



You Matter

BIRTHDAY BAGS

Student Leadership Toolkit

**Baking a
Difference
for Kids**

aevidum 
I've got **your** back.

Welcome!

Every person deserves to feel special on their birthday. The **You Matter Birthday Bags** project helps make that possible for children and families who may be experiencing food insecurity, housing instability, or other financial challenges. Each Birthday Bag contains the basic ingredients and supplies needed to make a birthday cake and is distributed through schools, food pantries, community organizations, and other community partners.

As an Aavidum Club, you can lead your own Birthday Bags drive and help make sure that no one's birthday goes unrecognized.

This toolkit will walk you through everything you need to plan, promote, collect, assemble, and distribute your Birthday Bags.

A message from Sarah

My name is Sarah Kokas; I am a High School Junior and the founder of Baking a Difference for Kids. As an avid baker, I have made and sold dozens of birthday cakes for commission, but the most memorable were when I baked birthday cakes for girls experiencing homelessness, during the Covid-19 pandemic. It really transformed the meaning of birthdays for me, showing me how birthday cakes offer a powerful moment of joy and celebration, something that can mean even more to a child experiencing homelessness. This inspired the creation of the You Matter Birthday Bags project and Baking a Difference for Kids, both initiatives inspired by the belief that everyone, regardless of financial situation deserves to be celebrated.



Your Role

As Aavidum leaders, your job isn't to do everything yourself. Your job is to lead the project and bring other people into it. As your club plans the drive, you are responsible for:

- Choosing when your drive will happen.
- Setting a goal for the number of Birthday Bags you want to make.
- Creating a plan for collecting donations.
- Promoting the drive to your school and community.
- Keeping track of donations.
- Organizing your packing event.
- Identifying where your Birthday Bags will be distributed.
- Working with your advisor and other adults when you need help.

Remember: Big projects are easier when you build a team. Ask for help!

1. Build Your Team

Before you start collecting anything, decide who is going to help make your drive happen. Start with your Avidum Club. Assign different students to take the lead on:

- **Promotion**
 - Create posters, announcements, social media posts, and other ways to get people involved.
- **Donations**
 - Track what has been collected and communicate what items are still needed.
- **Logistics**
 - Plan where donations will be collected and stored and when your bags will be assembled.
- **Distribution**
 - Work with an adult to identify organizations that can receive and distribute your completed bags.

Make it bigger!

You don't have to do this project alone. Consider inviting other school groups to partner with you, such as:

- Student Council
- National Honor Society
- Key Club
- Interact Club
- Service clubs
- Family and Consumer Sciences classes
- Art clubs
- Sports teams
- Other student organizations

A larger team can mean more donations, more Birthday Bags, and a bigger impact.

If another club joins you, decide together how each group will contribute. One club might promote the drive, another might collect donations, and another might help decorate or assemble the bags.



2. Set your goal & timeline

Before launching your drive, decide how many Birthday Bags do you want to make. Start with a goal that feels achievable for your school. For example, your goal might be to create 50 Birthday Bags. Once you have a goal, you can determine how many of each item you need.

For 50 Birthday Bags, you need:

- 50 cake mixes
- 50 cans of frosting
- 50 cans of soda
- 50 packs of birthday candles
- 50 recipe cards
- 50 bags

Choose Your Dates

Give yourself enough time to:

- Plan
- Promote
- Collect donations
- Sort and count donations
- Assemble the bags
- Distribute the completed bags

A 2 to 4 week collection period can be a good starting point, but choose a timeline that works for your school.

Tip: Check your school's calendar before choosing your dates. Avoid weeks when students and staff are already overwhelmed with major events, exams, or breaks. Choose a window with less competition from other school activities.



3. Decide how you'll collect

Your club can collect Birthday Bag items in several ways.

Option 1: School-wide Donation Drive

Ask students and staff to bring in specific items.

For example:

- WEEK 1: Cake Mix
- WEEK 2: Frosting
- WEEK 3: Soda
- WEEK 4: Candles

This makes it easy for people to know what to bring.

