



# Unlocking Year-Round Fundraising Ideas



**MEALS ON WHEELS**

# Introduction

Nonprofit organizations like Meals on Wheels—committed to providing access to nutritious food, supporting local food banks and pantries, and strengthening communities—play a crucial role in addressing social challenges. To continue making a lasting impact, it's essential to plan thoughtfully, engage volunteers, solicit donor contributions, and explore innovative strategies. One often underutilized approach is to align your appeals and [development plan](#) with various holidays and observance days throughout the year. By doing so, you can maximize your efforts and connect meaningfully with your supporters.

Every season offers unique challenges and opportunities. Harnessing the potential of these seasonal shifts—by customizing holidays and observance days to fit your mission's objectives and incorporating them into your annual plans—can help you strategize effectively, engage your supporters, and optimize your fundraising endeavors. With [more than 70% of donors](#) motivated by a personal connection to the cause, integrating storytelling that aligns with the theme of the observance day can further enhance your appeals.



# Using this calendar



Before we delve into the list of holidays and observance days, let's explore strategies to align these occasions with Meals on Wheels' mission:

## 1. **Connect your cause to the holiday**

Identify common ground between the holiday or observance day and your mission. Emphasize how your work aligns with the values, themes, or causes associated with that date.

## 2. **Create themed campaigns**

Develop specific fundraising or awareness campaigns tailored to the holiday. Craft compelling messaging that resonates with your audience's emotions and motivations.

## 3. **Launch volunteer opportunities**

Organize volunteer projects or service events related to the holiday's theme. Encourage your community to contribute their time and skills to make a difference in housing solutions.

## 4. **Share impactful stories**

Storytelling is a powerful tool in appeals, with [over 70% of donors](#) motivated by a personal connection to the cause. Use this opportunity to share stories of individuals or communities positively impacted by Meals on Wheels. Showcase the tangible outcomes of your work and how it aligns with the holiday's spirit.

## 5. **Host educational events**

Organize workshops, webinars, or seminars that educate the public about issues related to the holiday. Establish your nonprofit as a thought leader in your field. For example, you can highlight your organization's work in providing nutritious food to families and individuals in need during National Nutrition Month.

## 6. **Empower advocacy**

Encourage supporters to take action in a way that aligns with the holiday's goals. Provide resources and guidance to help them advocate for your cause or relevant social issues.

## 7. Launch targeted fundraising appeals

Clearly articulate how contributions will directly advance your mission in line with the holiday's significance.

## 8. Engage with your community on social media

Share stories, quotes, and visual content that resonate with your audience. Use relevant hashtags and encourage user-generated content to amplify your message.

## 9. Amplify the impact through collaboration

Partner with other nonprofits, community organizations, or local businesses to create a collective impact around the holiday. Joint efforts can expand your reach and engage more supporters.

## 10. Engage your donors

Engage your existing donor base with communications around specific holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, or other significant dates. Use these [important dates](#) as opportunities to express appreciation for their ongoing support and engage them in your mission.

## 11. Introduce unique giving opportunities

Create time-limited giving opportunities, donation matching campaigns, or challenges specifically for the holiday. Encourage your supporters to contribute in celebration or honor of the occasion.

## 12. Follow-up and stewardship

After the holiday, maintain engagement with those who participated in your activities or campaigns. Share updates on the impact of their efforts and contributions. Cultivate these relationships throughout the year.

By following this approach, you can effectively harness the power of holidays and observance days to build a sense of community, foster support, and advance your mission of providing access to nutritious food. Whether it's Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Earth Day, or any other significant date, integrating these strategies into [your annual calendar](#) can help you establish lasting connections with your audience and drive positive change in communities.



# Understanding seasonal impact

Nonprofit organizations experience a distinct rhythm throughout the year, with each season offering a set of challenges and opportunities. Let's look at how you can take advantage of holidays and observance days to navigate these seasonal shifts.



## New Year

Preparing for the year ahead

The new year is the time to build your foundation for the year ahead. It's a month to take stock of your achievements and challenges—past and future—and set the stage for the coming months. By analyzing past performance and acknowledging donors' generosity, you demonstrate transparency and accountability to your constituents.

### JANUARY

#### **Martin Luther King Jr. Day** | Third Monday

This day of service encourages community involvement and altruism, resonating with Meals on Wheels' mission to mobilize people in the fight against hunger.

##### Activities:

- **Day of Service Events:** Organize special volunteer events at local food banks or in communities.
- **MLK Day Educational Campaigns:** Educate the public about the intersection of civil rights and hunger.
- **Community Forums:** Host forums discussing community solutions to hunger.
- **Youth Engagement Programs:** Involve youth in service projects and educational activities related to hunger relief.
- **Social Media Tributes:** Share quotes and messages from Martin Luther King Jr. related to service and fighting hunger.

## National Soup Month | January

National Soup Month offers an opportunity to emphasize warm, nourishing meals, resonating with Meals on Wheels' initiatives to provide food to those in need.

### Activities:

- **"Soup-er Bowl" Fundraiser:** Host an event where local chefs or prominent community members compete to make the best soup, and attendees donate to taste and vote.
- **Soup Can Collection Drive:** Organize drives to collect canned soups, highlighting their importance in food banks.
- **"Soup Day":** Partner with local restaurants for a "Soup Day," where a portion of soup sales goes to Meals on Wheels.
- **Community Soup Kitchen Day:** Partner with local soup kitchens for a day of service, inviting volunteers and raising awareness.
- **Soup Recipe Sharing:** Encourage supporters to share their favorite soup recipes on social media, highlighting the importance of nutritious meals. Link to a donation page.
- **Virtual Soup-Making Class:** Host an online class with a suggested donation, teaching participants to make nutritious soups.
- **Volunteer Event:** Host a soup-making volunteer event, with the prepared soups donated to local shelters.

## National Canned Food Month | January

This is a time to promote the importance of non-perishable food donations in fighting hunger. This month aligns with Meals on Wheels' efforts to stock food banks and pantries.

