



## SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE FOR COMMUNITY FOOD DRIVES

[DATE]

### Boost the value of your food drive donations

[YOUR NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION]

{YOUR TOWN}--Community groups and social organizations often host food drives to fill local food pantry shelves this time of year. By keeping a few simple tips in mind, you can enhance the value of the food donations you make.

"It's important to remember that donated food is most helpful if it is both safe and high quality," says Barbara Ingham, food safety specialist with the University of Wisconsin-Extension [OR YOUR NAME AND TITLE].

Make sure to check the dates on packages of foods that you donate, advises Ingham [YOUR NAME].

[IF AVAILABLE, YOU COULD ADD INFORMATION ABOUT HOW MANY PEOPLE USE THE PANTRY; HOW MUCH FOOD IS NEEDED, ETC. OR SOMETHING SPECIFIC TO THE LOCAL PANTRY.]

### Here are some other things to look for:

- **Quality or pack dates** often designated on packages by the words "Better if used by..." and a date. Look for these dates on packaged mixes, cold cereals, peanut butter, and increasingly, on canned items like fruits and vegetables. These dates mean that after the quality date, the food will begin to lose its flavor and may even develop an off flavor. Donate only foods that are well within the quality dates marked on the package.

- **Expiration dates**, such as "Expires 2/15/19" or "Do not use after 7/9/19." Look for these dates on vitamins, yeast, baking powder and cake mixes. Do not donate foods that are past their expiration date.
- **Pull dates.** Example: "Sell by May 16." Look for these dates on perishable, refrigerated foods such as milk, yogurt, cottage cheese, cream, eggs, lunch meat and packaged salad mixes. Perishable foods, with the exception of garden produce, are usually not included in a food drive. If they are, choose foods that are well within the pull date.

Besides looking for a date, be sure to check the integrity of the package. To ensure that the food has not been contaminated, donate only foods from unopened packages. Avoid foods with packaging that shows signs of leakage or damage. Ingham [YOUR NAME] urges consumers not to donate canned items that have broken seams or large dents.

Your donation only makes a difference in the life of someone in need if the product donated is within the date marked and of good quality. If you question the integrity of the product or wouldn't feed it to your household—it is probably best not to donate it.

Are home-canned foods, fresh eggs or produce safe to donate? Food pantries often welcome donations of fresh produce. However, home-canned foods, meat or eggs that have not been handled by licensed food processors should not be donated.

"If you have a question about a proposed donation, contact the food pantry. Staff there will be happy to discuss whether they can accept or store the donation that you have in mind," suggests Ingham [YOUR NAME].



*continued...* **SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE FOR COMMUNITY FOOD DRIVES**

Amber Canto, State Coordinator for FoodWise, a program of University of Wisconsin-Extension [OR YOUR NAME] suggests avoiding sugary cereals, salty noodle mixes, and fruit-flavored beverages that might be easy to donate, but difficult for households to include in nutritious meals. Instead, Canto [YOUR NAME] urges consumers to donate foods that have a stable shelf life, are full of nutrients and easy to prepare.

**Good examples of foods to consider are:**

- Canned vegetables, especially those without added salt.
- Fruits canned in juice, unsweetened applesauce, 100-percent fruit juice and dried fruit such as raisins or raisins.
- Canned meats and fish, such as chicken, ham, beef, tuna and salmon. Do not donate meat canned at home.
- Peanuts and peanut butter.
- Whole grain, low-sugar cereals such as plain instant oatmeal, whole grain Os and bran flakes.
- Whole grain or enriched pasta and instant rice—either brown or enriched. Boxed noodle and rice dishes can be an easy starting point for a one-dish meal.
- Whole grain crackers (especially reduced-sodium) and popcorn.
- Spaghetti sauce, salsa and canned beans, including baked beans.

- Reduced-sodium broth and soups.
- Salad dressings or spreads, and condiments such as ketchup or mustard lower in fat and added sugars.
- Baby food is a very welcome donation. Just be sure to donate well within the date marked on the containers.

“Food pantry guests are extremely grateful for the help that they receive through the pantries. Pantry guests welcome your donations of safe, high quality foods so that they can feed themselves and their households good, nutritious meals,” says Canto [YOUR NAME].

Consider donating cash to food pantries. “Pantries can often get more for their dollars, address shortages and needs and focus on high quality products with some extra financial assistance,” says Canto [YOUR NAME]. “Cash donations help food pantries offer the widest possible array of products to the individuals that they serve.”

[ADD SPECIAL NEEDS FOR YOUR PANTRY, OR OTHER INFORMATION.]