

# **Organizing a Scouting for Food Drive in a Rural Area**

**Robert D. Wright**

**rayadorob@yahoo.com**

**Assistant District Commissioner**

**Scouting for Food, Chair**

**Brazos Valley District, Longhorn Council**

**College of Commissioner Science**

**Doctoral Project**

**August 5, 2017**

## Table of Contents

Table of Contents .....	2
Organizing a Scouting for Food Drive in a Rural Area .....	4
Introduction .....	4
Objectives .....	5
Planning the Scouting for Food Drive .....	7
Planting Seeds .....	7
Gathering Useful Information .....	10
Table 1. Unit collection and delivery information .....	12
Promoting the Drive .....	13
Figure 1. Scouting for Food message .....	14
Collection Results .....	16
Table 2. Unit collections .....	17
Findings and Recommendations .....	18
Contacting Unit leaders .....	19
Local media .....	20
Local newspapers .....	21
Radio, cable, television, and internet .....	22
Working with food pantries .....	22
Changes in Unit Leadership .....	23
Food Drive Organizers .....	24
Conclusion .....	25
References .....	27
Appendices .....	29

Appendix A. Unit Information Form ..... 30

Appendix B. Public service announcement emailed to the  
Azle News, Weatherford Democrat, the Springtown Epigraph  
News, and the Community News (Parker County) ..... 32

Appendix C. Email from Troop 109 ..... 34

# Organizing a Scouting for Food Drive in a Rural Area

## Introduction

This project details how to plan for and implement a Scouting for Food Drive in a rural area. Rural areas and rural-area units present several challenges as:

- rural areas consist of smaller populations than urban areas (Texas Demographic Center, 2016; Texas Health and Human Services, 2014).
- rural units serve less-dense populations; residences are farther apart (Boy Scouts of America, 2011).
- some rural residents perceive scouting as primarily an urban or metropolitan program (Boy Scouts of America, 2011).
- rural units are sometimes unresponsive to traditional scouting methods (U.S. Scouting Service Project, 2017).
- rural scouts and scouters can be indifferent to Council programs and are not properly supported by the Council or the District (Boy Scouts of America, 2009).

While this project could support all units in the Brazos Valley District, it focused on eastern Parker County, primarily the cities of Aledo and Weatherford. I served as unit commissioner to five units in the area and had a good relationship with all. I also enjoyed a good relationship with some of the larger Weatherford units. This project centered on the following units:

- Pack 109, Aledo, TX
- Pack 270, Hudson Oaks, TX
- Pack 375, Weatherford, TX
- Troop 76, Weatherford, TX
- Troop 109, Aledo, TX

## **Objectives**

This project's objectives were to:

- provide units with information on how to conduct a Scouting for Food drive.

- demonstrate how the district can coordinate unit efforts to avoid duplication and conflict.
- supply resources for community, district- and unit-level promotion of the drive.
- provide advance promotion of the 2017 Scouting for Food drive; the materials can easily be updated for use in subsequent years.
- develop processes and forms for reporting collection efforts.

This report covers the planning, implementation, collection, delivery, and recording processes involved in the Scouting for Food drive. While the project focused on eastern Parker County units, the information presented was developed to allow for adaptation by other rural-area units within the Brazos Valley District and beyond.

## **Planning the Scouting for Food Drive**

### **Planting Seeds**

Shortly after a nearly-non-existent Scouting for Food drive in 2016, I volunteered to chair the 2017 drive. I had done this years earlier while serving as district commissioner, and saw that district interest and direction had waned as I became occupied with other life and scouting activities.

Volunteering for any long-term responsibility in Scouting is usually met with little resistance when the volunteer is qualified. Some rural districts are heavily reliant on one individual to organize activities (NetCommissioner, 2011). Volunteering to lead an activity frees the district leadership from having to convince other district- or unit-level volunteers to get on board. I presented my motion to serve to the Brazos Valley District Committee in June of 2017 and to the commissioner staff in July. Both groups expressed their support for the idea.