### Activities:

- **Canned Food Drives:** Host community-wide canned food drives, with collection points at schools, businesses like supermarkets and grocery stores, and other public spaces.
- **Can Art Installation:** Encourage groups to create art or build structures using canned goods, then donate the cans to food banks.
- **Canned Food Awareness Campaign:** Use social media to educate about the importance of canned food donations.
- **Corporate Partnership Drives:** Collaborate with businesses for employee-driven canned food collections.
- **Canned Food Chef Challenge:** Sign up local chefs to create dishes using typical food bank canned goods, promoting the event and cause.
- **Supermarket "Round-up" Campaign:** Coordinate with local supermarkets for a "round-up" campaign, where shoppers round up their bills to the nearest dollar for Meals on Wheels.
- **Education:** Organize educational workshops on the significance of canned food in hunger relief.

## National Poverty Awareness in America Month | January

This month focuses on raising awareness about poverty in America, a key issue directly linked to hunger and food insecurity, which are central concerns of Meals on Wheels.

### Activities:

- **Poverty and Hunger Awareness Campaign:** Use social media, blogs, and public forums to educate about the connections between poverty and hunger.
- **Collaborative Events with Poverty Alleviation Groups:** Partner with organizations focused on poverty reduction for joint events or panels.
- **Fundraising Drives:** Organize donation drives highlighting how contributions specifically aid in alleviating poverty-related hunger.
- **Volunteer Spotlight Stories:** Share stories of volunteers working in communities heavily impacted by poverty.
- **Advocacy Initiatives:** Engage in advocacy efforts to influence policies that address poverty and, consequently, reduce hunger.

## FEBRUARY

### National Pizza Day | February 9

National Pizza Day can be an engaging way for Meals on Wheels to connect with communities, as pizza is a widely loved food. This day can be used to organize fun events that also highlight the importance of food assistance.

### Activities:

- **Pizza Fundraiser with Local Pizzerias:** Partner with local pizza restaurants for a day where a portion of sales is donated to Meals on Wheels.
- **Pizza Making Contest:** Host a contest where participants pay an entry fee to create unique pizzas, with proceeds going to Meals on Wheels.
- **“Slice Out Hunger” Campaign:** Encourage people to donate the cost of a pizza slice or a whole pizza to help those in need.
- **Pizza Party for Volunteers:** Show appreciation for volunteers by hosting a pizza party as a thank you for their hard work.

## Valentine's Day | February 14

Valentine's Day, with its focus on love and caring, aligns with Meals on Wheels' mission by emphasizing the power of compassion and community in addressing hunger. It's an opportune time to encourage people to show love not just to those they care about, but also to those in need in their communities.

### Activities:

- **"Share the Love" Food Drive:** Encourage individuals, schools, and businesses to participate in a Valentine-themed food drive, collecting items most needed by food banks.
- **Valentine's Day Fundraiser Dinner/Gala:** Host a charity dinner or gala event where attendees can celebrate the holiday while supporting Meals on Wheels.
- **"Love Notes" Campaign:** For each donation, offer to send a personalized 'love note' or Valentine card to a person of the donor's choice, spreading both love and awareness.
- **Volunteer Appreciation Event:** Organize a special event or create appreciation packages for volunteers, showing gratitude for their work in the spirit of Valentine's Day.
- **Social Media Challenge:** Start a #ShareTheLove challenge, encouraging people to share stories of how they're helping to fight hunger or to post photos with a Valentine's Day frame, promoting donations to Meals on Wheels.

## National Random Acts of Kindness Day | February 17

This day promotes kindness and selfless acts, aligning with Meals on Wheels' goals by encouraging acts that support those facing hunger.

### Activities:

- **Random Acts of Kindness Challenge:** Encourage supporters to perform and share acts of kindness related to hunger relief.
- **Kindness Cards with Food Donations:** Distribute kindness cards that can be passed along with each food donation.
- **Community Kindness Events:** Host events where participants can engage in various activities supporting local food banks.
- **Social Media Campaigns:** Use social media to highlight stories of kindness related to helping those in need.
- **Partner with Local Businesses:** Collaborate with businesses to donate a portion of their sales to Meals on Wheels on this day.



## Spring Mobilizing volunteers

Engaging volunteers not only strengthens their connection to your organization but can also lead to increased financial support as they become more deeply invested in the cause. A national study by the [Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund found that volunteers' donations average 10 times that of non-volunteers.](#)

### MARCH

#### International Women's Day | March 8

This day focuses on women's rights and achievements, intersecting with Meals on Wheels' goals by highlighting the impact of hunger on women and families.

##### Activities:

- **Women's Stories Campaign:** Share stories of women who have been helped by Meals on Wheels, or who contribute significantly to its mission.
- **Educational Workshops:** Host workshops focusing on the intersection of women's issues and hunger.
- **Collaboration with Women-Led Organizations:** Partner with women-led businesses or groups for fundraising and awareness events.
- **Volunteer Initiatives Focused on Women:** Engage volunteers in projects that specifically support women and children in need.
- **Special Fundraising Drives:** Organize drives on this day, emphasizing support for women and families struggling with hunger.



## National Agriculture Day | March 19

Use this day to highlight the connection between agriculture and food security, echoing Meals on Wheels' commitment to ensuring access to nutritious food.

### Activities:

- **Farm Visits and Education:** Collaborate with local farms for a "Farm Day," inviting the community to learn about sustainable agriculture and food sourcing.
- **Youth in Agriculture Programs:** Facilitate a school program teaching children about farming and its importance in food production, and encouraging their involvement in agriculture-related volunteer activities.
- **Partner with farmers' markets for fundraising activities.**
- **"Focus on the Farmers" Campaign:** Launch a social media campaign showcasing stories from farmers who contribute to Meals on Wheels.
- **Seed Library Partnership and Exchange Program:** Collaborate with a local seed library to distribute free seeds to community members, along with educational workshops on growing their own food and awareness about sustainable agriculture.
- **Agri-Advocacy Campaigns:** Advocate for policies supporting sustainable farming and food security.
- **Community Gardens:** Initiate or support community gardens, engaging volunteers in growing fresh produce for food banks.
- **"Adopt a Farm" Initiatives:** Partner with farms where a portion of their produce is donated to Meals on Wheels in exchange for volunteer support.

