

St. Vincent Place

Food Drive & Fundraising Guide



Before you start...

Thank you for wanting to support St. Vincent Place! As a small community-based organization, we rely on the support of individuals and businesses who believe in the work we do. Although our men's shelter receives some government funding to operate, our food bank and soup kitchen run solely with the help of volunteers and donors.

As you set out to collect canned food or run a fundraiser in support of St. Vincent Place, we want to make sure that you feel supported as well. Take a look through this guide to find inspiration, help, and answers to questions you might not even know you had.

If you still have questions after reading this guide, feel free to get in touch with me. I'm always happy to help walk you through setting up your food drive or fundraiser, to provide you with materials, or to help promote it.

Thank you for helping to give hope to the hungry and homeless in our community. Best of luck on your drive!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Sara McCleary'.

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Getting started

1 Let us know your plans

As soon as you decide that you'd like to run a food drive or fundraiser on behalf of St. Vincent Place, let us know. Not only does it help us get a good idea of what to expect in terms of donations coming in, we're happy to support you however you'd like. To let us know your plans, you can contact Sara by:

- emailing marketing@vincentplacessm.ca
- phoning 705-253-2770 ext. 202
- sending a message to the Facebook page (@StVincentPlace)
- stopping in to the office at 222 Albert St. E. from 9:30am to 3pm



2 Decide if you want to collect food, raise funds, or both, and set yourself a goal for how much

We make good use of all donations we receive and are happy to receive both food and monetary donations. Although some believe that money is better, that's not necessarily the case for us. That's because we're fairly small as far as food banks go, so we don't have the buying power that a food bank in a larger city might. Although some local stores will sometimes offer us some discounts when buying groceries, for the most part we pay the same shelf prices as you.

If you plan to collect primarily donations of food, check out our Most Needed Items list. It's available in a poster format or infographic on our website for you to print. We even have it as a magnet – let us know if you'd like one of these.



If you plan to collect money, we recommend using our donation tracking form (available on our website and at the end of this guide) if you're going to be working with cash or cheques. You can also set up an online fundraiser through our CanadaHelps page.

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3 Decide where and when you'll run your drive

While food banks tend to receive a large influx of donations at Christmas, that tends to drop off quite sharply in January. Unfortunately, the number of clients in need of help doesn't ease up, leading to a demand that far exceeds the supply. By March or April (and often even sooner), any stores that the food bank was able to build up over Christmas have usually depleted, and the food bank shelves start to look very bare. That tends to last until into the fall, making spring and summer the best times to run a food drive.

Similarly, monetary donations tend to start to pick up around October, reaching their peak in December, then abruptly drop off in January.

All that being said, both financial donations and nonperishable goods are welcome donations any time of the year, as they can be stored and used as needed, so if you're thinking about running a food drive or fundraiser outside of the "ideal" times, don't change your mind just because of the timing! We always welcome donations, no matter the time of year we receive them.

One piece of advice about timing – make sure that everyone knows when your food drive or fundraiser will end. Whether it's a time of day for a one-day food drive or a specific day for a longer collection, make it clear on any signage and advertising you do. A lot of people procrastinate, thinking that they've still got time, so make sure they know the deadline to donate.



Choosing where to run your food drive requires a bit of thought as well. (Monetary fundraising allows for a bit more flexibility.) Here are some ideas about where to collect donations and whom to ask.

- a) Collect canned goods at work – Many workplaces are happy to accommodate an employee who wants to take on the initiative and collect canned goods. Talk to your boss, put out a memo or put up signs asking for donations, and set out a box or bin to collect the donations.
- b) Collect in your apartment or neighbourhood – Deliver small flyers saying that you'll be by on a certain day to collect any donations placed outside your neighbours' doors. Taking the work out of dropping off the donations will encourage your neighbours to take part.

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- c) Collect at school – Many schools are more than happy to support a student's (or their parents') charitable efforts. See if you can put up signs on a school bulletin board or put notices in newsletters. Encourage your friends at other schools to do the same.
- d) Set up a table somewhere in public – Many stores, malls, banks, or other businesses are happy to provide a site for you to run a one-day food drive. Grocery stores are particularly good locations for them, since customers can see you on their way into the store and pick up some extra cans to drop off to you on their way out. Don't hesitate to ask business owners.
- e) Make use of social media – The easier it is for someone to donate, the more likely they are to do it! In addition to asking for donations of canned goods via social media, you can also use Facebook's donation platform to collect money from your friends that can either come directly to St. Vincent Place, or that you can then use to go buy canned goods to donate yourself. (Just be sure to be upfront when you're collecting if that's what you plan to do with the money.)

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Get creative with a theme

Although it's far from necessary, it can be fun to get a bit creative when setting up your fundraiser. By adding a theme, you can get potential donors more excited about getting involved. Here are some ideas for food drive themes.

- Earth Day Food Drive – 'Go Green' by asking for donations of canned green vegetables like green beans and peas, or packages with green labels
- Spread the Love Food Drive – A great idea at Valentines Day. Peanut butter and jam are some of the most in-demand items in food banks, so ask for donations of just these two items
- Spring into Action Food Drive – Spring is one of the hardest times for food banks with so few donations coming in, so ask your donors to get into the giving spirit
- Shark Week Food Drive – Everyone loves Shark Week, so ask your donors to really get into it this year by donating seafood items, particularly canned tuna and salmon
- Back to School Food Drive – Help parents send their kids to school with a full lunch bag by collecting donations of good (school-safe) lunch items, like apple sauce and nut-free granola bars



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- Trick-or-Can Food Drive – At Halloween, dress up in your costume and go door to door collecting canned goods to donate
- Challenge your donors – Run a ‘100 Can Challenge’ or challenge them to fill your vehicle with donations. If you’re collecting at a school, challenge each class to try to bring in the most cans. Some schools will offer a prize like a pizza party to the winning class.

