



Conducting a **CANQUEST**[®] Food Drive

A Program of SpenserNation LLC and Operation Hungry Child, Inc.

What is a **CANQUEST** Food Drive?

Spenser and the entire SpenserNation team are committed to addressing the problem of childhood hunger in our country. We think it is so sad that the greatest country on the planet has children that go to bed each night hungry.

The author proceeds from the Spenser books go to the community food bank in the area featured in the book. Operation Hungry Child, our non-profit affiliate, raises money to directly support programs aimed at raising the awareness of the child hunger problem in our country. Spenser and Mom work in the food banks that they visit all across the country. But the **CANQUEST** Food Drive is something Spenser wants to do on his own. And he invites children everywhere to help him.

A **CANQUEST** Food Drive may be held at school or church or a community center or at an athletic event. It is intended to be a program for children, although the adults in their lives will need to help. The goals of a **CANQUEST** Food Drive are to collect non-perishable food for the local food bank and to raise awareness in your community.

Step 1: Learn About Spenser, America's Favorite Traveling Dog

Spenser is a very small, almost human dog who travels the country with his Mom. Along the way they learn a lot about the United States and they always look for a way to help hungry children. You can learn all about

Spenser, take a look at his photograph album, write him an email, and order from his store by visiting his website at www.spensernation.com. He would love to hear about your food drive. He always writes back!

Step 2: Planning a **CANQUEST** Food Drive

Things to think about:

- Consider the financial abilities of your school population. If you have children that may be served by the food pantries in your area, consider how you will address this issue without negative fall-out.
- Consider the parent support you are likely to have.
- Determine the contest rules.
- Consider the other activities going on at the same time. Some may be appropriate to piggy-back on and others may create conflicts.

INSIDE THIS PLAN:

- 1 What is a **CANQUEST** food drive?
- 1 Step 1: Learn About Spenser
- 1 Step 2: Planning a **CANQUEST** Food Drive
- 2 Step 3: Conducting a **CANQUEST** Food Drive
- 2 Hunger in America Facts
- 3 Step 4: Wrapping Up a **CANQUEST** Food Drive
- 3 Suggested Fun Activities
- 4 Sample Letter to Parents
- 4 Spenser's Birthday Party
- 4 Operation Hungry Child

Step 3: Conducting a **CANQUEST** Food Drive

Before the Food Drive

- Set the dates for your food drive. Successful drives will cover more than a one day period unless you are tying this to a larger event.
- Determine which Spenser book will be the basis for your food drive.
- Identify children who will serve on the planning committee for your food drive. These may be children whose parents have volunteered to help with the details.
- Determine if the drive will be a contest. If so, set contest rules, deadlines, and prizes, How will you measure the food – by counting or weighing? If counting, what counts as one item?
- Create or collect collection containers to put around the area during the food drive. Sturdy boxes or barrels make good receptacles. You may choose to let the children decorate these containers. Maybe a contest prize for the “best decorated: container”?
- Set in place a communication plan for the period of the food drive. How will you communicate the drive to the faculty or other adults impacted, parents/grandparents, and the media? Define exactly what type of communication each party will receive. Determine if you have parents in your organization that could help with media contacts.
- Contact your local food bank or food pantry. Ask if there are special needs at the time of your drive. Let them know what you plan to do and be specific about what you would like for them to do. If you need them to come pick up the donated food at the end of the drive, tell them so now. If you'd like them to come to the event or if you would like children to visit their site, tell them at this point so you can work it into your plans.

During Drive

- Plan a kick-off event to get everyone excited and pumped up.
- Talk to the children about the drive every day.
- Plan special activities related to hunger and the

Spenser book for each day of the drive.

- Contact the local media and the local food bank to remind them of your event.
- Collect food all week. You may report to the group on significant amounts of participation - ex: the second grade brought in 10 jars of peanut butter today or the eight year olds are collecting bags of rice.
- Secure food during the week.

After Drive

- Have an event celebrating the success of the food drive.
- Announce the winners (if having a contest) and award prizes.
- Meet food bank representatives and help get food loaded into their vehicles.
- Thank all volunteers and helpers.
- Award certificates to children and parents who served on the committee. Recognize them in front of the group.

Facts You Should Know About Childhood Hunger in America

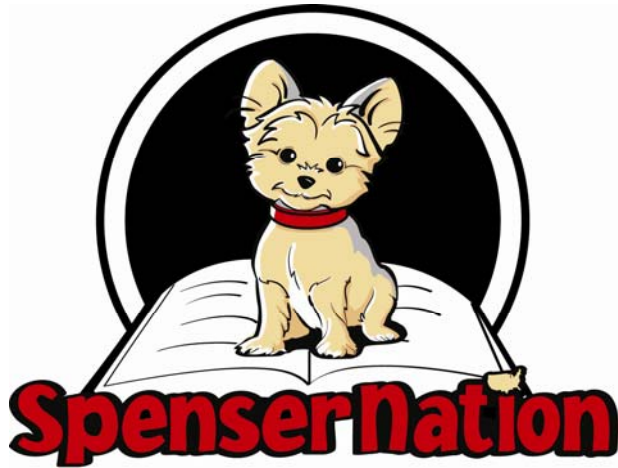
- 1 in 8 Americans does not have access to enough food.
- Hunger is not an issue just for the homeless.
- More than 12 million children live in food-insecure households.
- Food insecurity is the inability of people to obtain sufficient food for their household (includes homes where people may find themselves skipping meals or cutting back on the quality or quantity of food they purchase at the stores).
- Lack of adequate nutrition affects the physical, emotional, mental, and social development of a child.
- More than 36 million Americans do not have access to enough food.

