
WHAT: “Adopt” an Elderly Person or Shut-In

Why

Within your community, there are elderly people and persons with disabilities who are either unable or reluctant to leave their homes. As a result, their ability to meet their nutritional needs—and their health—may suffer. Befriending and helping someone in this type of situation is an activity that you can do on your own, and that will benefit both of you.

This activity requires little or no experience. It does require a regular commitment of time.

How

- ❑ Contact organizations within your community that can direct you to someone who needs help, such as a local senior center, social services agency, house of worship, area agency on aging, or a municipal government information center.
- ❑ Another way to get to know and to help some of the elderly or shut-in people in the community would be to volunteer to deliver meals for a local home-delivered-meals program. This is usually done for a couple of hours during the middle of the day or on a weekend, and can be done on as many days of the week as you are available.
- ❑ You may already know someone in your neighborhood in need of assistance, and you may wish to help directly. Have someone who already knows the person introduce you. Explain that you are available to help. Be sensitive to the fact that the person may at first be reluctant to accept help.
- ❑ Some of the things you can do to help the person include:
 - Help the person apply for food stamps and serve as an authorized representative.
 - Arrange to have Meals on Wheels delivered to the person.
 - Help get the person involved in a program where meals are available through the Child and Adult Care Food Program or find additional resources through the Eldercare Locator, both listed below.
 - Volunteer to shop for groceries.
 - Occasionally prepare a nutritionally balanced meal for the person.
 - Alert family or social services professionals to health, nutrition, housing, or other problems that might need to be addressed.

Need More Help?

- Child and Adult Care Food Program: www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Care/Default.htm
- Eldercare Locator, (800) 677-1116 or www.aoa.dhhs.gov/elderpage/locator.html

WHAT: Hold a Food Drive

Why

A food drive is a great community activity for any volunteer organization, or for the experienced organization that would like to increase community participation during times of decreased contributions, such as after the holidays.

This activity requires little or no experience. It is a perfect once-a-year activity for service organizations, community groups, or even private offices.

How

At 4-6 Weeks

- Establish a small committee to plan and coordinate the food drive. Select an overall coordinator and team leaders for individual tasks.
 - Schedule a training session for the food drive volunteers. Provide them with a brief list of key times, dates, and responsibilities, as well as contact names and phone numbers. Responsibilities may include:
 - ▶ Setting up collection site(s).
 - ▶ Collecting food at predetermined intervals.
 - ▶ Assembling donations for the participating food banks.
 - ▶ Delivering donations to the food banks.
 - ▶ Distributing the food drive flyer throughout the community at supermarkets, places of worship, libraries, schools, etc.
 - Contact local food banks or other food distribution facilities to confirm their interest in accepting the collected foods, as well as any guidelines or restrictions. Set a tentative delivery date.
 - Develop a timetable for carrying out the food drive.
 - Contact organizations that may be interested in serving as collection sites, such as schools, local businesses, religious organizations, or grocery stores.
 - Develop a one-page flyer describing the activity. Reproduce the flyer for distribution. Also develop a list of suggested foods for contribution.
 - Call potential collection sites and ask for their participation. Track responses as they are received.
 - Determine where the central food storage site will be. It must be large enough to hold all the food collected during the 2 weeks of the food drive, and to accommodate volunteers who will assemble the food for distribution once the food drive is over.
 - Develop a media plan.
-

At 2 Weeks

- Contact local businesses and civic groups to request additional assistance, such as transporting the food to the food bank, displaying flyers, or notifying their employees of the upcoming event. Obtain their commitment in writing.
- Design a flyer to advertise the food drive that includes the list of foods suitable for donation.

At 1-2 Weeks

- Contact participating food banks to reconfirm the date and procedure for delivering the food donations.

Day Before

- Call volunteers to remind them of the start of the food drive, and of their responsibilities throughout the 2 weeks of the food drive.
- Set up the food collection site(s).

During the 2-Week Food Drive

- Collect food donations daily.
- Deliver donations to a central storage area or directly to the designated food bank(s).

Day Before Assembling Food Donations

- Set up registration and information tables at the entrance.
- Set up tables to separate foods by food group.
- Set up assembly area. Have bags available for assembling the contributions.
- If necessary, place posters or banners in the building so volunteers can find the location.
- Prepare area with chairs where volunteers can relax. Have snacks on hand.

Day of Assembling Food Donations

- Welcome volunteers as they arrive, and lead them to their predetermined workstations.
- Have a team leader guide each volunteer team in its assigned duties. Teams will be needed to:
 - Bring food donations from the storage area to the assembly area.
 - Divide the assembled food by food groups.
 - Bag the foods so each bag will contain a variety or follow participating food banks' guidelines.
 - Load the food bags into vehicles for transportation to pre-designated food banks.
- Clean up.

Follow Up

- Write a thank-you note to all volunteers. You may wish to include information on how much food was raised or plans for additional food drives.

Tips

- ▶ First-time organizers will want to keep the food drive as simple as possible. You may wish to have only one or two collection sites, and one or two collection days.
- ▶ Work with your selected food bank or food distribution agency to develop a one-page “wish list” of the kinds of food the agency would prefer, as well as those it does not, e.g., cans, yes; soft boxes and bags, no.

Need More Help?

- ▶ Media plan, p. 32.
 - ▶ Golden Harvest: www.goldenharvest.org/How_You_Can_Help/Food_Drive.htm
-

WHAT: Grow a Community Garden

Why

Start your own community garden project and contribute the harvest to local food banks, or work with the residents of an area in need to grow, harvest, and enjoy their own fresh-grown produce. This on-going activity will improve participants' diets and add to their nutritional knowledge.

This activity does not require experience, but it does require organization and cooperation, as well as an intensive time commitment.