If you’re running a fundraiser rather than a food drive, here are some fun ideas to encourage donors.

- Tacky tie/Ugly Sweater Tournament – Charge an entry fee for the tournament and see your colleagues square off to find out who has the tackiest tie or ugliest sweater. Have the rest of your colleagues act as judges - you can even vote via donation.
- Dress Down Day – This is a common one in many workplaces. Allow employees to wear casual clothing in exchange for a donation. If you’re running the fundraiser at a school, you could do a pyjama day or hat day.
- Change for Change – Although fewer people are carrying cash these days, most of us still have at least a small jar with spare change kicking around. Ask people to donate even some of theirs. Everyone will be surprised at how quickly it will add up.
- Give it Up – Ask your donors to give up a habit (maybe buying their coffee or work lunch instead of making it at home) for a set amount of time and donate the money they save.
- Lemonade Stand – If you’ve got young kids that you want to get involved, see if they’d like to run a lemonade stand on a hot day. Bring them with you when you drop off the money they raise – we love to meet our young supporters and they can see how their hard work will help.
- “-athon” – Run what’s known as a “peer to peer” fundraiser by encouraging your friends and colleagues to take part in an action while collecting money for doing it. Wake-a-thons, Walk-a-thons, Read-a-thons, or Bowl-a-thons are some common ones. We can help set up an online platform to support this kind of fundraiser, so be sure to get in touch with Sara if you’re interested in running something like this.



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5 Spread the word about your collection

If nobody knows about your food drive or fundraiser, nobody will be able to donate. Fortunately, it's easier than ever to spread the word.

- Post on social media, and ask your friends to share with their own networks
- Send out an email, especially if you're collecting at work and have a site-wide list
- Put up posters in communal areas or hand out flyers
- If you're running a food drive at a local business, ask the business owner to post it on their own social media or to put up signage in the day or two leading up to it



We're happy to help with designing posters and social media posts. Having well-designed and properly-branded materials will help potential donors feel confident making a donation. If you'd like to create your own material but want a copy of our logo to use, contact Sara. We do ask that you run any created material past us prior to using it, though. (We promise a quick turnaround on getting back to you on it!)

6 Run your food drive or fundraiser!

Now it's time to run your collection. Try not to let it stress you out – have fun with it. Bring on some friends to help with organizing and running it. Just about everything is easier with help.

If you are running a food drive, we do ask that you prearrange with us how and when you'll be getting the donations to our food bank. We need to make sure we have volunteers available to put away large donations, so it is important that we know when it will be arriving. If you'll need us to pick up the donations, we need at least a few days' notice in order to plan and ensure that someone will be available.



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Questions from Donors

If you're collecting donations for St. Vincent Place, it's only natural that donors will expect you to be able to answer some questions about us. Here are some questions you might get.

What is my donation going to do in the community? How will it help?

St. Vincent Place operates a men's residence, soup kitchen, food bank (including Lunches for Learning and the Period Pantry), and thrift store. Every year, the food bank gives out more than 3,000 food packages, and the soup kitchen serves about 14,000 hot meals. But St. Vincent Place does more than just provide food and shelter – we give hope to the hungry and homeless in our community. We help them to see that they aren't alone and that their community hasn't forgotten about or given up on them.



Who uses St. Vincent Place?

St. Vincent Place helps anyone who comes to us in need of assistance. While our residence is only for men 18+, we frequently have younger clients and families in our food bank and soup kitchen. In fact, about 40% of our food bank clients are children under the age of 18. Another 25% are seniors.

Many of our clients are gainfully employed, but struggle with covering all of their expenses, but the highest percentage (about 40%) of our food services clients are ODSP recipients.

Does the food bank only give out food?

Our food bank packages provide about 4 days worth of food, as well as some hygiene items. We try to include in each package a few rolls of toilet paper, a toothbrush and toothpaste, soap, and shampoo. We also have feminine hygiene products for those who need them.

What donations are most needed?

There is a list of most needed items on our website. For the most up-to-date information about what our food bank is running low on at a given time, we recommend you check out our Facebook page (@StVincentPlace), as we post there regularly to request donations of particular items.



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Can I get a tax receipt for my donation?

We are happy to provide charitable receipts to those who ask. Donations processed through CanadaHelps will receive a receipt immediately, while those coming in via cash or cheque will receive their receipt in the mail or via email, depending on their preference. In order to be able to provide a receipt, though, we do require a donor's entire mailing address (even if they want their receipt emailed to them).

If someone wants a receipt for donating canned goods, they will need to provide us with their receipt from the store where they purchased the items. If we do not receive a receipt showing just the items purchased, we will not be able to provide a charitable receipt for donations of goods.

To keep track of these donations and receipt requests, we recommend that you use our Donation Tracking Sheet, available on our website or at the end of this guide.

So What's Next?

Once we've received all of the food or money you've collected, we'll tally it all up and let you know the total. (Although some food banks measure food by weight, we estimate the dollar value of what we receive.)

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with Sara, whether before, during, or after your collection. We're always happy to help in whatever way we can.

Thank you again for supporting St. Vincent Place. Good luck with your food drive or fundraiser!

