

Stormcells Challenge



Current Process – Volunteer Packing Events

A little history will help set stage for current processes. In previous years GO Pantry has built our schedules around packing events. This method was designed because we worked in borrowed space. For several years we worked out of the Master Provisions warehouse. As such, we had to work around their hours of operation. This model worked well for cost reduction, but limited us on floor time. We had to work on days they did not. Our response was to create weekend volunteer events. This model was supported by the community as it offered an opportunity for working people to volunteer and for families to serve together. Because we had so much support from our volunteers, we continued with this model after moving into our warehouse. In order to maximize our weekend time we packed for 6-10 weeks at a time (3,900 – 8,000 bags were packed during a weekend).

Desired Outcomes – Volunteer Packing Events

We would like to shift away from weekend packing events and build new processes around consistent, weekly volunteer shifts. We intend to keep one weekend volunteer shift each month for families and people who are not able to help during the week. We will likely also add a weekday afternoon shift for the high school students fulfilling volunteer hour requirements. We believe our volunteers will embrace the shift to more predictable events.

Our volunteer army is the heartbeat of GO Pantry. Our community is so good. People really want to help – especially when it comes to giving food to local, hungry kids. It is a blessing for us to be able to offer a place for people to plug in and volunteer their time and talents. It is so fun to see people leave the warehouse after a volunteer shift on fire to do more good work. We receive weekly requests for consistent volunteer opportunities. We believe our community will embrace this idea of regularly scheduled volunteer opportunities.

Current Process – School Ordering

Several weeks before an event we send an email to the schools participating in the GO Pantry program (24 schools for GO Bags / 45 schools for GO Boxes). In this email we ask for the number of kids needing GO Bags/ Boxes. The schools respond with their requested number. We keep a spreadsheet for each pack, updating as individual responses come in. We also offer an option to pick up all the bags at one time or an option to split the pick-up. These responses are also recorded in our manual spreadsheet. We would prefer for the schools to take all boxes

in one pick-up. However, we recognize space is a challenge for many schools. For the split option we have to coordinate a second round of pick-ups (details in “pick-up” section below).

This is a very high-touch model. The frequent communication from GP has worked well to create strong relationships with the schools. We have gone above and beyond to accommodate the schools so as to easily get food to as many kids as are in need. We even coordinate the delivery of all GO Bags and GO Boxes (details in “pick-up” section below). We check in frequently to make sure the # of bags and boxes is accurate. We plan each event based around the # of bags/boxes needed for the next delivery. Adjusting numbers for each pack assures there is very little waste. The downside of this model is how time consuming it is for GO Pantry to manage the growing number of schools. There is also room for error receiving and tracking so many individual email responses from the schools and then manually populating a shared Google sheet.

Storage space is an issue for some schools. Our response to that challenge has been to offer a split pick-up. When we do the school communication for each pack event we also ask if they would like to receive all their bags in one delivery or split the delivery. This is another task for us to track and then coordinate.

Desired Outcome – School Ordering

We would like to shift to a more automated ordering system with a monthly template. Using something like a SignUp or a survey we would like to prompt the schools mid-month to commit to a number of GO Bags needed for the next month or GO Boxes needed for an upcoming school break. For example, we need to send out a communication to all our participating schools on August 17 requesting numbers for the first set of GO Bags. The schools will provide us with the number of bags they need for September. Different from previous years, we will be packing GO Bags ahead of time so they will be ready for pick up as soon as Sept 1st.

Having a template for this monthly communication would help both GP and the schools. In a perfect world the monthly template would:

- capture the # of GO Bags needs for the month and populate a spreadsheet
- politely prompt the school to complete the # should they not do it by a designated date
- designate a driver and capture desired pick-up for each school (For example, a school with limited space might come weekly, while another may opt to pick up all month’s bags in one trip.)

Current Process - Pick up

Currently we coordinate a group of volunteers to pick up all of the GO Bags at the end of weekend packing events. We send a SignUp.com to ask our regular group of drivers to select a slot to come to the warehouse to pick-up packed bags. These pick-ups are staggered throughout Sunday afternoon. As bags come off the line they are staged for pick-up. Bags are packed and sent out all in one big, fun, tiring event. Some of the drivers are school employees (we have a

couple principals, FRCs, and teachers). Some are just nice people helping with this task. The schools take their load directly to their school. Other volunteers will hold bags in their vehicles overnight and deliver first thing Monday morning. A few schools come to the warehouse at scheduled appointment times to pick up their full (or split) load during the school day. This requires someone for GP to meet them at the warehouse. The biggest advantage of this process is ease for the schools. All they have to do is make space of the incoming load. We coordinate all delivery details.

Sunday is an advantage for some as it gives working people an opportunity to plug in and help. Sunday is a disadvantage for others who would rather not disrupt their weekend time for a GP pick-up.

A plus for GP in this model is we tend to have great volunteers as part of our weekend event to help lift and load all the heavy boxes. For shifts during the week, lifters are harder to find. The biggest obstacle of the current process for GP is the amount of time required to track and coordinate the details of these varying options.

Desired Outcome – Pick Up

We would like to ask the schools to designate a driver and pick-up during the school week.

We will offer an “open” day once a week. This will likely be a Monday or Tuesday for this school year as there is a good chance we will be in a hybrid school week due to COVID-19. Schools may have kids coming just 2 days a week – some Mon/Tues and some Thurs/Fri. We need to ensure schools have access to GO Bags for all kids in need of food. In this model it does not matter to GP if the schools pick up 1,2,3 or 4 weeks of GO Bags on the designated “open” day; but, it will help us to know for space management and staffing. We will need to schedule volunteers on the open day to help with lifting and loading.

Current Process - Timing

GO Bag packing events happen 5 times throughout the school year. Our volunteers actively watch for the SignUp for new events. Shifts fill up quickly.

Desired Outcome – Timing

We would like to create predictable weekly shifts for volunteers; a predictable monthly Sunday volunteer event (ie 3rd Sunday of every month); a routine monthly order process for the schools; and, weekly “open” days for schools to pick-up GO Bags.

New School Year

We will be packing weekly starting in August so the GO Bags will be ready when school resumes. We will be starting Sept with 2,000 GO Bags on hand. This will get us through 3-4 weeks of demand. Beth will have food ready to pack more if needed. If the numbers come in from the school higher than expected, we will add volunteer shifts to pack more bags. There is a balance here given the instability of our COVID world. We do not want to pack too many GO Bags in case the schools revert to an all-NTI school week. If this happens, we will need to shift to GO Boxes. We will also have 100+ GO Boxes ready when school starts to help with emergencies.

We will need to communicate this change as soon as our contacts return to school. We are targeting Aug 17th for this communication to go out. We will be asking them to coordinate their own pick-up of GO Bags. We would like to see the schools coordinate the person designated to come to the warehouse. This person might be the school FRC, custodian, PTA parent, etc. In the event they cannot find a volunteer, we can always reach out to our GP community to find a driver for this shift.

Help Needed

Your ideas to improve and implement new processes are welcome. We will need to move quickly to launch the new process for the upcoming school year. Specially, we would love help with the following processes:

- Automating school communication requesting monthly GO Bag #s (and GO Box #s as needed), including automated reminder if not submitted by designated date.
- Automating school pick-up process, including automated reminders for the volunteer drivers.
- Automating GO Bag/Go Box counts by school.