

ENGAGE ARKANSAS

LITTLE FOOD PANTRY PROJECT

Information provided by LittleFreePantry.org.



Martin Luther King Jr. Day is the only federal holiday designated as a National Day of Service to encourage all Americans to volunteer to improve their communities. As the state agency responsible for planning and implementing service days statewide, we have considered astonishing food insecurity rates in Arkansas, currently ranking as some of the highest in the country.

Thanks to inspiration from the International Little Free Food Pantry Movement, which began in Fayetteville, Arkansas in 2016, and a partnership with the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, we invite you to participate in the upcycling and repurposing of old newspaper dispensers into little free food pantries for your communities.

This project will require you to identify a community leader or group to adopt the food pantry, ensuring it remains stocked for your community members in need. Leaders will plan and oversee events related to the painting and installation of the pantry and hosting the necessary food drive(s) to collect supplies.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day is about community members coming together to serve.

The project is not meant for one individual to implement. It's important for the success of the Day of Service, that community members have some way to serve. There are many ways this could happen, depending on the ideas and creativity of each community.

Engage Arkansas will host two mandatory virtual calls before the event to facilitate collaborative idea sharing and event planning. The final optional call will take place following the service day. It will be an opportunity to discuss event successes and impact.

Following the installation, community leaders will need to register the pantry in the International Little Free Food Pantry database, ensuring it is easy for community members to locate.

COMMUNITY LEADERS

When you think of a leader in your community, who is the first person that comes to mind? Is it an individual or a community group? This might look different in different communities. *Some examples of citizen leaders include:*

- Neighborhood Associations
- Community Development Groups
- Community School Coordinators
- Government Leaders
- Church Leaders
- Collegiate Leaders
- Civic Clubs
- Teachers

This is not an exhaustive list. Characteristics of community leaders include the ability to:

- maximize other's strengths
- balance the leadership needs
- work as a team
- mobilize others
- pitch in
- practice stewardship
- be accountable
- think ahead
- recruit and mentor
- walk beside, not above



LOCATION

Ensuring that you have the proper permissions to install a Little Food Pantry is essential to the success of the project. Privately-owned, publicly-operated properties like businesses, schools, churches, community gardens and nonprofits can help avoid privacy or traffic concerns.

The potential host is likely someone you know, an organization with which you affiliate, or an organization with which someone you know affiliates. If the latter, ask your contact to bring the proposal or to provide a warm introduction.

After you secure an enthusiastic “yes,” invite the host’s input on mini pantry design, name, and exact location. About exact location, prioritize the following:

- A location that is noticeable
- A location with lighting (street light, other exterior lighting)
- A location clear of easements
- A location with a North or East-facing orientation for hot summers



PAINTING THE PANTRY

Painting and installing the Little Free Pantry could be a part of your MLK Day Service Project, but it may be more successful to prepare the pantry ahead of time. **You could tap a local artist to use their talents, or you could let youth at a local club, school, or church do the art.**

If you choose to let a local artist or group paint it, you should ensure that they have all of the necessary supplies, which include sandpaper to scrape off dead paint and a new can of exterior paint. One example is Hirschfield Heavy Duty 100% Acrylic Latex Interior/Exterior Paint.

Having a relative design in mind will be helpful if there are more than a few people on the art team. What imagery represents your community?

OPTIONAL: You may want to remove the spring-loaded steel shelf. It's held in place with a removable steel rod and spring on each side. Then, you can glue or wedge one or two shelves into the box. Click [here](#) to learn more.





Boxed Entrees

- Mac & cheese boxes
- Canned chili
- Campbell's Ready Meals

Milks & Beverages

- Shelf-stable almond or soy milk
- Powdered or condensed milk
- Water bottles
- Juice boxes

Non-food Items

- Dog / cat food
- Socks
- Rain gear
- Baby wipes & diapers
- Deodorant
- Toothpaste & alcohol-free mouthwash
- Shampoo & conditioner
- Sun block & SPF lotions
- Toilet paper
- Feminine hygiene products
- Sanitizer sprays or wipes
- Gloves
- First-Aid supplies
- Cleaning supplies

WHAT TO STOCK

All items should be non-perishable, sealed, and able to withstand high temperatures. Please avoid any items you don't want accessible to children.