However, top-down support is only the beginning. Interest and support at the unit level must be initiated and cultivated.

Rather than bombard units with information at the outset, it is best to provide a tickler, months in advance. A brief presentation was made at the August 2016 roundtable, with just enough information to inform unit leaders that they would be supplied with sufficient support to conduct their individual collection drives. The presentation was well-received; several unit leaders had questions both during and after the presentation. This was the ideal situation: them asking for more information, rather than them waiting for the plea for participation to end.

This underscores a very important point in a project. Providing sufficient support to unit leaders frees them from having to do a lot of the planning. Letting scouters know that their responsibility lies in having to take little action before the two Saturday mornings in February (that happen to be in the somewhat-distant future) can soften resistance, promote acceptance of the idea, and facilitate participation in the event.

At the September roundtable, a brief announcement was made concerning the need for unit contact information, and whatever additional information that could be provided:

- Locations of past Scouting for Food collection efforts
  - This could be in the form of a map, or an explanation of the north, south, east, and west boundary streets.
- Past beneficiaries of their Scouting for Food drives
- Contact information for the beneficiaries (if available)
- Past collection results (if available). Such figures would assist the assessment of this year's efforts.
  - Number of items collected
  - Number of service hours worked
- Media outlet information (if available). This would facilitate promotion of this year's Scouting for Food drive
  - Local newspapers
  - Community magazines
  - Radio

Roundtable attendees were told that all information would be helpful; but it was realized that they might not be able to provide everything that was requested. If the collection areas were not identified by the units, decisions would be made at a meeting of the unit commissioners. They were also told that a Unit Information Form would be sent to enable them to report the information. Unit Leaders were instructed to tell their scouting families to save at least 25 plastic shopping bags for each scout, in the months leading up to the collection date, in preparation for the drive. Storage of these bags would not pose a problem for most households; and the use of recycled bags would not only make it unnecessary for units to ask local retailers for donated bags or to buy bags, it would also be ecologically friendly.

### **Gathering Useful Information**

In early October, an electronic copy of a Unit Information Form (see Appendix A) was emailed to unit leaders. They were asked to either fill out the electronic form and return it to via email,

or to complete a printout of the form and bring it to the October roundtable.

Four units responded to the request for unit information:

- Pack 109, Aledo, TX
- Pack 270, Hudson Oaks, TX
- Troop 109, Aledo, TX
- Troop 303, Springtown, TX

Other units that later responded via email or personal contact included Pack 76 and Troop 75, both of Weatherford, TX.

None of the returned forms contained geographical information regarding collection areas. This limited planning efforts, as the lack of information made it impossible to create a unit-defined collection map that identified areas covered by current efforts. Such a map would not only help to avoid conflicts in multi-unit communities; it would also identify potential target neighborhoods and communities that were not being covered. This information would be useful for new units that formed in the

future. However, apart from Pack 270, these were long-established units with histories of collecting near their charter organizations; working through the unit commissioners in the District, it was verified that there was no conflicting overlap in collection areas.

Information that was received was reviewed and assembled (see Table 1). While the information collected was less than complete, it did offer a clear picture of the collections planned by the participating units.

Table 1

*Unit collection and delivery information*

Unit	Distribution & Collection Dates	Beneficiary
Pack 76	February 4 & 11, 2017	Manna Warehouse, Weatherford
Pack 109	February 4 & 11, 2017	Manna Room, Aledo
Pack 270	February 18 & 25, 2017	Center of Hope, Weatherford

Troop 75	February 4 & 11, 2017	Manna Warehouse, Weatherford
Troop 109	February 4 & 11, 2017	Manna Room, Aledo
Troop 303	February 4 & 11, 2017	Neighbor to Neighbor, Springtown

### **Promoting the drive**

In mid-October, I contacted Mr. John Long, supervisor of the Manna Warehouse food pantry to confirm interest in being the recipient of the Scouts' collection efforts, and to arrange delivery times for units to drop off their collections on the second Saturday in February. Traditionally, Manna Warehouse was very enthusiastic in their support of the drive, as the Christmas-season food donations were usually exhausted by February; this year was no exception. We agreed on a drop-off window of 10 am to noon on February 11, 2017.