## National Nutrition Month | March

This month emphasizes the importance of proper nutrition, aligning with Meals on Wheels' goal of not only providing food but also ensuring that it's nutritious.

### Activities:

- **Nutritional Education Campaigns:** Run campaigns educating the public on the importance of nutrition in food aid.
- **Healthy Eating Workshops:** Conduct workshops or cooking classes focusing on preparing nutritious meals.
- **Nutrition-Themed Food Drives:** Collect specific nutritious foods requested by food banks.
- **Partnerships with Dieticians and Nutritionists:** Collaborate for expert talks and advice.
- **School-Based Nutrition Programs:** Implement programs in schools to teach children about healthy eating.

## Easter | Late March to mid-April

Easter's themes of renewal and sharing are a good fit for promoting community involvement and support for those in need, aligning with Meals on Wheels' aim to alleviate hunger.

### Activities:

- **Easter Meal Drives:** Organize drives to collect and distribute special Easter meals to families in need.
- **Easter-Themed Fundraising Events:** Host Easter egg hunts or brunches with proceeds benefiting Meals on Wheels.
- **Volunteer Appreciation Events:** Host special events to thank volunteers, tying them to Easter themes of renewal and giving.
- **Faith-Based Community Outreach:** Partner with churches and religious groups for special Easter collections or awareness campaigns.
- **Children's Art and Awareness Project:** Engage children in creating Easter-themed art that promotes awareness about hunger.

## APRIL

### Earth Day | April 22

Earth Day's focus on environmental sustainability intersects with Meals on Wheels' initiatives through the lens of sustainable food practices and reducing food waste.

#### Activities:

- **Sustainable Food Practices Workshops:** Conduct workshops on sustainable farming and reducing food waste.
- **Community Clean-Up and Gardening Events:** Organize local clean-ups and garden plantings to promote environmental and food sustainability.
- **Educational Campaigns on Food Waste:** Highlight the importance of reducing food waste in fighting hunger.
- **Partnerships with Green Organizations:** Collaborate with environmental groups for joint awareness and action campaigns.
- **Eco-Friendly Fundraisers:** Host fundraisers that focus on eco-friendly products or practices.

### Global Youth Service Day | April 26–28

Global Youth Service Day is about engaging youth in service and volunteerism, and mobilizing young volunteers in the fight against hunger.

#### Activities:

- **Youth-Led Food Drives:** Support school-based and community-led collection initiatives.
- **Educational Workshops in Schools:** Host interactive sessions about hunger and food insecurity, and how to help.
- **Youth Ambassador Program:** Create opportunities for youth to serve as advocates for Meals on Wheels.
- **Service Projects at Food Banks:** Organize volunteer days specifically for youth at local food banks or distribution centers.
- **Social Media Takeover by Youth:** Let young volunteers manage social media accounts to raise awareness and share their perspectives on hunger relief.



## MAY

### Mother's Day | Second Sunday in May

Honoring mothers aligns with Meals on Wheels' efforts to support mothers and families facing hunger.

#### Activities:

- **Tribute Donations:** Encourage donations as tributes to mothers, providing food to families in need.
- **Mother's Day Brunch Fundraiser:** Host a brunch event with proceeds going to Meals on Wheels.
- **Stories of Mothers:** Share stories of mothers who have been helped by Meals on Wheels or who volunteer.
- **Mother's Day Volunteer Opportunities:** Offer special volunteer opportunities for families to participate together.
- **Partnership with Women's Groups:** Collaborate with women's organizations for special Mother's Day initiatives.

### World Hunger Day | May 28

This day focuses on sustainable solutions to hunger, aligning closely with Meals on Wheels' mission to alleviate hunger.

#### Activities:

- **Hunger Awareness Virtual Summit:** Host a virtual event or panel discussion on global hunger issues and solutions.
- **Hunger Advocacy Campaigns:** Engage in advocacy efforts urging lawmakers to support hunger relief legislation.
- **Matching Gifts:** Launch a matching gift campaign, where donations are matched by corporate sponsors.
- **Storytelling and Testimonials:** Share real-life stories of those affected by hunger and how Meals on Wheels has helped.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** Collaborate with influencers or public figures for awareness-raising campaigns.
- **Interactive Hunger Map:** Create an online interactive map showing local and global hunger statistics and stories.
- **Community Meal Sharing Event:** Organize events where participants share meals and learn about global and local hunger challenges.



# Summer

## Planning upcoming fundraising

Summer vacation vibes may be in the air, but now's the time to take a [mid-year check-in](#), strategize, and plan your fundraising efforts for the rest of the year.

## JUNE

### National Donut Day | First Friday of June

National Donut Day, a day with a historical connection to charity and helping others, aligns well with Meals on Wheels' mission, offering a platform for both awareness and fundraising.

#### Activities:

- **Donut Sale Partnership:** Collaborate with bakeries and donut shops where a portion of every donut sold is donated.
- **Donut Decorating Event:** Host a donut decorating event for families, with entry fees supporting Meals on Wheels.
- **Corporate Donut Day Sponsorship:** Get corporate sponsors to match donations made on this day.
- **Virtual Donut Day Celebration:** Host an online event or competition for the best homemade donut, with participants donating to join.

### Juneteenth | June 19

Juneteenth, commemorating the end of slavery in the United States, aligns with Meals on Wheels' mission as it underscores the importance of equality and access to resources—including food—for all communities.

