

## Thanks for Giving

Our experience in Rockport and Camden was a very good one and might serve as an example to other assessors who, like us, had no background in organizing a food drive.

We first spoke to our town clerks. Caitlin Thompson and I assess both towns. We approached each town's town clerk (they also serve as election warden) and asked if they would allow us to do an election day food drive. Elections are a complex logistical operation. We need their cooperation, enthusiasm and advice to pull this off. Fortunately for us, both clerks agreed without hesitation.

I had trouble connecting with the person who ran a prominent food pantry local to us. Hannah Sisk, my administrative assistant, suggested we look into the school's backpack program. The program fills backpacks with food for students in need. My reaction was, "Great. Get right on it, please." Which she did.

We had the town clerks on board and a worthy organization to accept the food. Caitlin modified the Thanks for Giving Posters to suit our local messaging needs, drove around and distributed posters, and sent press releases out to the local press.

Rockport and Camden have the same news outlets as does Rockland. Rockland's assessor, Roxy LaFrance, was also doing a Thanks for Giving food drive in her city, so we combined our publicity efforts as you will see our press release.

On election day we had boxes to collect the goodies set up in locations where voters could easily access them, and when it was over we brought everything to an appreciative backpack program coordinator.

There is very little we will do differently this time around. We'll spend a little more time on publicity beforehand to ensure we reach as many people as possible before the election.

This year will be more of a challenge due to the need for more people to vote via mail or absentee ballot. I will, in my publicity, ask people to come by and drop off food even if they don't vote in person. I may also locate donation boxes in the supermarkets and a few other locations.

If you're on the fence, considering whether or not to give this a try, my advice is to at least give it a shot. Raising food for people in need is a good thing, and unfortunately there are plenty of them. Good luck!