At the January 2017 roundtable, scouters were given printed samples of the collection paperwork and support materials for the Scouting for Food drive. These included a Unit Reporting Form

(see Appendix A) and a one-up (see Figure 1) Scouting for Food message to be duplicated and inserted in the plastic bags distributed by the scouts.



*Figure 1.* Scouting for Food message.

Alternatives to the traditional food drive were also suggested. These consisted of:

- promoting the drive within the charter organizations (all churches) by setting up collection bins at the charter

organization at least two weeks in advance of the collection date and informing the congregation, through announcements at the services and within newsletters, of the food collection efforts; and

- contacting local retail grocers to receive permission to set up a collection bin in their stores; again, at least two weeks in advance of the collection date.

Also at the January roundtable, I discussed the drive with the cubmaster of Pack 270. He was due to step down in February, as his Webelo son was supposed to move up to a local Boy Scout troop. He did not foresee any problem with the pack conducting the Scouting for Food drive.

At the end of the month, unit leaders were sent electronic copies of the materials sampled at roundtable, along with sheets with two-up and four-up copies of the Scouting for Food message. These were to be duplicated and inserted into the collection bags.

Naturally, community engagement with the food drive is critical. To increase community participation in the Scouting for Food drive, it is helpful to provide information concerning the drive, in advance, to the public. This can be done from both the district and unit levels. On January 24, 2017, background information and sample public service announcements were sent to local newspapers in Aledo, Azle, Weatherford, and Springtown (see Appendix B). In addition, one of the units provided radio station QXFM 89.5 FM, in Weatherford, with the public service announcement information.

### **Collection Results**

Half of the units' Scouting for Food drives were held as planned. Their reported collections appear in Table 2.

Table 2

*Unit collections*

Unit	Item Count	Monetary Donation
Pack 76	115	\$30.00
Troop 75	196	\$20.00
Troop 303	461	--

However, there were notable exceptions. Due to a change in Key 3 leadership, Pack 270 did not hold a Scouting for Food Drive. Pack 109 elected to have their families collect food, rather than canvas the community as a group, and bring it to their charter organization on the second Saturday (February 11). Troop 109 planned to do the traditional collection in the community. However, they were informed by Manna Room that the pantry was full and could not accept any more donations from either the troop or the pack. I suggested that they bring their donations to Manna Warehouse in Weatherford. But, they opted to postpone

their food drive (see Appendix C). Pack 109 successfully rescheduled their collection for May and collected 302 items for Center of Hope in Weatherford; Troop 109 will hold their drive in the Fall. Total collections, as of this writing, was 1073 items.

### **Findings and Recommendations**

The collected items benefitted the recipient pantries. However, as one of the largest districts in the Longhorn Council (Brazos Valley District, no date), Brazos Valley should be able to generate a greater response from the troops and packs. The benefit of this project was not in the results, but in the lessons learned from its shortcomings. While the basic processes were sound, they proved to be limited in scope and implementation. Greater efforts with unit leaders, unit commissioners, area media outlets, and local pantries are required for future Scouting for Food drives to be deemed successful. These efforts are detailed below.

## **Contacting Unit Leaders**

Initial contacts are critical. Presenting to scout leaders at roundtable early in the scouting year (August) is important as a starting point. It is an opportunity to invite scouters to participate in the overall planning and organization of the drive, as well as to generate unit leaders' interest in having their pack or troop take part in the drive. It is also a good opportunity to discover if any scouter has an existing relationship with area newspapers or radio stations. But, the real value to the early start is that it provides additional time for the critical, and repeated, face-to-face unit-level meetings to take place afterwards. The lack of these personal meetings at the unit level severely impacted the final results.

