Pantry Fundraising Ideas

**Reverse Offering:** Instead of putting something *in* the offering plate, the members of the congregation take a slip *out* of the plate. Each slip of paper lists specific non-food item(s) that the pantry needs. During the next week, each person should purchase the item(s) that are listed on the slip and bring them to the church to complete the “reverse offering.”

**Thanksgiving Challenge:** Challenge your extended family at Thanksgiving dinner to collect food items, one per week per family unit for the next year. One year later have everyone bring their “harvest” to the family Thanksgiving dinner and then donate the items to a food pantry.

**A Gift Substitute:** Suggest that co-workers forego exchanging holiday gifts in favor or sending the saved money to a food pantry.

**Birthday Bag Project:** Ask small groups, Sunday School classes, or youth group to collect cake mix, frosting, decorations, and candles. Place in a gift bag for pantries to give out when they notice there is a birthday coming up in the family.

**Church Canned Good Drop Boxes:** Have churches in the community place boxes, barrels, baskets, or shopping carts inside the church door for people to drop off cans of food. There are many variations on the theme: collect food every week with the pastor periodically reminding people of the need; collect food only one Sunday each month; collect only during one month of the year trying to meet all of the pantry’s needs; have people bring in specific items needed by pantries; have the ushers carry the food into the sanctuary to be placed along with the collection plates to be consecrated. This truly puts the food in its proper perspective.

**Lenten Fast Offering:** Ask church-goers who fast a meal-a-week or a day-a-week during the Lenten season to bring in the money saved as a special offering for the pantry.

**Office Snack Money:** Approach business employees about foregoing coffee break treats for a week or more and donating that saved money to a food pantry.

**Your Change Can Change Hunger:** School children can collect loose change for a donation to the food pantry. Pantry purchases at Feeding America for best pennies per pound deal.

**Meeting Refreshments:** Suggest that businesses or social organizations not serve refreshments at their meetings so that a donation can be made at the pantry. With the permission of the restaurant they meet at, even noontime civic organizations could forego lunch some week at which someone from the pantry makes a presentation; they could donate the saved money to the pantry instead of having lunch that day.
**Un-baked Good Sale:** Coordinate scout troops or other youth organizations to offer an un-baked good sale. After hearing a lecture on hunger in the community and a possible tour of the pantry, the group may go out to a shopping center or anywhere a bake good sale might be held, and set up tables with plates, napkins, cake pans, cookie jars, etc. just like a baked good sale. Instead of having food to sell, the cookie jars and plates have slips of paper that say something like, “I did not buy ____ cookies so that hungry people in Kent County might eat. Price: 1 for $0.25, 2 for $0.50, 5 for $1.00. All proceeds given to the ____________ Food Pantry.”

**Fast-a-thon:** Organize high school church groups to fast one weekend at their church, studying hunger issues and praying. Before the fast, each student asks for pledges for each hour fasted. Afterwards, the money is collected and donated to the pantry. A 30-Hour Planned Famine Organizing Kit is available from World Vision at 1-800-7-FAMINE or Catholic Relief Services Food Fast at 1-800-222-0025.

**Church Farm Market:** Ask members who have gardens to plant extra and then bring the surplus produce to church on Sunday or at a midweek service. Produce should be put on a table in the fellowship hall. After the service, members may “purchase” the produce by a freewill donation which goes to the pantry. All donations and left-over food goes to the pantry. One possible variation of this program is for the church itself to have a garden.

**Grocery List Bulletin Insert:** Insert a “grocery list” in the church bulletin. List specific items needed by the pantry. Leave blank lines on the page for the shopper to fill in items he/she needs for personal use. At the bottom, explain that the listed items are needed for the pantry.

**Brown Bag Answer to Poverty:** Find a grocer who will donate bags. Print several hundred labels with a list of items necessary for a balanced diet for a family of four, such as four 16 oz cans of vegetables, four 16 oz cans of meat (chili, tuna, etc), four 16 oz cans of fruit, four 16 oz cans of soup, one package of pasta, one package of dry beans, one package of cereal, one package of crackers, one package of powdered milk, one jar of peanut butter, and one family size bar of bath soap. Enlist the church youth to paste the labels on bags and to distribute them to church members or neighborhood homes in order to be filled and returned to church.

*Do you have other great ideas that have worked in your congregations to help food pantries raise support? If so, please let the Access office know so we can pass them along to others. THANKS!*