Proteins

- Canned meats: chicken, ham, spam, corned beef
- Fish (canned or packets): tuna, salmon, sardines
- Nut / seed butter: peanut, almond, sunflower
- Shelf-stable cheeses: parmesan, cheese spreads
- Shelf-stable meats: pepperoni, summer sausage
- Jerky: mushroom, beef, turkey
- Assorted nut mixes
- Protein bars



Fruits & Vegetables

- Apple sauce
- Dried fruit: mango, cranberries, raisins
- Canned fruit: mandarins, peaches, pineapple
- Individual fruit cups
- Fruit strips or gummies
- Canned vegetables: green beans, peas, corn, carrots, tomatoes, veg-all, etc.
- Pizza Sauce (cans or jars)
- Baby food (jars or pouches)

Grains & Carbs

- Pasta: spaghetti, linguine, penne, macaroni
- Rice: instant packages, bags
- Beans (canned or dry): pinto, black, cannellini
- Shelf stable pizza crust
- Tortillas
- Cereal & granola (individual packages or boxes)
- Cereal bars & granola bars
- Trail Mix
- Crackers
- Rice cakes
- Pretzels
- Popcorn (kernels or microwaveable)
- Pudding or jello cups



Soups, Stocks, & Broth

- Soups (boxed or canned): tomato, chicken noodle, beef stew, vegetable, cream of mushroom
- Broth or stock (boxed or canned)

MLK DAY EVENTS

There are many ways to adapt the MLK Day of Service to the needs of your community. While you could center the day around painting the pantry and hosting a food drive, it may be more successful if your mini pantry is already painted and ready to premier. You could drum up buzz around the "unveiling".

Maybe its a BLOCK PARTY !

For a block party, all community members are invited to participate and are asked to bring food items for the pantry. Maybe they're also asked to bring warm clothing to donate. Maybe it's all centered around a parade. You could invite local food trucks to come out and set up. Local nonprofit or locally-owned businesses could set up booths to sell goods or offer service opportunities or ways to get involved with their organizations.

Maybe you bring in a local musician, artist, or speaker. Maybe you center the day around learning the history of race in America. Inspirational speakers and experts could speak to how we can make tangible improvements around race and service to build and grow civically healthy communities.

These are just some ideas which we can discuss further. Ultimately, you know your communities best. You know how to get people to show up and make change for the better. As we always say

**LOCAL PEOPLE
SOLVE LOCAL
PROBLEMS BEST**



HOW TO HOST A FOOD DRIVE

BUILD A TEAM

ORGANIZATION CONTACT

You'll connect with folks inside the hosting organization, first making sure the organization is on board, then discussing ways to get the whole organization involved. (May need to attend a meeting.)

When speaking with potential food drive hosts, ask about dates; when might a food drive be most successful and avoid conflict with other events?

Ask if there is space to store food collected and who to contact to get an announcement out to the wider organization.

COMMUNITY CONTACT

You'll reach out to local food pantries about what would most help. Look for places nearby, then email or call. Ask questions like these.

Which foods or items are most needed?

Are there any unneeded or unacceptable items?

How should your group sort donations?

When/where should you store excess supplies?

Do they have suggestions for making the food drive a success?

Who should you contact with further questions, and do they have questions for you?

EVENT PROMOTER

Your team has two jobs. The first is to brand the food drive and promote the MLK Day theme—where flyers are pre-delivered and food is collected at predetermined time? Maybe a friendly competition?

Your second job is to make sure lots of folks know about the food drive. See if you can hang posters onsite, at local stores, and on coffee shop bulletin boards. Make posters with dates, times, and local hunger statistics. (Be sure to take down afterward!) Then, routinely communicate wherever your network is listening until the food drive is over. When the drive is over, communicate its success with the organization and media.