Face-to-face encounters are more personal in nature than roundtable presentations, email or phone calls, and are more likely to promote engagement and interest; while later contact can be made through phone calls and emails, subsequent face-to-face visits should also be made to provide information and

support materials to the units, to assist the units in identifying collection areas, to collect information from the units regarding beneficiary pantries' contact information, to follow up with units who do not respond to initial requests for information, and, if needed, to verify with unit leaders that the pack or troop will not be participating.

## **Local Media**

Rural areas are not served by multiple newspapers, radio, and television stations, and other mass media outlets; but local media entities do exist. Making proper use of these increases the opportunities for promoting the food drive. Contacting them one month in advance of the first Saturday, and providing the event dates and other relevant information in the form of a public service announcement facilitates better media promotion of the event.

## **Local Newspapers.**

While local newspapers provide community calendars, Facebook pages, and other online resources to publicize community events, they proved to have little interest in requests for postings from non-subscribers. Contact should be made to recruit unit leaders who are subscribers to local newspapers to place announcements in the community calendars; non-subscribers have limited access to place announcements and letters to the editors are not always printed in a timely manner.

Drive organizers can provide complete announcement information, preferably in a finished form (see Appendix B). Recruited leaders are to be instructed to submit the announcement requests four weeks in advance of the first Saturday of the drive. Organizers can also encourage the unit leaders to contact the paper directly to ensure placement of the announcements. Naturally, organizers should follow up with unit leaders to verify that the announcements have been submitted

and, again, to verify that the announcements appeared in the newspaper prior to the first Saturday of the food drive.

### **Radio, cable television, and internet.**

Organizers can also make use of electronic media to promote the drive. For most rural districts, the primary resource will be radio. In some cases, local internet service and cable television providers maintain community bulletin boards and are willing to promote the Scouting for Food drive. As with newspapers, providing the information four weeks in advance of the first Saturday of the drive allows the electronic media sufficient time to publicize the event.

### **Working with food pantries**

One pantry's inability to accept donations impacted two units, limiting the drive's success. To prevent this, food drive organizers can contact beneficiary pantries directly rather than rely on individual units to make proper arrangements. Such personal contact facilitates arrangements between units and

pantries to coordinate delivery dates and plans, and provides organizers with a comprehensive picture of how collected items will be distributed. It also prepares organizers, as much in advance as possible, to find alternate recipients if the intended beneficiary cannot receive the collected items as scheduled. Even if the pantry is a function of the unit's charter organization, such contact is necessary if last-minute cancellations are to be avoided.

### **Changes in unit leadership**

As it is the anniversary of the founding of scouting in the United States, February is a busy month for units: in addition to Scouting for Food, there are Blue and Gold banquets, crossing ceremonies and other activities for both packs and troops. As Webelo Scouts move up to Boy Scouts, or leave scouting for other pursuits, their parents—who may have occupied leadership positions—move with them. Such was the case with Pack 270, where the cubmaster and son left scouting. While ongoing contact had been kept with the incumbent cubmaster, no communication

had been made with the incoming unit leaders. Information provided to the outgoing cubmaster had not been passed along to the new leaders. This resulted in the pack not participating in the food drive.

To prevent this, food drive organizers can utilize unit commissioners' ongoing communications with unit leaders to identify those packs or troops that will be undergoing leadership changes prior to, and during, the collection month, and bring the incoming leaders into the loop regarding the Scouting for Food drive activities and unit requirements. Ongoing communications with the Scouting for Food contact person, leading up to the drive, can overcome the potential negative effect of leadership changes.

### **Food drive organizers**

In this instance, organization of the food drive rested with one person. Greater use of other scouters, especially the district the unit contacts and the commissioner staff, would have increased the likelihood of a more effective Scouting for Food

drive. In districts that lack a strong commissioner staff, these efforts would need to be undertaken by assistant district commissioners or, perhaps, by the Scouting for Food chair. Obviously, the fewer people that are involved, the sooner the contact and communication efforts need to begin.

