

# HOSTING AN EVENT FOR THE FOOD BANK!



Hey guys! I'm Elliot Baker, and I'm one of the many Food Bankers eager to help you engage with our Culture of Philanthropy.

Are you ready to keep spreading the word about the Food Bank to friends and family, but having trouble getting them to one of our signature events?

Throw your own party for the Food Bank instead!

## Why?

Simply put, not everyone enjoys a large busy environment; some feel far more comfortable in smaller, more intimate social settings.

Hosting an event is a great way to spread awareness about what we're doing, tell the story of the Food Bank, and potentially even bring in some funds for our cause!

## How to get started

### First things first: you are not alone!

Hosting your own event can be daunting, especially for first timers. So, know that you can always turn to Food Bank staff for advice. I'm happy to answer all the questions that you have. You can reach me at [ebaker@northernillfoodbank.org](mailto:ebaker@northernillfoodbank.org) or 630 664 6910 ext. 210

### Next, decide on the kind of event and venue

Ask yourself – if YOU were attending an event, where would you want to go? Chances are that your own friends and family will be like-minded enough that there will be some cross-over in terms of events they'd find fun too!

Some examples to get your creative juices flowing include:



**Your house!** Perhaps a “porch party” in warmer weather, or a “fireside social” on your back patio or family room. You could also host a dinner party in your dining room, or perhaps a Football watch party in front of the TV!



Is there a **restaurant or bar** that you love? Why not reach out to them and see if they have an event space for hire? You could have a cocktail party, or a formal dinner, or maybe a casual and fun karaoke session! It is totally up to you.



Speaking of ‘casual’, if it's a family-friendly event, why not consider a fun day out at a **local park** or even throw a **neighborhood block party**?

The space is really up to you! Events have happened at all sorts of places – bars, restaurants, golf clubs, dining halls, homes, hotels, tattoo parlors (yes really, I've hosted one), bakeries, coffee shops, cafes, churches, riverboats, skating rinks, basements, penthouses, yoga studios... the world is your oyster!

Learn more at [SolveHungerToday.org](http://SolveHungerToday.org)

## When should you host your event?

There's no right or wrong time to host an event, but there are times that are more and less effective.

Less effective times of year may be times you're competing for people's attention. For example, throwing a fundraiser between Thanksgiving and Christmas will leave you competing with other holiday parties. Hosting a social in late summer may also be tricky as parents will be getting their kids ready for school again.

More effective times could relate to important moments in your life. For example, could you tie your event to your birthday? People may be more apt to attend if they also feel they're also celebrating you!

You could also look to throw an event around an important Food Bank date, such as Founder's Day (May 18th) or Hunger Action Month (September). Or find a random holiday and celebrate it! Grilled Cheese Day, anyone? (April 12!)

If you'd like to see a list of quirky holidays, check out the links below:

- <https://juleeho.com/food-marketing-blog/2020-food-holidays-the-most-comprehensive-365-day-list>
- <https://nationaltoday.com/food-beverage-holidays/>

There are no hard and fast rules when it comes to dates; but it is certainly worth thinking about.

## What will the purpose of the event be?

At the Food Bank we typically divide events into two categories:



**Informational:** These are events that are held purely with the purpose of raising awareness of the Food Bank and its mission.



**Fundraiser:** While these events still raise awareness for the Food Bank, the measure of success is often determined by the funds raised for the Food Bank.

## Invitations, food and libations

What's an event without guests? Now it's time to fill the chairs!

- First, identify WHO the event is for. A more formal event may be ideal for work colleagues, while a more casual event could be ideal for friends and family. Or vice-versa! Perhaps you'd like to invite a mix of people. The decision is up to you.

It may also depend on the type of event you're hosting. Informational events may be perfect for people who have NEVER heard of the Food Bank before, whereas a fundraiser may be best suited for those you've spoken to about our work.

- Next, we think about HOW you want to invite people. Statistics show that it often takes people being asked multiple times before committing to something. So consider the following handful of tactics, and employing more than one of them.



**In-Person-** When you invite someone to something in-person, they're more likely to respond positively as they know you MEANT it. It feels INTENTIONAL.



**Social Media-** The strength of this channel is in its reach. You can harness this power to connect with the most amount of people in the shortest amount of time.



**Mailed invites-** Snail mail may seem old-fashioned, and even out of touch. The data suggests differently. People still enjoy getting mail if it feels personal and purposeful, which is exactly what every good invitation should be. If you need help with creating good invitations for your event, look to the Food Bank for support. Following up with an email or text message can be very effective.



**Emailed invites-** Remember, services like Eventbrite make it easy and inexpensive to share an invitation.

- On a practical level, the invite should contain the following:
  - The event time and place
  - The event purpose
  - An RSVP request
  - The name of the host – AKA, you
  - If necessary and not implied, a dress code
  - Food and drink options
    - Decisions on food or drink are often informed by the type of event you're hosting. Is it a BYOB potluck? Is it light appetizers and cocktails? Is it a sit-down dinner? Communicate with your guests so they know how to prepare.

### Create an itinerary for the event

Even if this is a casual, fun event, you'll still want to give this some thought. Organization keeps 'casual' fun. Disorganization makes 'casual' chaotic. Here's some points you may want to think about:

- Time to mingle and meet (perhaps an hour or so)
- Short, fun, Food Bank presentation (perhaps 15 to 20 minutes)
- Making an ask to volunteer, donate, or otherwise get involved (5 minutes)

You'll also want to factor in the time to eat, and time for the event to wind down.

Remember, as with most of the points in this toolkit – these are helpful guidelines, not strict rules. Let the event flow longer or shorter if it wants to.

### Pointers for during the event

- Make sure guests are comfortable
- Work the room – don't get stuck in one place or in one group of people for too long
- Have a helper or two in place to help greet, chat, and introduce people to each other

Oh, and most importantly: **ENJOY IT!**

### After the event

It's easy to forget that there are still a few things to do once the event has finished... But we promise, you're almost there!

- Make sure to contact the people who came and thank them for their attendance. When possible, message people individually just to add that personal touch.
- Let us know how it went! We want to celebrate your success.
- Finally, think about your next event! If this first one was purely informational, perhaps next time you'll host a fundraiser. Or maybe you'll invite a group to volunteer at the Food Bank!

### Ready to get started?

To get started or learn more, contact Elliot Baker at [ebaker@northernilfoodbank.org](mailto:ebaker@northernilfoodbank.org) or (630) 742 3913 ext. 210