

Loaves and Fishes Food Drive

*Scott Elementary School
Naperville, Illinois*

Helping others is an important life lesson that Scott Elementary tries to teach by example. Through its Loaves and Fishes Food Drive, the whole Scott community shows it cares about others. The project helps students in this highly diverse student body understand that a person can be generous, regardless of how much money he or she has.

Scott Elementary actually conducts two food drives each school year to benefit a community food pantry. The October drive lasts all month and includes a kick-off tour of the pantry. One child from each classroom, several teachers and parents from the School, Family, Community partnership (SFCP) team take the tour.

The director talks with the group, explaining why people need food assistance, how much food the pantry collects, how much it gives away and the important role of volunteers. The students see the food on the shelves, how much food is missing, and how bags are filled for families, and they walk into the refrigerator. Part of their job is to listen and take notes. After the tour, the students take a collection box to their classrooms and give a short report on what they learned.

Once a week during the drive, SFCP team parents gather the food from the classrooms, count it and take it to the pantry. The school keeps a tally of how much food it collects each week and displays the numbers on a thermometer-type-poster in the school lobby. The October food drive netted more than 2,700 food and non-food items.

The February food drive is a one-week competition among grades. A few days before the food drive begins, the school sends fliers home with a list of most needed items. The Student Council teachers and representatives help the SFCP team by counting food items and bringing them to the lobby each morning. SFCP parents accept the food and collect the food tally sheets. The collection stays in the

lobby for several days so that everyone can see how much has been collected.

At the end of the February drive, SFCP volunteers took several van loads of food to the pantry. Almost 1,700 food and non-food items were donated in one week.

The winning grade received doughnuts and a special warm, fuzzy thank you note from the SFCP. The second-place grade received bags of chips and a warm fuzzy thank you animal for the classroom. The SFCP sent home a "Thank You" flier, as well, to thank all families for their help.

Students, teachers and parents benefited greatly from the food drives, as did the community members on the receiving end. Teachers commented on how touched they were by the pantry tour and how important it is for children to have this opportunity to learn why helping and donating are important.

A child, however, captured the essence of this project: "Mom, take some of my money and buy more items for the food drive."

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