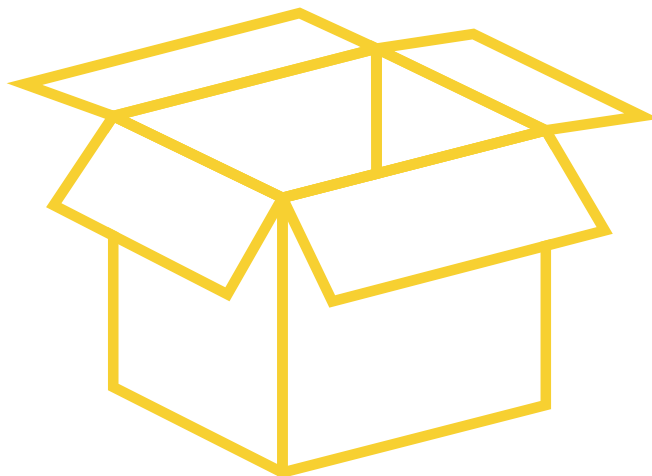
Option 2: Collect Everything at Once

Create a list of all needed items and ask families, students, and staff to donate whichever items they are able to provide.

Option 3: Ask for Donations from the Community

Ask local businesses, grocery stores, community organizations, families, or other groups if they would like to donate items.

Tip: Don't be afraid to ask! You may be surprised by how many people are willing to help when they know exactly what you need.



4. Plan to promote

People can't participate if they don't know about your drive!

BKD has provided a [sample Birthday Bags poster](#) that your club can use to advertise the drive. To use the poster, make a copy and then customize it with your dates, donation location, and goal.

Consider promoting your drive through:

- Posters around school
- Morning announcements
- School newsletters
- School social media
- Club social media
- Emails to families
- School or community events
- Tables during lunch or other high-traffic times

Keep reminding people!

One announcement probably isn't enough. Promote the drive when it begins, provide updates during the collection period, and let people know how close you are to reaching your goal.

For example: We've collected 32 of our 50 Birthday Bags! Help us reach our goal!

Seeing your progress can motivate people to participate.

5. Make your bags special

Your Birthday Bags don't have to be plain!

You can purchase inexpensive gift bags from places such as the dollar store. Kraft paper bags or colorful gift bags work great. Then, turn them into something special.

Ask students to decorate the bags with:

- "Happy Birthday!"
- "You Matter!"
- "You Are Special!"
- "You Are Loved!"
- "Celebrate You!"
- Birthday cakes, balloons, stars, or other designs

You could even make decorating the bags a club meeting activity or collaboration project with your school's art club.

A small reminder can make a big difference.

The goal isn't to create a perfect bag. It's to make the person receiving it feel seen, valued, and celebrated.

6. Track donations

This is one of the most important, but easiest to forget, parts of the project!
Create a simple tracking sheet and update it regularly.

ITEM	GOAL	COLLECTED
Cake Mix	50	
Frosting	50	
Can of Soda	50	
Pack of Candles	50	
Bag	50	

Keep donations organized by item as they come in.

Tip: Designate a specific storage location for donations and make sure your advisor knows where everything is being kept. Large drives can take up a surprising amount of space so plan your storage area before the donations start arriving

7. Confirm where to donate

Do this before your packing event whenever possible.

Birthday Bags can be distributed through:

- **Your School or School District**

- Talk with your school counselor, social worker, or another appropriate school professional about whether your school would want to distribute bags to families.
- You can also ask whether other schools in your district could use bags.

- **Food Pantries**

- Contact local food pantries and ask whether they accept Birthday Bags and have space to store them.
- A quick Google search can help you identify food pantries in your community. School staff may also be aware of pantries you could support.

- **Community Organizations**

- Community centers and other organizations may be able to distribute bags to families in their community.

- **Faith Communities**

- Many faith communities (Churches, Synagogues, Mosques & Other Faith Communities) have food pantries, community assistance programs, or other outreach efforts that serve local families. Reach out to churches, synagogues, mosques, temples, and other faith-based organizations in your community to see if they would be able to accept and distribute Birthday Bags.

- **Other Nonprofits**

- Look for organizations serving children and families experiencing financial hardship, housing insecurity, or other challenges.

Important: Always contact an organization before bringing them a large number of bags.

Confirm that they are able to use the bags, how many they can accept, and when/how they would like to receive them.

8. Plan your packing event

Once you have collected your donations, it's time to turn them into Birthday Bags!

A packing event can happen during:

- An Aavidum Club meeting
- A school service day
- A lunch period
- An after-school event
- A larger service project with other clubs

Before packing the bags, you need to do four things:

1. Decide if you're decorating the bags.

- If you're decorating the bags, do this before you pack them because it's much easier to decorate a bag when it can lay flat.

2. Unpack donations.

- Unpack donations of packs of soda/crates of cake mix so that grabbing one of each item is easier when the assembly line starts.