#### Activities:

- **Cultural Awareness Events:** Host food drives or a community potluck that celebrates the diversity of African-American culture and cuisine.
- **Educational Events:** Organize events or webinars discussing the historical and current impact of inequality on food security in Black communities and Meals on Wheels' efforts to address it.
- **Community Partnerships:** Collaborate with local Black-owned businesses and organizations for joint fundraising or awareness events.
- **Social Media Campaigns:** Share stories and information highlighting the significance of Juneteenth and its relation to food justice.
- **Volunteer Engagement in Black Communities:** Focus volunteer efforts in predominantly Black communities, addressing specific needs and fostering community ties.

## Father's Day | Third Sunday in June

Father's Day can be used to honor fathers while also drawing attention to the needs of fathers and families struggling with hunger.

### Activities:

- **Father's Day Dedicated Donations:** Invite donations in honor of fathers, aiding families in need.
- **Father-Child Volunteering:** Organize special volunteering opportunities for fathers and their children.
- **Highlight Stories of Fathers:** Share impactful stories of fathers who have benefited from or contributed to Meals on Wheels.
- **Father's Day Fundraising Events:** Host events like BBQs or sports days with proceeds benefiting Meals on Wheels.
- **Corporate Partnerships for Father's Day:** Partner with businesses for special promotions or donation matching on Father's Day.

## National Fresh Fruit and Vegetables Month | June

This month emphasizes healthy eating and access to fresh produce, echoing Meals on Wheels' goals to provide access to fresh, healthy food.

### Activities:

- **Fresh Produce Drives:** Partner with local farms or farmers' markets for fresh produce drives.
- **"Make It Fresh" Classes:** Organize cooking demonstrations or classes focusing on healthy, seasonal, produce-rich recipes.
- **"Veggies To Go" Campaign:** Start a campaign to fundraise for mobile fresh food pantries.
- **"Name that Fruit/Veggie" Workshops:** Collaborate with schools to educate children about nutrition and fresh produce, and learn to identify less common, but delicious produce.
- **Community Salad Day:** Host a community event where participants make salads from donated fresh produce.
- **Gardening Workshops:** Offer workshops on growing vegetables and fruits, even in small spaces.
- **"Adopt a Farm" Initiatives:** Partner with farms where a portion of their produce is donated to Meals on Wheels in exchange for volunteer support.

## JULY

### Independence Day | July 4

Independence Day, a celebration of community and national spirit, resonates with Meals on Wheels' goals by fostering a sense of unity and collective responsibility towards addressing hunger in the nation.

#### Activities:

- **Patriotic Food Drives:** Organize food drives with a patriotic theme, encouraging communities to donate as part of their Independence Day celebrations.
- **4th of July Fundraising Events:** Host themed events like BBQs or concerts, with proceeds going to Meals on Wheels.
- **Social Media Campaign:** Launch a campaign encouraging people to share what independence from hunger means to them.
- **Corporate Partnerships:** Partner with businesses for special 4th of July promotions or donation matching.
- **Community Parades:** Participate in local parades with banners and information about Meals on Wheels' mission.

### World Population Day | July 11

This day focuses attention on issues related to the growing global population, including food security, a core concern of Meals on Wheels.

#### Activities:

- **Volunteer Day:** Encourage volunteerism in local food banks or shelters on this day.
- **Population and Hunger Awareness Campaign:** Use social media and other platforms to educate about the link between population growth and hunger.
- **Panel Discussions and Webinars:** Host events with experts discussing the intersection of population growth and hunger, and finding sustainable solutions to food security in a growing world.
- **Collaborative Community Gardens:** Encourage communities to start or participate in local gardens, emphasizing sustainable food sources.
- **Youth Engagement Programs:** Involve youth in discussions and activities about population and food security.
- **Fundraising Campaigns:** Tie fundraising efforts to the theme of providing food in an ever-growing world.

## National Ice Cream Month | July

National Ice Cream Month can be used by Meals on Wheels to create light-hearted, enjoyable fundraising events that bring communities together, while also drawing attention to the more serious issue of food insecurity.

### Activities:

- **Ice Cream Social Fundraiser:** Host a community ice cream social event where local ice cream shops contribute flavors, and proceeds are donated.
- **“Scoops for Good” Campaign:** Collaborate with ice cream parlors where a portion of every ice cream sold on this day goes to Meals on Wheels.
- **DIY Ice Cream Making Contest:** Invite participants to create their own ice cream flavors at home and share on social media, encouraging donations.
- **Ice Cream Tasting Event:** Organize an ice cream tasting event with tickets sold for the benefit of Meals on Wheels.
- **Educational Campaign:** Pair the event with an educational campaign about the importance of balanced nutrition and how Meals on Wheels helps provide a variety of foods to those in need.

## National Culinary Arts Month | July

This month celebrates the art of cooking and can be used to emphasize the importance of nutritious and well-prepared meals, a vital part of Meals on Wheels’ goal to end hunger.

### Activities:

- **Chef-Led Cooking Demonstrations:** Host events with local chefs demonstrating how to prepare nutritious meals using common food pantry items.
- **Culinary Arts Fundraiser:** Collaborate with culinary schools or chefs for fundraising events like tastings or cooking classes.
- **Recipe Contests:** Encourage supporters to submit recipes that use ingredients commonly found in food banks.
- **Restaurant Partnerships:** Partner with restaurants to donate a portion of their proceeds to Meals on Wheels.
- **Social Media Campaign:** Share cooking tips and easy recipes, highlighting the role of good nutrition in combating hunger.

## AUGUST

### International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples | August 9

This day highlights the unique challenges faced by indigenous peoples, including food insecurity, aligning with Meals on Wheels' goals to combat hunger.