### **Conclusion**

Even in rural districts, Scouting for Food drives are complex activities. They require ongoing communication and engagement with area unit leaders that begins well in advance of the actual collection dates. Face-to-face contact is critically important, at the outset of the planning and promotion of the drive, in the weeks and months preceding the drive, as well as just before the actual collection dates. Extensive and ongoing communication with the units is essential; frequent contact with the beneficiaries can avoid last-minute changes to collection and delivery plans.

Use of the unit commissioners of the district facilitates unit support and promotion efforts. Making use of unit and district scouts to contact local media for promotion increases the

publicity and creates buy-in for the scouters who participate. In addition, organizers can follow up with leaders and initiate their own contacts to promote the event through local media.

Contacting the recipient pantries regarding collections and receipt of items rounds out the planning and implementation process. Coordinating the actions between the pantries and the units that serve them cannot be left up to the individual units. Efforts must be centrally organized to ensure proper utilization of the collections.

By using unit commissioners to work with the leadership of the packs and troops in the district, and communicating with all parties in the community, scouters can successfully plan, implement, and conduct a successful Scouting for Food drive in their rural area.

## References

Boy Scouts of America. (2009). The district: How the district carries out the operational mission of the council. Retrieved from <http://www.scouting.org/filestore/commissioner/pdf/33070.pdf>

Boy Scouts of America. (2011). Scouting in rural communities. Retrieved from <http://www.scouting.org/filestore/membership/pdf/523-235.pdf>

Brazos Valley District. (No date). *Brazos Valley District 21*. Retrieved from <http://brazosvalleydistrict.com/>

Green, C. (May 16, 2012). Lack of volunteers? Retrieved from <http://scoutmastercg.com/lack-of-volunteers/>

NetCommissioner. (2011). Scenario # 2: Who's minding the store? Retrieved from <http://netcommissioner.com/training/modules-1-to-9/module-8/>

Ray, M. (2014). Advice on recruiting Cub scouting volunteers.

Retrieved from <https://scoutingmagazine.org/2014/10>

[/advice-recruiting-cub-scouting-volunteers/](https://scoutingmagazine.org/2014/10/advice-recruiting-cub-scouting-volunteers/)

Scout Association. (2017). Frequently asked questions 9Adults).

Retrieved from <https://members.scouts.org.uk/cms.php>

[?pageid=1813](https://members.scouts.org.uk/cms.php?pageid=1813)

Texas Demographic Center. (2016). Estimates of the total

populations of counties and places in Texas for July 1, 2015

and July 1, 2016. Retrieved from <http://demographics.texas>

[.gov/Resources/TPEPP/Estimates/2015/2015\\_txpopest](http://demographics.texas.gov/Resources/TPEPP/Estimates/2015/2015_txpopest)

[\\_msa.pdf](http://demographics.texas.gov/Resources/TPEPP/Estimates/2015/2015_txpopest_msa.pdf)

Texas Health and Human Services. (2014). Texas population

2016 (projections). Retrieved from <https://www.dshs.texas>

[.gov/chs/popdat/ST2016p.shtm](https://www.dshs.texas.gov/chs/popdat/ST2016p.shtm)

U.S. Scouting Service Project. (2017). Scouting in rural and

remote areas. Retrieved from <http://usscouts.org/profbvr>

[/rural\\_scouting/](http://usscouts.org/profbvr/rural_scouting/)

## **Appendices**

Appendix A: Unit Information Form

Appendix B: Public service announcement emailed to the Azle News, Weatherford Democrat, the Springtown Epigraph News, and the Community News (Parker County)

Appendix C: Email from Troop 109

Appendix A: Unit Information Form

**Brazos Valley District Scouting for Food**

**Unit information**

**Your Unit Number & location:**

**Contact person for your Unit:**

**Phone number:**

**Email address:**

**Historical collection area**

**Boundary streets**

North:

