations?
A: Food and financial donations can be dropped off to us at 1 Carrot Way, Ann Arbor, MI, 48105. We are open to accept donations from 9AM-4:45PM on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, and Wednesday from 9AM-6:45PM. Limited hours Saturday, too: 9AM-3:45PM. Carrot Way is off Dhu Varren Road near Pontiac Trail. Feel free to call us at (734) 761-2796, or consult your favorite Maps app for directions. Financial donations by check or money order can be mailed to Food Gatherers at P.O. Box 7971, Ann Arbor, MI 48107.

Q: How do I schedule a pickup of food donations?
A: If you have more than 100 pounds of food and can’t bring it to the warehouse yourself, we can arrange for one of our trucks to come by and pick it up. After you register your food drive, we’ll schedule that pickup time. If something happens and the originally scheduled pickup time has to change, just call our Transportation Coordinator, Dan Calderone, at (734) 761-2796 at least a couple of business days before you need the pickup made, and we’ll reschedule it with you.
Q: If you pick up from my location, what kind of access do you need?
A: For safety concerns, we can’t carry boxes up and down stairs, so grade-level/flat/elevator access is required for all pickups (like handicapped access). If a Big Box is full, we can’t go over dirt, paving stones, grass, or gravel, because we have to use wheeled carts. If you’re collecting in GIANT-SIZED BOXES, we need the kind of paved, hard flooring (no carpet) that will allow us to use a big rolling pallet jack, like a concrete floor or a loading dock.

Q: What happens to the food once it’s donated?
A: Food Gatherers is the food bank for Washtenaw County. We take your donated food, rescued food from local businesses, and food purchased with financial donations and distribute it to more than 170 partner agencies and programs, including food pantries, family meal programs, our own Community Kitchen, Healthy School Pantry and Summer Food Programs, and other frontline providers of hunger relief. Last year, we distributed 6.3 million pounds of food throughout our community, equivalent to 14,000 meals per day.

Q. Will people have to pay for the food I donate to Food Gatherers?
A. Absolutely not. All donated food is delivered free of cost or associated charges to our partners and directly to the people we serve.

Q: What kind of receipt do I get for donations?
A: Food Gatherers provides every identified donor with a tax receipt for all financial donations, by mail or email, your choice. All we need is the donor information: gift amounts, names, and addresses. Plus, we’ll provide you or your organization with the total poundage of food received, and the sum total of all financial donations raised, so you can see the results of your drive. Just make sure that the donations that you want tracked are clearly marked with your identifying information—download printable donation forms at www.foodgatherers.org/fooddrive.

Q: What is the cash value of donated food, for tax reporting?
A: Keep your receipt from the store when you buy food for donation: your donation value is the cost that you paid for it. Food Gatherers can’t determine that for you, because it’s dependent on what it is and where you buy it. According to a 2016 study by Feeding America, the nationwide network of food banks, the average value of the donated food that Food Gatherers actually distributes is $1.67 per pound, but your donations could be worth a different amount: a pound of beans generally costs less than a pound of beef. We can give you a receipt indicating the weight of foods that you donate, for your records.

Q: Can we volunteer at Food Gatherers?
A: Can you ever! Volunteers provide 70% of the hours worked here at Food Gatherers, and there are many different ways for you or your group to help, and see the full process of hunger relief. You can help us sort and pack food in the warehouse, ride along and assist on our trucks doing pickups and deliveries, help at our fundraising events, or prepare and serve meals at our Community Kitchen in downtown Ann Arbor. To sign up to volunteer as a group or individual, go to www.foodgatherers.org/volunteer.

Q: Can we come to Carrot Way and tour your warehouse?
A: Of course you can! Tours are a great way to kick off or wrap up a food drive. Once people see us in operation, they can see how serious and committed we are to fighting hunger where we live, and they’re inspired to help. We do need to plan ahead to have a leader for your tour, so call (734) 761-2796 to schedule it well ahead of time.

Q: I have read your Frequently Asked Questions. Can I ask an infrequently asked question?
A: Of course! We’re here to help. Call us at (734) 761-2796, or email us at info@foodgatherers.org.