#### Activities:

- **Storytelling Initiatives:** Highlight stories of indigenous peoples benefiting from or contributing to Meals on Wheels.
- **Cultural Awareness Events:** Organize events to celebrate indigenous cultures and raise awareness about their food security challenges.
- **Indigenous Peoples' Food Drives:** Focus on collecting and distributing food in regions predominantly inhabited by indigenous populations.
- **Educational Campaigns:** Create educational content that helps to promote understanding of the unique challenges faced by indigenous communities in accessing nutritious food.
- **Volunteer Outreach:** Encourage volunteerism in projects directly assisting indigenous communities.
- **Partnerships with Indigenous Leaders:** Collaborate with indigenous leaders to better address community-specific food needs.

### International Youth Day | August 12

This day focuses on youth engagement, resonating with Meals on Wheels' goals to involve younger generations in the fight against hunger.

#### Activities:

- **Youth-Led Initiatives:** Support youth in organizing their own food drives or awareness campaigns.
- **Educational Workshops:** Host workshops in schools or youth clubs about hunger and how youth can make a difference.
- **Social Media Takeover by Youth:** Let young volunteers manage Meals on Wheels' social media for a day, sharing their perspectives and ideas.
- **Youth Ambassador Program:** Create a program for youth to become ambassadors for Meals on Wheels in their communities.
- **Volunteer Opportunities for Youth:** Offer special volunteering opportunities at local food banks specifically for young people.

## National Wellness Month | August

National Wellness Month focuses on self-care, health, and wellness, aligning with Meals on Wheels' mission to provide access to nutritious food and promote overall well-being.

### Activities:

- **Wellness Workshops:** Organize workshops focusing on nutrition and healthy eating, especially using food bank resources.
- **Wellness Challenges:** Host a challenge encouraging healthy habits, with participants fundraising for Meals on Wheels.
- **Partnerships with Health and Wellness Brands:** Collaborate with wellness brands for promotions that benefit Meals on Wheels.
- **Educational Campaigns:** Use social media and other platforms to share information on nutrition and wellness, tying it to hunger relief.
- **Employee Wellness Programs:** Work with corporations to include food drives and donations to Meals on Wheels as part of their wellness programs.





# Autumn

Priming for end-of-year giving

Fall ushers in a season of giving as nonprofits encourage their supporters to make end-of-year contributions to finish the year on a solid financial note.

## AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER

### Back to School

The back-to-school period is an opportunity to emphasize the importance of proper nutrition for learning and development, aligning with Meals on Wheels' work in providing food for children and families.

Activities:

- **School Supply and Food Drives:** Coordinate drives in schools to collect both food and school supplies for children in need.
- **Educational Programs:** Implement programs in schools to educate children and families about nutrition and food security.
- **Back-to-School Breakfast Events:** Host breakfast events in communities, raising awareness about child hunger.
- **Partnerships with Educational Institutions:** Collaborate with schools and colleges for ongoing food collection and volunteer programs.
- **Social Media Back-to-School Campaign:** Share stories and statistics about the impact of hunger on education and child development.

## SEPTEMBER

### Labor Day | First Monday in September

Labor Day, honoring the contributions of workers, aligns with Meals on Wheels' mission by highlighting the issue of working families still struggling with food insecurity.

Activities:

- **Labor Day Food Drives:** Organize food drives in workplaces, emphasizing support for working families.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** Use the day to educate about the challenges faced by working individuals and families in accessing sufficient food.
- **Community Picnics or Events:** Host events celebrating workers and their families, incorporating fundraising for Meals on Wheels.
- **Corporate Engagement:** Encourage businesses to support Meals on Wheels through donations or volunteer initiatives as part of their Labor Day activities.
- **Volunteer Recognition:** Acknowledge the contributions of volunteers who are part of the workforce, tying it to the spirit of Labor Day.

## National Pancake Day | September 26

National Pancake Day can be a delightful way for Meals on Wheels to raise awareness about hunger issues while engaging the community in a fun, family-friendly event.

### Activities:

- **Community Pancake Breakfast:** Host a pancake breakfast event in the community with donations supporting Meals on Wheels.
- **Pancake Art Contest:** Organize a creative pancake-making contest, encouraging participants to donate and showcase their culinary art skills.
- **Corporate Pancake Day Challenge:** Engage local businesses in a challenge to create the best pancake, with employees donating to participate.
- **Social Media “Flip for Hunger” Challenge:** Start a social media challenge where for every pancake flip video posted, a small donation is made.

## Hunger Action Month | September

Hunger Action Month is dedicated to fighting hunger across the country, directly aligning with Meals on Wheels’ core goals.

### Activities:

- **“30 Days of Action” Calendar:** Create a calendar of daily actions individuals can take to fight hunger, from donating to volunteering.
- **Corporate Challenges:** Engage businesses in challenges to raise funds or collect food donations throughout the month.
- **Hunger Action Day Events:** Host special events or initiatives on Hunger Action Day to mobilize communities.
- **Community Hunger Forums:** Host forums or discussions about local hunger issues and how communities can respond.
- **Advocacy Campaigns:** Encourage supporters to advocate for policies and programs that address hunger and its root causes.

## OCTOBER

### National Taco Day | October 4

National Taco Day can be a fun and engaging way to bring people together and raise funds. Tacos are popular and versatile, making them an excellent focus for community events.

### Activities:

- **Taco Truck Rally:** Organize a taco truck rally with a portion of proceeds going to Meals on Wheels.
- **Taco Day Cook-Off:** Invite local chefs or cooking enthusiasts to a cook-off, with attendees donating to taste and vote for their favorites.
- **Build-Your-Own Taco Night:** Host a community event where people pay to build their own tacos, with all proceeds benefiting Meals on Wheels.
- **“Taco ‘bout Giving Back” Social Media Campaign:** Use social media to encourage donations, sharing taco recipes, photos, and hunger awareness messages.

## National School Lunch Week | Second week in October

National School Lunch Week emphasizes the importance of healthy school lunches for children, a cause closely related to Meals on Wheels' focus on combating child hunger and promoting nutrition.

