

Feed the Heartland Patch Program

**“If you can’t
feed a hundred
people, then feed
just one.”
— Mother Teresa**

Did you know that according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s latest household food insecurity report, more than 35 million people in the United States experienced hunger in 2019. That number continues to grow and may include members of your own community, friends and family, or members of your troop. As a Girl Scout, you might be wondering how you can make a difference by supporting hunger relief efforts. Complete this patch program to learn more about food insecurity and how to get involved. Read the full report from the USDA.

Steps:

1. Find out about food insecurity in your community.
2. Explore organizations in your community that are making a difference.
3. Get involved in the solution.
4. Share what you have learned.

Purpose:

When I’ve earned this patch, I’ll know more about food insecurity in my community and how to be a part of the solution.



Step 1: Find out about food insecurity in your community.

We need to learn more about food insecurity before we can help with hunger relief. So, what is food insecurity anyway? Food insecurity is when a person or family is without reliable access to a sufficient amount of affordable, nutritious food. This is different from hunger which is when a person feels physical discomfort from wanting or needing food. Learn more about food insecurity and why it's important by watching this video by Feeding America and by completing one of the following activities:

1.

Discover what a food bank does.

Learn about how a food bank operates, how it gets its food and how it identifies who needs its resources. Create a picture chart that tracks how one food item gets from its initial source to the people who need it. You can find this information online or by reaching out to a local food bank.

2.

Research food insecurity statistics.

Find some information on food insecurity in the United States by checking out the Feeding America website. Create an infographic of the top five statistics that got you thinking about food insecurity in a new way. Check out some examples of infographics created by GSUSA below, then make your own about food insecurity!

3.

Find out what groups are impacted most by food insecurity.

List major barriers to obtaining food for these groups and discuss which barriers you see in your community. Record what you find by creating a word web. Write down all the barriers and connect any barriers that have an impact on each other. What do you notice about your word web?



Infographics teach people about statistics and numbers in an easy to understand way by adding pictures and other visual elements to tell the story of the research.

Step 2: Explore organizations in your community that are making a difference.



Be prepared to ask your guest good questions by brainstorming questions before they arrive. You should also take notes as you listen to their responses and be ready to ask any follow ups or clarify the meaning of your initial question. Practice actively listening when they provide you with information. Remember to always follow the Girl Scout Law when interacting with others! You can also show your appreciation for their time by following up with a small gift or a handwritten note. They are working hard and have done you a favor by giving you their time. Kind gestures can bring a smile to their face and encourage them to continue the vital work they do.

There are many ways you can make a difference for hunger. You can volunteer, do research, impact laws, fundraise or craft a career around fighting for food security. Find out what others are doing and how you can fit in by completing one of the following activities:

☐ Meet with someone who works for a local food bank.

Find out about their mission, their priority issues and ways you can help. You can find a list of food banks by visiting the Feeding America search engine or by searching the internet to find more food banks in your area. You can also reach out to program@gsoh.org to help you find a food bank if you are having trouble locating something near you.

☐ Meet someone on your city council or a city employee who has a focus on food insecurity.

Search on websites for your local city council members and committees and found out who might be involved in food insecurity. Email or call the councilperson to set up a meeting for you to learn how their work can influence hunger relief efforts.

☐ Create a brochure explaining careers that are making a difference.

Imagine you are at a career fair trying to give information about careers related to food insecurity. Do some research on a career and create a brochure explaining what they do to help. You have a great range to pick from including a nutritionist, environmentalist or even a farmer.

Step 3: Get involved in the solution

So far, you have explored the topic of food insecurity by conducting your own research and learning from an expert in the field! You are now ready to create a service project to get involved with the solution to food insecurity. Take some time to review what you have learned before moving on with your service project. It is important to get to know the root cause of an issue before you jump into helping with the solution. The better you understand food insecurity, the better the chance for your service project to have an effective impact. When you feel like you have enough information you can continue with Step 3. Follow the guide below to help make an impact on your community.

- 1. Brainstorm ways to make a difference.**
Hold a brainstorming session with your group for your service project. Think of the following questions to get you started:
 - a. Who might you ask to help you with your project?
 - b. Who will benefit from your project?
 - c. What will be your goal for your project?

- 2. Choose a project.**
Choose a project by working with a local food bank or other community organization focused on food insecurity. The organization should have an idea of what they need help with and can help guide your project. Here are some common project ideas to get you thinking:
 - a. Host a food drive.
 - b. Support an existing food drive.
 - c. Volunteer at a food bank.
 - d. Start a community garden.
 - e. Volunteer at a community garden.
 - f. Volunteer at a community kitchen or soup kitchen.

This is not a complete list. You can work creatively to help tackle food insecurity in your community!

- 3. Plan your project.**
Create a plan for your project including what you will do, how it will make a positive impact, who it will impact, your goal and how you will achieve it.

- 4. Execute your project!**

- 5. Thank everyone and debrief.**
Be sure to thank everyone who helped you with your project and reflect on if you met your goals.

Step 4: Share what you have learned.

You have learned a lot about food insecurity by researching, connecting with experts and creating your own service project! Share all that knowledge by completing one of the following activities:



Be a Mentor.

Use your experience with this patch program to help coach another troop in earning it. Reach out to other troops in your area to see if they are interested in learning more about food insecurity and the Feed the Heartland patch program. You can share what you learned and the process you went through to complete all the patch requirements! Follow up with the troop to see how their project is going and offer your support.



Hold a community discussion.

Gather members of your community for a discussion on food insecurity. This can be with your service unit, troop, families, school group or any other group you can gather. Here are some discussion topics to get you started:

- Think about one reason why access to food is important.
- We can't always know how others are feeling or what challenges others may be experiencing — including who in our communities might be suffering from food insecurity. How can we express compassion and support others, regardless of if we know their personal circumstances?
- Why is it important to care for our own community?
- Brainstorm some solutions to systemic food insecurity. What are some actions that we can take in the future — as a troop, or as a greater community — to help more people have access to food?
- Are there changes our government can support to help our communities become more food secure?



Create a video.

Document your project with a video and share it with members of your community to educate them on food insecurity and how they can make a difference.

Congratulations! You have completed the Girl Scouts of Ohio's Heartland Feed the Heartland Patch Program. You can purchase your patch by visiting our shop ([Link](#)). Challenge yourself to earn this patch yearly and get an add on patch for each year. For more information on how you can help hunger relief efforts, please see our Girl Scouts Grow program. Thank you for participating!

Note to Troop Leaders:

You should never ask girls in your troop if they have experienced food insecurity or to share their own stories related to food insecurity. Here are some tips for what to do if do you suspect someone in your troop is experiencing food insecurity:

- Do not share this information with other families in your troop. This could be something that the girl and her family do not want others to know.
- Consider letting all caregivers know that you'll be covering this topic as a group, so they have time to prepare if it is a sensitive issue for their child.
- If appropriate, reach out to the girl's family and offer the resources that you have learned about while completing this project with the troop. Do not reach out to the girl with this information.
- Let the girl participate in the project as normal.