



SCOUTING FOR FOOD HISTORY

Scouting For Food is Greater St. Louis Area Scouting's one-of-a-kind day of service. Thousands of Scouts, parents, and leaders hit the streets on a Saturday in November to distribute blue bags to the homes in their area. Community members fill up those bags with non-perishable food items, and the Scouts return one week later to pick up those bags and distribute them to local food banks and pantries. On average, we collect almost 2 million food items each year.

2026 marks Greater St. Louis Area Scouting's 41st annual Scouting for Food Good Turn. During its 41-year history, Scouts have collected more than 68 million cans of food. The 2026 campaign begins on Saturday, November 14th. Thousands of Scouts will go door-to-door distributing custom-made plastic grocery bags. On Saturday, November 21st, Scouts return to those neighborhoods to collect the bags filled with canned goods. The timing of the campaign coincides with the spirit of giving and appreciation associated with the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday season.

A History of Scouting for Food

The First Scouting for Food

In preparation for the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the BSA in 1985, then Scout Executive and CEO Bob Meinholtz challenged his staff to develop a new and noteworthy program feature.

They seized upon the idea of a community-wide good turn to collect food for the needy. The council had never tried anything of this scope in the past, nor was it aware of any organization that had. Delivering collection bags to nearly every home in 11 counties and then collecting, compiling, and distributing an unknown amount of food seemed a daunting, perhaps impossible, task.

The initial success of Scouting for Food can be attributed to the leadership of Dennis Long and the Anheuser-Busch Company. They devoted considerable time and resources to making this groundbreaking idea a reality. Fire departments throughout the area enthusiastically came on board as collection sites, partner food pantries were identified, and the 892nd Transportation Company of the 102nd Army Reserve Command agreed to provide food transport through the St. Louis metropolitan area. That first year, Scouts collected 750,000 cans of food.

A Legacy of Service

What was intended to be a one-time service project quickly became our hallmark. The council's executive board determined that Scouting for Food is a perfect example of Scouting's values and set about to make it an annual affair.

In 1988, with St. Louis as a model, Scouting America adopted Scouting for Food as a national BSA program and encouraged every council to participate.

Scouting for Food has continued annually since its beginning in 1985 as a signature service event throughout the now 63 counties served by the Greater St. Louis Area Scouting.

Since the inaugural Scouting for Food drive in 1985, Scouts have collected more than 68 million items of food for the St. Louis region!