### Activities:

- **School-Based Campaigns:** Work with schools to raise awareness about child hunger and the importance of nutritious school lunches.
- **Educational Workshops for Parents and Students:** Host workshops on nutrition, healthy eating, and the role of school meals in child development.
- **Partnerships with School Districts:** Collaborate on initiatives to improve and fund school lunch programs.
- **Social Media Awareness Drive:** Use platforms to share facts and stories about the impact of school lunches on child health and learning.
- **Fundraisers:** Organize fundraising events specifically aimed at supporting school lunch programs in low-income areas.

## World Food Day | October 16

World Food Day promotes global awareness and action for those who suffer from hunger, perfectly aligning with Meals on Wheels' goals.

### Activities:

- **Community Meal Packaging:** Organize a global meal packaging event, involving multiple communities.
- **International Cuisine Event:** Host a "World Food Fair," showcasing cuisines from around the world and raising funds for global hunger relief.
- **Educational Campaigns:** Launch an educational campaign about global hunger issues and solutions.
- **Community Engagement:** Facilitate food donation drives in partnership with international organizations.
- **Advocacy for Policy Change:** Advocate for policies that promote global food security.
- **Global Hunger Awareness Events:** Organize events and workshops to educate about global hunger issues.
- **Social Media Campaigns:** Leverage social media to share facts, stories, and call-to-actions related to world hunger.
- **School Outreach Programs:** Engage schools in awareness and fundraising activities.
- **Corporate Partnership Initiatives:** Partner with corporations for matching donation campaigns or awareness events.

## International Day for the Eradication of Poverty | October 17

This day aligns with Meals on Wheels' goals by emphasizing the broader issue of poverty and its link to hunger.

### Activities:

- **Hunger Awareness Summit:** Host a conference or panel discussion on poverty and food insecurity.
- **"Full Circle Care" Drive:** Launch a donation drive focused on providing comprehensive support beyond food.
- **Poverty and Hunger Education Campaigns:** Educate the public about the interconnection between poverty and hunger.
- **Community Engagement Events:** Host events focused on understanding and alleviating poverty, including food drives and fundraisers.
- **Advocacy for Policy Change:** Advocate for policies that address poverty and, by extension, reduce hunger.
- **Collaborative Projects with Other NGOs:** Partner with organizations focused on poverty reduction.
- **Storytelling Initiative:** Share stories of individuals who have overcome poverty with the help of Meals on Wheels.

## Halloween | October 31

Halloween, a time for community and fun, can be used to engage people in the fight against hunger in a creative and enjoyable way.

### Activities:

- **Trick-or-Treat for Canned Goods:** Encourage children to collect canned goods along with candy.
- **Halloween-Themed Food Drives:** Organize food drives with a Halloween theme, encouraging participants to donate while in costume.
- **Halloween Fundraising Parties:** Host Halloween parties or events where entry fees or a portion of sales go to Meals on Wheels.
- **Costume Contests for a Cause:** Organize costume contests with entry fees or donations going to Meals on Wheels.
- **Pumpkin Carving Contest:** Host a contest with an entry fee, with all proceeds supporting Meals on Wheels' mission.



## Year-End

Hosting gala and fundraising events

The **year-end** is often a festive time in the nonprofit world. Galas, fundraising dinners, or themed parties generate excitement and funds. Significant funds. Year-end giving accounts for a substantial portion of nonprofit revenue, often exceeding 30% of total donations.

### NOVEMBER

#### International Volunteer Managers Day | November 5

International Volunteer Managers Day, dedicated to recognizing the hard work and dedication of volunteer managers, offers an opportunity to emphasize the crucial role these individuals play in coordinating efforts to combat hunger.

##### Activities:

- **Appreciation Events for Volunteer Managers:** Host special events or gatherings to recognize and celebrate the contributions of volunteer managers.
- **Highlight Stories of Volunteer Managers:** Share stories and testimonials on social media and other platforms about the impact volunteer managers have in the fight against hunger.
- **Professional Development Workshops:** Offer workshops or training sessions for volunteer managers to enhance their skills and knowledge.
- **Volunteer Manager Awards:** Create an award program to honor outstanding volunteer managers within the Meals on Wheels network.
- **Peer-to-Peer Learning Sessions:** Facilitate sessions where volunteer managers can share best practices, challenges, and solutions, fostering a sense of community and collaboration.



## Veterans Day | November 11

Veterans Day, a time to honor military service members, aligns with Meals on Wheels' mission by acknowledging the food insecurity issues faced by many veterans.

### Activities:

- **Veterans Food Drive:** Organize a food drive specifically to support veterans facing hunger.
- **Fundraising Campaign for Veteran Families:** Launch a campaign focused on providing food assistance to veterans and their families.
- **Awareness Events:** Host events or webinars discussing the challenges of food insecurity among veterans.
- **Partnerships with Veterans' Organizations:** Collaborate with organizations serving veterans to amplify impact.
- **Volunteer Opportunities at Veterans' Shelters:** Organize special volunteer activities at shelters or centers dedicated to veterans.

## World Kindness Day | November 13

World Kindness Day encourages acts of kindness, a concept that aligns with Meals on Wheels' work in community support and helping those in need.

### Activities:

- **Kindness Food Drive:** Encourage individuals and groups to participate in food drives as an act of kindness.
- **Social Media Kindness Challenge:** Launch a challenge encouraging followers to perform and share acts of kindness related to hunger relief.
- **Kindness Stories Campaign:** Share stories of kindness from donors, volunteers, and beneficiaries.
- **Community Kindness Events:** Host events promoting kindness and supporting local food banks.
- **Kindness Ambassador Program:** Recognize volunteers who go above and beyond in their service and kindness.

## Universal Children's Day | November 20

This day focuses on promoting children's welfare, echoing Meals on Wheels' efforts to combat childhood hunger and ensure that all children have access to nutritious food.