How

Join a pre-existing community garden by calling the American Community Garden Association or your local USDA Cooperative Extension Service office.

Or

Identify and recruit interested volunteers.

Select a site that ideally gets at least 6 hours of sunshine a day, is located near a water source, and has proper drainage.

Determine the size of the garden. A suitable harvest can be collected from a 4-foot-square plot per person. A plot larger than 10 square feet is not recommended.

Plan the garden before planting. Consult with your local nursery or nursery section of a hardware store to select the best seeds for your site.

Draw a scale “floor plan” of the garden to determine how many rows there will be, how many plants, and where the different varieties will be located.

Purchase tools or ask local businesses to contribute them to the project. Necessary tools include long-handled shovels, gardening spades, spading forks, hoes, and rakes. Other useful tools include three-pronged hand cultivators, a hose, and watering cans.

Prepare the soil. Once the soil is dry enough, loosen the soil and remove grass and weeds.

Once the soil is cleared, dig as deeply as the blade of the spade and turn the soil.

Add organic material such as compost, manure, or peat moss. This helps feed the plants and enrich the soil. Spread evenly on top of the turned soil in a layer no deeper than 3 inches.

Blend everything using a spading fork, until the soil is so soft that planting can be done with the hands.

Rake the soil until it is smooth and level.

- ❑ Purchase seeds or seedlings and plant according to the directions. Remember to use waterproof marker stakes to identify what has been planted.
- ❑ Visit the garden daily. Make sure the garden is properly watered, weeded, and fertilized.

Tips

- ▶ Your local library is a great source for information on growing specific plants, and a great nutrition education tool.
- ▶ Yard sales are a great way to save on the cost of tools.
- ▶ USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service offers a wide range of technical resources. www.nrcs.usda.gov/

Model

The San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners (SLUG) has built crop-scale urban gardens on abandoned lots adjacent to public housing developments, and runs youth job-training and employment programs at each of the sites. The purpose of this project is to establish sustainable and measurable community food security for the public housing residents. This project brings together the food production and employment efforts at the public housing gardens with the revenue-generating

efforts of SLUG's community-based enterprises. Young people plant, harvest, and distribute fresh organic produce to the families of the neighboring development. Project staff carry out detailed community surveys, develop growing plans for each garden site, assist the youth department in expanding program capacity and cohesiveness, build food systems coalitions, and support the development of SLUG food-related enterprises.

Need More Help?

- ▶ Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service: www.ree.usda.gov/crgam/cfp/community.htm
- ▶ American Community Garden Association: (860) 523-4276
- ▶ America the Beautiful: (202) 638-1649, www.america-the-beautiful.org/home.html
- ▶ Natural Resources Conservation Service Technical Resources: www.nrcs.usda.gov/TechRes.html

WHAT: Bring the Summer Food Service Program to Needy Children in Your Community

Why

The Summer Food Service Program provides nutritious meals to children in low-income areas when school is out and kids do not have access to meals served through the National School Lunch Program. And, because there is a strong link between learning and nutrition—studies have shown that kids who are not hungry learn more effectively, are sick less often, and behave better—you will be giving hungry kids in your community a chance to learn, thrive and be healthy, all summer long!

Extensive volunteer experience preferred. Very time-intensive.

How

- ❑ Contact your State agency (usually the State education agency) to learn all you can about the SFSP—the application process, sponsor and site eligibility requirements, reimbursement rates, and required paperwork.
- ❑ Are there significant numbers of children who receive free and reduced-price lunches during the school year who do not have access to meals during the summer? Work with your State agency, community leaders, and anti-hunger advocates to determine where the need for the program is in your community.
- ❑ Identify potential sponsors of the program and educate them about the need for, and the benefits of, the SFSP for children. Potential sponsors include schools, local government agencies, and nonprofit community organizations. SFSP sponsors must be strong managers in order to properly staff meal service sites, train staff in program operations, monitor sites, manage the food service, and complete the required paperwork.
- ❑ Work with community leaders to identify potential sites that could be used for serving meals. Consider schools, recreation buildings, and local parks.
- ❑ Help your sponsor determine the best way to provide meals at the site(s). If there is equipment for food service preparation, consider if it is viable to prepare the meals on site. If not, contact your local school food service or other food vendors.
- ❑ Publicize the location of the meal service site(s). Distribute information to children and parents before summer vacation through the schools, local newspapers, radio stations, etc.
- ❑ Enlist other supportive adults, such as parents and retirees, as volunteers to help with the meal service and to provide educational and enrichment activities at the site(s).

Tips

- ▶ Start early. A successful SFSP requires extensive planning and community support.
- ▶ Contact your local or State-level anti-hunger advocates to enlist their support and advice on successful methods and potential roadblocks to bringing the SFSP to your community.
- ▶ Attend community meetings and events to distribute information and promote participation in the SFSP.
- ▶ Make appointments with local community leaders (e.g., the mayor, school board, police chief, director of parks and recreation) to inform them about SFSP.
- ▶ Ask local businesses and community agencies to donate their time and expertise to provide fun activities for children at the meal site(s).

Model

The 1998 SFSP Summer Sunshine Award national winner in the category of Child Development Activities was the Vinita Public Schools for their 9 weeks of *Food, Sun, and Fun* SFSP Program. They achieved success by combining nutritious meals with fun activities for kids.

Vinita Public Schools built a partnership with the Craig County 4-H and the Craig County Department of Human Services. Together, they provided the children with educational and enrichment activities, and taught life skills. Their creative activities included courses in personal safety, first aid, cultural diversity, career week, and wildlife education.

Need More Help?

- ▶ USDA's Child Nutrition Division: www.fns.usda.gov/cnd
-