3. Print the recipe cards.

- Count each cake mix and print 1 [recipe card](#) per one cake mix.
- Tape 1 recipe card onto each cake mix. Tape the card over the recipe instructions found on the back of the cake mix box. Make sure to tape both the top and bottom of the page so that it doesn't get crumpled. See image below for what the back of your cake mix box should look like.

4. Designate an area.

- Designate an area for students to put the completed bags. This could just be a corner of the room where lots of bags can be held until they're distributed. Make sure this area is large enough to fit all the bags you plan to complete. Birthday Bags take up lots of space!

To efficiently pack your bags, use an assembly line.

Organize your supplies into stations so that all of the same items are together in one spot:

1. Bags (decorate ahead of time if you're choosing to decorate)
2. Cake Mix with attached [Recipe Card](#)
3. Frosting
4. Soda
5. Candles
6. Finished Bags

Students can move down the line, adding one of each item to their bag.



9. Finishing touches

Before you finish, check every bag!

Make sure each bag contains:

- ☐ 1 cake mix with an attached recipe card
- ☐ 1 can of frosting
- ☐ 1 can of soda
- ☐ 1 pack of candles
- ☐ 1 decorated gift bag

Then close your bag so that the items stay safely inside.

You can use:

- Ribbon
- Twine
- A piece of tape
- Another simple closure

Tip: If you're using ribbon, consider having a student or adult responsible for tying the bags so they stay secure.



10. Deliver & Track

Once your bags are assembled, coordinate with your distribution partner to deliver them.

Before you go, confirm:

- How many bags they are receiving
- When they would like the bags delivered
- Where to bring them
- Who will receive them

Take a moment to celebrate your work!

Don't forget to count your impact.

Record:

- Number of items collected: _____
- Number of Birthday Bags assembled: _____
- Number of people/organizations involved: _____
- Name of community partners: _____

These numbers can help you tell the story of your project and show your school community what you accomplished. Please report these numbers back to Aavidum at clubs@aavidum.org or with a message on social media (@aavidum) so we can see the impact you made.



Ideas to Enhance the Project

Want to take your Birthday Bags drive to the next level?

Try one of these ideas:

Birthday Bag Challenge

- Challenge another club, grade, or school to see who can collect the most items. Or have a competition across homerooms.

Decorating Party

- Partner with the art club to decorate bags with positive messages.

Club Collaboration

- Invite Student Council, National Honor Society, Key Club, or another service organization to join the project.

Progress Tracker

- Create a giant thermometer or birthday cake graphic showing how close you are to your goal.

Birthday-Themed Collection Day

- Set up a table with balloons, birthday decorations, and information about the project. The birthday decorations are likely to get people's attention.

Work Together

- If your district has a Little Aavidum elementary club, this could be a great project to do together to help form new connections and make more bags.

Sample Timeline

Your timeline may look different depending on your school's schedule, but here's one example:

WEEK 1: PLAN

- ☐ Choose your goal
- ☐ Choose your drive dates
- ☐ Recruit student leaders
- ☐ Identify potential partners
- ☐ Confirm a storage location
- ☐ Identify a potential distribution partner

WEEK 2: PROMOTE

- ☐ Put up posters
- ☐ Make announcements
- ☐ Send information to families
- ☐ Begin collecting donations
- ☐ Reach out to other clubs

WEEK 3: COLLECT

- ☐ Continue promotion
- ☐ Track donations
- ☐ Send reminders
- ☐ Share your progress
- ☐ Identify items you still need

WEEK 4: FINISH & PACK

- ☐ Finish collecting donations
- ☐ Count and organize items
- ☐ Decorate bags
- ☐ Hold your packing event
- ☐ Check every completed bag

AFTER THE DRIVE

- ☐ Contact your distribution partner
- ☐ Deliver Birthday Bags
- ☐ Record your final numbers
- ☐ Thank everyone who participated
- ☐ Celebrate your impact!

You've got this!

YOU CAN DO THIS!

A successful Birthday Bags drive doesn't have to be huge.

Whether your club makes 10 bags or 100 bags, every bag represents a birthday that might otherwise go unrecognized.

You are helping someone receive more than cake mix, frosting, soda, and candles.

You are helping someone feel **remembered**.

You are helping someone feel **celebrated**.

You are reminding someone that they **matter**.

And that's what Aavidum is all about.

Thanks for having our back.