### Activities:

- **Children's Art and Awareness Campaign:** Engage children in creating art that raises awareness about hunger and its impact on children.
- **School-Based Food Drives:** Collaborate with schools to organize food drives and educational activities.
- **Children's Nutrition Workshops:** Host workshops on healthy eating and nutrition, tailored for children.
- **Youth Volunteer Day:** Organize a special day of volunteering for children and teens at local food banks.
- **Fundraising Initiatives in Schools:** Encourage schools to participate in fundraising activities, like read-a-thons or sports events, to benefit Meals on Wheels.

## National Family Week | Fourth Week in November

National Family Week emphasizes the importance of family support and togetherness, resonating with Meals on Wheels' goal of ensuring food security for families across the nation.

### Activities:

- **Family Volunteer Day:** Create opportunities for entire families to volunteer together at local food banks or in community food drives.
- **Family Stories Sharing:** Highlight stories of families who have been helped by Meals on Wheels, as well as those who contribute as volunteers.
- **Community Family Events:** Host community events like picnics or fairs, with activities for all ages, focused on raising awareness and funds.
- **"Adopt a Family" Program:** Encourage donors to support specific families in need during this week.
- **Educational Content for Families:** Provide resources and activities that families can do together to learn about hunger and how to help.

## Thanksgiving | Fourth Thursday in November

Thanksgiving, centered on gratitude and sharing meals, is intrinsically linked to Meals on Wheels' work in addressing hunger and food scarcity.

### Activities:

- **Thanksgiving Meal Drives:** Organize drives to collect and distribute Thanksgiving meals to those in need.
- **"Thankful for Giving" Campaign:** Encourage people to donate as a way of giving thanks for their own blessings.
- **Volunteer Appreciation Events:** Host special events to thank volunteers who contribute their time around Thanksgiving.
- **Community Thanksgiving Dinners:** Organize community dinners, especially for those who might otherwise be alone or without a meal.
- **Corporate Partnership Drives:** Partner with businesses for Thanksgiving-themed fundraising and food collection drives.

## GivingTuesday | Tuesday following Thanksgiving

GivingTuesday, a [global day of giving](#), resonates with Meals on Wheels' work to encourage generosity and support for those in need of food assistance.

### Activities:

- **Online Fundraising Campaign:** Maximize online giving with a targeted, compelling GivingTuesday campaign.
- **Matching Gift Initiatives:** Collaborate with corporate sponsors to match donations made on GivingTuesday.
- **Social Media Blitz:** Use social media to amplify GivingTuesday efforts, sharing stories, goals, and live updates.
- **Community Giving Events:** Host local events encouraging community members to donate and volunteer.
- **Engagement with Influencers and Celebrities:** Leverage public figures to promote the campaign and encourage donations.

## DECEMBER

### Human Rights Day | December 10

Human Rights Day focuses on the fundamental rights of individuals, aligning with Meals on Wheels' mission to ensure the basic human right to adequate food and nutrition.

#### Activities:

- **Human Rights and Hunger Awareness Campaign:** Use this day to educate the public about the right to food and the issues of hunger and food insecurity.
- **Collaborative Forums:** Host forums or panel discussions with human rights organizations on the intersection of human rights and hunger.
- **Advocacy for Food Security Policies:** Advocate for policies that promote food security as a basic human right.
- **Storytelling and Testimonials:** Share stories of individuals whose right to food has been supported by Meals on Wheels' efforts.
- **Community Engagement Events:** Organize events that bring together diverse community members to discuss and act on human rights and hunger issues.

### Holiday Season

The holiday season, a time of generosity and goodwill, provides an ideal backdrop for Meals on Wheels' initiatives to support those facing hunger, encouraging the spirit of giving to extend to those in need.

#### Activities:

- **Holiday Food Drives:** Organize special holiday-themed food drives in communities and schools.
- **Holiday Fundraising Events:** Host galas, concerts, or other events where holiday spirit and fundraising go hand in hand.
- **"Adopt a Family" for the Holidays:** Create opportunities for donors to provide a Christmas meal or hamper to a family in need.
- **Volunteer Appreciation during the Holidays:** Show appreciation for volunteers with special events or tokens of thanks.
- **Holiday Storytelling Campaign:** Share heartwarming stories of those helped during the holiday season, encouraging empathy and donations.

## OTHER YEAR-END IDEAS

### Gratitude Campaign for Donors and Volunteers

This campaign aligns with Meals on Wheels' mission by acknowledging and thanking the individuals and groups whose generosity and effort make a significant impact in the fight against hunger, fostering a sense of community and continued support.

#### Activities:

- **Personalized Thank You Videos:** Create and send personalized thank you videos from board members and staff to donors and volunteers.
- **End of Year Impact Report:** Share a detailed report highlighting the year's achievements, directly attributing successes to the support of donors and volunteers.
- **Social Media Appreciation Posts:** Regularly feature donors and volunteers on social media, sharing their stories and contributions.
- **Appreciation Event:** Host a virtual or in-person event exclusively to celebrate and thank volunteers and donors.
- **Recognition Certificates or Awards:** Send out certificates or awards to recognize the exceptional contributions of certain individuals or groups.

### Sharing Heartwarming Stories from Constituents to Raise Awareness

Sharing personal, impactful stories from those who have been helped by Meals on Wheels connects emotionally with the audience, raising awareness about the realities of hunger and the difference that support can make.

#### Activities:

- **Storytelling Video Series:** Produce a series of videos featuring stories from individuals and families who have benefited from Meals on Wheels' services.
- **Written Testimonials on Website and Newsletters:** Regularly publish written stories and testimonials in newsletters and on the organization's website.
- **Story-Sharing Social Media Campaign:** Initiate a campaign encouraging followers to share their own experiences with hunger or how Meals on Wheels has impacted them, using a specific hashtag.
- **Community Storytelling Events:** Host live events, virtual or in-person, where beneficiaries share their stories with the community.
- **Collaboration with Local Media:** Partner with local newspapers, radio stations, and TV channels to feature these stories, reaching a broader audience.