EVENT COORDINATOR

You'll handle donations from placement of boxes and bins to sorting (Keep plastic bags for transporting!) and throwing away expired food (If you aren't sure, throw it out!).

Count items donated and take pictures for the Promoters to share in post-drive communications.

Finally, you'll deliver to the Little Food Pantry. What you can't fit in the pantry will need to be stored nearby for the Community Leader to stock once the pantry stock is low.

SIGNAGE

In order to keep your pantry stocked with necessary supplies, consider printing off and laminating a list of "**THINGS TO STOCK**". Many Little Food Pantries include a sign stating "**TAKE WHAT YOU NEED. LEAVE WHAT YOU CAN.**" This lets the public know that it's okay to take things. It also encourages the public to help keep it stocked. Additionally, you might provide contact info for the pantry sponsor.



If you have the appropriate permissions, avoid sitting in an easement, and keep your mini pantry in good condition, you are not likely to have issues. You may choose to purchase personal or commercial liability insurance; however, most mini pantry stewards do not. (Homeowner's policies typically contain coverage for other structures, and this line item cannot be deleted.)

The Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act (42 USCA § 1791), in most situations, protects from civil and criminal liability those who donate food products to a nonprofit organization for distribution to needy individuals. Establishing or donating to an affiliated Little Free Pantry project is not a guarantee of protection from liability under this law. If you have specific questions about liability or any applicable regulations to a Little Free Pantry in your area, you should consult an attorney. You may choose to post an on site disclaimer; however, most mini pantry stewards do not.

GETTING THE WORD OUT

Locate your mini pantry where people will notice it, then ask community members to co-steward. Hundreds of stewards use social media accounts dedicated to their particular mini pantry to communicate about them—current status/needs, requests, thank you notes.

You could create a Facebook page. On launch day, you could share the page and ask friends if they'd like and share it, as well. Coordinating a Facebook page launch generates excitement and givers! Prioritize the platform/s you already use. No need to figure out TikTok! But if you "live" on TikTok, use it!

Don't do social media? You can send a press release to your local newspaper or post flyers around the pantry location.

Finally, add your mini pantry to the map: mapping.littlefreepantry.org. Be sure to include city, state, and zip code, as these are the terms most folks use when searching.

SOCIAL MEDIA

 [@engage_ar](https://www.instagram.com/engage_ar)

 [@engage_ar](https://twitter.com/engage_ar)

 [@engagegear](https://www.facebook.com/engagegear)

TAG US!
We'd love to share your pantry project with our networks.



IMPACT

The ultimate goal of this project is to unify Arkansas communities through service and to ensure all Arkansans have access to food. Our hope is that these pantries will serve as a neighborhood gathering place and that they will provide nourishment to people of all ages and backgrounds who may not have the ability to advocate for themselves.

When considering impact, we know that it can often be difficult to measure pounds of food donated or even the number of attendees at the community events.

WE'RE INTERESTED IN LEARNING:

How many community partners were involved?

How many artists helped out?

How many volunteers helped to organize your food drive?

How many volunteers provided service to prep the pantry?

What impactful stories could you share from the event?

What has been welcomed into your community as a result of the project?

We also LOVE photos. You can drop as many as you'd like [here](#).



CONTACT & DELIVERABLES

For any questions or concerns regarding your MLK Day of Service Pantry Project, please reach out to the following.

Starr Crow
Civic Engagement Manager
Starr.Crow@adhe.edu
501-537-9722

PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS:

- Attend the MLK Day of Service Planning Calls
- Host a community event with service opportunity on MLK Day, January 16.
- Submit a list of partners & volunteers who contributed by January 20.
- Submit a photo of the installed pantry by January 20.

*Add the calls
to your
calendar.*

*Begin working to
identify your
Community
Lead and project
partners.*

*HAVE FUN!
UNITE!
SERVE!*

