

# impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

## Eat Smart Idaho healthy food drives teaches the importance of giving back

### AT A GLANCE

Eat Smart Idaho in the northern district manages a competitive based healthy food drive with donations supporting a school-based pantry.

### The Situation

The U.S. Department of Agriculture defines food insecurity as a lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life. Many Idaho residents experience food insecurity, about 11.3% of the population, one in nine individuals. Of those over 57,000 of them are children. More than 53% of people in Idaho who are food insecure may not qualify for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) due to their income level. Food provided in food banks and local pantries assist many families in Idaho that are food insecure and ask for community assistance with food donations. The Eat Smart Idaho program with direct funding from two USDA grants supporting low-income families can assist food banks and pantries with healthy food drives.

### Our Response

Managing healthy food drives is an important part of the Healthy Food Bank, Healthy Food Drive project within Eat Smart Idaho. UI Extension family and consumer sciences educator Shelly Johnson and her northern district Eat Smart Idaho team frequently manage healthy food drives and have been extremely creative over the years in acquiring food for low-income families. For the past three years, educator



Canfield Middle School students pause for a photo after loading a truck with healthy food donations for a school-based pantry.

Johnson has managed the highly competitive Canfield's Cares Food Drives at Canfield Middle School in the Coeur d'Alene School District, an idea she developed with the two lead Sources of Strength teachers at the school. For the past three years, Johnson has prepared Canfield teachers and students with a presentation on what it means to be food insecure and explains why donating healthy food is so important to families in need. The Canfield Cares Healthy Food Drive was designed as a competitively based food drive, pairing two homerooms against each other to bring in one food item. With almost 40 homerooms, 20 specific food items are donated by students. All food is donated to the Canvas Food Pantry, a Coeur d'Alene School District food pantry started in 2009 with the assistance of Eat Smart Idaho. To promote the food drive

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large posters and colorful print work is disseminated to each homeroom describing the competition. Students have two weeks to prepare for the day of delivery with morning announcements each day. On the food drive donation day, students bring in their food item and each winning homeroom is rewarded by the school's administration. Johnson organizes the local school-based pantry for food donation pick up.

Foods donated include MyPlate Food Groups

- Grains: whole grain tortillas, whole-grain crackers, whole grain granola bars.
- Fruits/Vegetables: sweet mini peppers, cutie oranges, mini carrots, no sugar added applesauce, nonfat refried beans, low sodium canned black beans.
- Dairy: low fat shredded cheese or string cheese, non-fat Greek yogurt, shelf stable unsweetened almond milk.
- Protein: all-natural lunch meat, low-fat turkey pepperoni, eggs, canned chicken breast, protein bars.

### Program Outcomes

In 2023, 602 healthy food donations were made by Canfield students with 145 hygiene items, such as toothpaste, toothbrushes and deodorant. In 2022, 568 healthy food donations were made with 156 hygiene items donated and in 2021, 1101 healthy food items were donated with 248 hygiene items. All food donations over the last three years met the healthy food criteria.

A letter to the editor of the CDA Press made May 10, 2023 titled *Kudos to Canfield and University of Idaho* reads:

Thank you Canfield Middle School students and staff for the hundreds of pounds of fresh produce, dairy and canned goods you provided for Canvas Pantry with your food drive. Thank you, Shelly Johnson from the University of Idaho Extension's Eat Smart Idaho program who helped organize the competition. Our pantry serves 50 to 70 people weekly and you have blessed us immensely. Your goal to inform students of good nutrition and teach them they can be good citizens in their community by sharing with others is heartwarming. The student leadership teams that brought out the boxes of food and helped load the trucks were so helpful and respectful. The future generation in our community looks bright; keep up the good work. — Roberta Ewert, coordinator of the Canvas Food Pantry, Coeur d'Alene.

Additionally, educator Johnson has helped lead the protocol for the Healthy Food Drives along with the Eat Smart Idaho administrative team and they are looking to publish the protocol through UI Extension publishing so others can follow their model.

### The Future

Eat Smart Idaho in the northern district will continue to assist with the statewide Eat Smart Idaho team and lead similar healthy food drives in the state.

### Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

Eat Smart Idaho administrative team: Annie Roe, Joey Peutz, Siew Guan Lee, Kathryn Hickok, Kristin Hansen, Cammie Jayo and Becky Woodhouse.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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