# Special Events

Each of these special events is designed to not only raise funds and awareness for Meals on Wheels but also to engage and unite the community around the shared goal of ending hunger.

## “Dancing for Dining” Event during National Culinary Arts Month

“Dancing for Dining” could be a signature event for Meals on Wheels during National Culinary Arts Month, merging the excitement and glamor of a dance competition with the theme of culinary arts. This event can raise awareness about hunger issues while also celebrating food and culture.

### Activities:

- **Celebrity and Chef Pairings:** Local chefs could be paired with local celebrities or community leaders for a dance competition, mirroring the “Dancing with the Stars” format. These chefs, often celebrated for their culinary skills, would step out of their kitchens and onto the dance floor, offering a unique entertainment angle.
- **Food-Themed Dance Routines:** Each dance routine could be inspired by different culinary themes or famous dishes, adding a creative twist that ties back to the culinary arts.
- **Judging Panel:** Include well-known figures from the culinary world and local celebrities on the judging panel to add prestige and draw public interest.
- **Audience Participation:** Audience members could vote for their favorite pairs, either through donations, for example each dollar equals one vote, or via a voting system on a dedicated event app or website.
- **Gala Dinner:** The event could also feature a gala dinner, with each course prepared by the participating chefs, turning the event into a full culinary experience.
- **Live and Silent Auctions:** Incorporate auctions featuring culinary experiences, such as private dinners, cooking classes, or gourmet food baskets, to raise additional funds.
- **Media Coverage and Live Streaming:** Ensure the event is covered by local media and consider live streaming to reach a wider audience, encouraging online donations.

## “Harvest of Hope” Farm-to-Table Dinner Event

“Harvest of Hope” is a farm-to-table dinner event that celebrates local agriculture while highlighting the issue of food insecurity.

### Activities:

- **Venue:** Host at a local farm or community garden, offering a rustic and authentic dining experience.
- **Menu:** Collaborate with local chefs to prepare meals using only locally sourced ingredients.
- **Educational Aspect:** Include talks or demonstrations on sustainable farming and its impact on food security.
- **Entertainment:** Work with local musicians or bands to provide a serene ambiance.
- **Fundraising:** Conduct a live auction featuring items like farm experiences, cooking classes, or gourmet baskets.
- **Engagement:** Invite local farmers to speak about their experiences, connecting guests directly with the source of their food.

## “Stride Against Hunger” Hunger Awareness Walk/Run

“Stride Against Hunger” is a charity walk/run event, combining physical activity with the goal of raising awareness and funds for hunger relief.

### Activities:

- **Route:** Plan a scenic route that starts and ends at a central community location. Potentially plan a one-mile walk.
- **Theming:** Create specific milestones along the route, each representing a different aspect of Meals on Wheels’ work.
- **Community Involvement:** Encourage schools, businesses, and local organizations to form teams to participate.
- **Post-Event Activities:** Host a small fair at the finish line with food stands, entertainment, and information booths.
- **Virtual Participation:** Offer a virtual run option, allowing people from anywhere to join in and support the cause.

## “Pantry Chef Challenge” Interactive Cooking Challenge

The “Pantry Chef Challenge” pits teams against each other in a cooking competition using typical food pantry items, emphasizing resourceful and nutritious cooking.

### Activities:

- **Team Formation:** Open for local businesses, schools, and community groups to form teams.
- **Mystery Ingredients:** Each team receives a box of random pantry items to create their dishes.
- **Celebrity Judges:** Involve local culinary experts or chefs to judge the dishes.
- **Cooking Demos:** Have chefs demonstrate how to make nutritious meals with simple ingredients.
- **Fundraising:** Sell tickets for the event and offer additional donations for audience members to taste and vote on their favorite dishes.

## “Bowls of Compassion” Empty Bowls Fundraiser

“Bowls of Compassion” is an event where attendees purchase handmade bowls as a symbol of all the empty bowls in the world, with a focus on community artistry and hunger awareness.

### Activities:

- **Artisan Bowl Creation:** Collaborate with local potters, artists, and schools to create unique bowls.
- **Simple Meal Offering:** Serve a modest meal of soup and bread to highlight the simplicity and necessity of food.
- **Artistic Showcase:** Display and sell additional artworks or crafts related to the theme.
- **Community Stories:** Share stories from individuals who have benefited from Meals on Wheels.
- **Interactive Activities:** Include workshops or live art demonstrations.

## “Melodies for Meals” Charity Concert or Talent Show

“Melodies for Meals” is a charity concert or talent show featuring local artists and performers, using the universal language of music to unite people in the fight against hunger.

### Activities:

- **Local Talent Lineup:** Showcase a variety of local artists, bands, and performers.
- **Themed Performances:** Encourage performances that speak to themes of community, support, and hope.
- **Audience Engagement:** Interactive segments like sing-alongs or dance-offs.
- **Raffles and Merchandise:** Sell event-themed merchandise and raffle tickets for prizes.
- **Community Choir or Group Performance:** Involve a local choir or community group for a special performance, symbolizing unity and collective action.



## “Canvas Against Hunger” Art Against Hunger Exhibition

“Canvas Against Hunger” is an art exhibition where artists and community members showcase works themed around food and hunger, inspiring action through visual storytelling.

### Activities:

- **Artwork Submission and Display:** Open calls for artwork submissions from local artists, schools, and community members.
- **Auction Component:** Silent auction for the displayed art pieces.
- **Artist Talks and Workshops:** Set up sessions where artists discuss the inspiration behind their works and the role of art in social change.
- **Interactive Installations:** Create immersive art installations that convey messages about hunger and community support.
- **Collaboration with Art Schools:** Involve local art students in creating and exhibiting their work, fostering community involvement.

By tailoring your activities to each holiday's theme and purpose, your Meals on Wheels affiliate can effectively engage the community, raise awareness, boost fundraising efforts, and show genuine appreciation for their dedicated volunteers and supporters.



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