Step 4: Wrapping up a **CANQUEST** Food Drive

Thank you is a very important part of an effort. The public thank you's should be part of your closing celebration. However, you may want to follow that up with thank you notes or emails to the people most significant to your success.

NEWS MEDIA

If you were fortunate enough to receive media coverage, make sure that the children know about it. We all succumb to the idea that anything in the news must be important and



children are no different. To be on television or in the newspaper is akin to being a celebrity. Understanding that what they accomplished is worthy of this kind of coverage underscores the importance of taking care of those less fortunate and makes an impression that won't be forgotten.

SPENSERNATION

We would love to hear about your food drive. You can send us any information that you would like to share via email at our website or via snail mail to our mailing address listed below. We enjoy hearing about the different ideas that have proven successful. We would especially like to get copies of any news coverage you received.

Spenser will also send an autographed photograph of himself to any child who emails him about their activities as part of a **CANQUEST** food drive.

CANQUEST CAN COUNT

SpenserNation is proud to track the number of cans that have been collected as the result of Spenser's friends' efforts. If you would like your Can Count to be included in our numbers, please send the final tally to us at cancount@spensernation.com. We will add it to the Can Count Scoreboard. You can send this count in cans or in weight. We look forward to big numbers!

SUGGESTED FUN ACTIVITIES DURING THE **CANQUEST FOOD DRIVE**

- Decoration Day – bulletin board contest, classroom door contest
- Spenser Days – have children dress in colors that Spenser is wearing on book cover; teach subjects using Spenser lesson plans.
- Distribute coloring sheets and have coloring contest. Post entries in school hallways.
- Kick-off Day – big celebration, recognize each class, and ask food bank staff to speak about how they are helping children in your community.
- Send letters home to parents – ask children to write and decorate them.
- Have class decorate the box(es) to collect food
- Play HUNGR bingo or have a Hunger Hunt (directions are on spensernation.com)
- Have a Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday winner – allow students to wear jeans, have extra recess, etc. Multiple winners (like one per grade) could be allowable.
- Plan a field trip to a food bank or food pantry.
- Have students write essays about helping other kids. Invite parents for reading of essays.
- Take Virtual Tour of one of the Spenser cities.



Dear Mom and Dad,

America has many hungry children and at our school, we want to do something about it. During the week of _____, we will be conducting a **CANQUEST** food drive at our school. Please help me to remember to bring canned goods.

The **CANQUEST** food drive is part of our participation in SpenserNation's efforts to raise food and awareness of the problem of childhood hunger in this country. Spenser and his mom travel the country to talk to people about hungry children. I want to help hungry children, too.

The classes will participate in a contest during **CANQUEST** to see which class can collect the most food. If our class wins, we will get a _____. We hope that all families will participate if they are able.

If you have any questions about the **CANQUEST** food drive, please talk to my teacher.

Yours truly,
Your son (or daughter),

Spenser's Birthday Party



Each year on or around Spenser's birthday, September 29, children are encouraged to have a birthday party for Spenser. Instead of gifts, they would bring food for hungry children.

The child having the party would take the food to the local food bank. A birthday party plan complete with invitations and games may be found at spensernation.com. Supplies may be ordered through the website or picked up at your local party store. Parties are designed to be held by small groups in homes or large groups at schools or churches.

Operation Hungry Child, Inc.

Spenser also has a non-profit foundation called, Operation Hungry Child, Inc. Some people say that Mom named it that because Spenser is always hungry but Spenser knows that Mom named it for all of the children who don't go to bed at night with full tummies.

Operation Hungry Child accepts donations from individuals and organizations and conducts fund-raising events. All of the money that OHC raises goes to specific needs of child hunger programs.



Two of the grants from Operation Hungry Child have been to America's Second Harvest of Coastal Georgia's Kids Café program and to the West Texas Food Bank in El Paso, Texas.

Kids Café used the money to buy hula hoops and bingo stuff to use to teach the children about good eating habits. El Paso used the money to help teach nutritional education in the public schools. In one of the programs students will make healthy, inexpensive snacks like peanut butter and banana sandwiches on wheat bread.

In Appreciation

When your **CANQUEST** food drive is over, please make sure you go to www.spensernation.com and select CanCount and enter the date of your drive and the number of cans. We will send your school a certificate thanking you and acknowledging your participation in our fight against child hunger in America. We would also love to hear any stories about your food drive especially if you think we should share them with others.

Good luck and thank you from the bottom of our hearts. This is a fight we must win.

Your friends,
Spenser and Mom