South:

East:

West:

**Historical collection information (if available)**

Year:                      Number of items collected:

Number of service hours worked:

Year:                      Number of items collected:

Number of service hours worked:

**Beneficiaries (if not Manna Warehouse in Weatherford)**

**Name of Pantry/Warehouse:**

Address:

**Contact person:**

**Contact phone number:**

Possible alternatives:

**Local media**

Radio:

**Newspapers:**

Community magazines/print outlets:

**Items in bold type are essential information.** Other items are very helpful. Any information that you can provide is truly appreciated! Thank you.

If you have questions, please contact me at [rayadorob@yahoo.com](mailto:rayadorob@yahoo.com).

Robert Wright

Scouting for Food Chair

Appendix B: Public service announcement emailed to the Azle News, Weatherford Democrat, the Springtown Epigraph News, and the Community News (Parker County)

Dear Editor-

On Saturday February, February 4 hundreds of Cub and Boy Scouts from Parker County will be distributing thousands of plastic grocery bags to area homes. It's the Brazos Valley District's annual Scouting for Food campaign. This event has served hundreds of families over the past two decades. The Scouts are asking residents to fill the bags with nonperishable food items—unopened packages of dried beans, pastas, cereals, and undented cans. The Scouts will return the following Saturday to pick up the bags. Donations will benefit the Manna Storehouse in Weatherford, the Manna Room at Aledo UMC, and the Neighbors to Neighbors Pantry, in Springtown. Food donations will also be accepted at the Manna Storehouse, 129 E. Spring Street, Weatherford, on Saturday, February 11 from 10 am to noon.

*For a calendar listing (edit as needed):*

February 4

Parker County Cub and Boy Scouts will be distributing plastic grocery bags to area homes as part of their annual Scouting for Food Drive, benefitting the Manna Storehouse in Weatherford, the Manna Room at Aledo UMC, and the Neighbors to Neighbors Pantry, in Springtown.

February 11

Parker County Cub and Boy Scouts will be collecting plastic grocery bags from area homes as part of the 2017 Scouting for Food Drive, benefitting the Manna Storehouse in Weatherford, the Manna Room at Aledo UMC, and the Neighbors to Neighbors Pantry, in Springtown. Food donations will also be accepted at the Manna Storehouse, 129 E. Spring Street, Weatherford, on Saturday, February 11 from 10 am to noon.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

**Robert Wright**

# Appendix C: Email from Troop 109

From: Committee Chairmain <troop109.committeechair@gmail.com>  
To: raydorob@yahoo.com  
Sent: Friday, February 10, 2017 3:51 PM  
Subject: Re: [announce] Scouting for Food Rescheduled

Rob, I think we'll stick with our current plan. Our attendance numbers were already looking a little thin. Plan to reschedule for sometime before the thanksgiving season.  
Ron

On Feb 10, 2017 10:12 AM, <raydorob@yahoo.com> wrote:

If you would like to hold the drive tomorrow & bring your collections to the Manna Warehouse in weatherford, I know that they can use the donations.

Please let me know.

Thank you!

Robert Wright

From: Troop 109 Email <listadm@aledo109.mv.troop.us>  
To: Committee Chairmain <troop109.committeechair@gmail.com>  
Cc: announce@aledo109.mv.troop.us  
Sent: Thursday, February 9, 2017 6:56 PM  
Subject: [announce] Scouting for Food Rescheduled

Troop 109,

We received word today that the church's food pantry is currently filled to the brim and cannot accept any additional food at this time. Therefore we have chosen to postpone our normal Scouting for Food drive until the church is in need of additional stores.

We will still have Scout Sunday practice this Saturday front 9-1030 or so. Be at the church Sunday @ 10:30 for Scout Sunday @ 10:30 for Scout Sunday. Wear blue jeans with your Class A shirt so we will look uniform.

Thanks

Troop 109 Leaders