

# Do's and Don'ts of Donating

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Nutley Family Service Bureau

Community support for The Pantry and The Shop at Nutley Family Service Bureau makes both operations possible, and for that the organization is tremendously grateful. The Pantry and The Shop (formerly known as the Food Pantry and the Thrift Shop) depend not only on the items donated, but on the time and energy of volunteers that make donations available for sale or distribution.

## What are the DO's & DON'Ts of donating?

Common sense is a good guide for donations to both enterprises. For The Shop, ask yourself if the item is sellable or if you would give the item to a family member, neighbor, or friend for re-gifting or as a hand-me-down. Generally, if the answer is yes that item qualifies as a 'do donate.' If the item is stained, soiled, torn, chipped, cracked, broken, or malfunctioning, it does not qualify, and is a 'don't donate.'

For The Pantry, ask yourself if the item is healthy and nutritious. Protein and staples are always a 'do donate' for most food pantries. Canned tuna, chicken, peanut butter, and canned or dried beans are high-value nutrition items and are always in need; hot and cold cereals, shelf-stable milk, canned fruit, and tomato products round out the list. Two primary 'don't donate' categories are goods that are past 'Best By' dates or do not have an intact seal. Nutritional value is another consideration. Foods low in sodium and low in processed sugar are part of a quality donation, as well as hearty soups and pasta. Fun foods for children are also encouraged, like individual packets of raisins, pretzels, and fruit cups that are perfect for lunch boxes or after-school snacks.

Since 2016, The Pantry at NFSB has been the recipient of food items collected from the Annual Scouting for Food Drive, as part of the Scouts' long-time commitment to the Nutley community's hunger needs. The donations from the Scout Drive comprise close to 90% of The Pantry's food supply. In 2019 over 38,000 items were accepted by over 200 volunteers on a single Saturday in March. Over several weeks, another 200 volunteers, sorted, dated, organized and transported the items from the collection site to The Pantry facilities. Unfortunately, close to 20% of the donated items are discarded due to the fact that they are damaged, open, or well past the manufacturer's 'Best By' date. Paying attention to the dates on the donated items will increase the percentage of usable donations and decrease waste.

The Shop at NFSB is unique among local thrift shops

## Items We CAN Accept

- ✓ Clothing
- ✓ Shoes
- ✓ Accessories
- ✓ Housewares
- ✓ Linens
- ✓ Home décor
- ✓ Small furniture items (lamps, end tables, etc.)
- ✓ Seasonal items (holiday décor, costumes, etc.)

## Items We CANNOT Accept

- ✗ Computers
- ✗ Electronics
- ✗ Medical supplies
- ✗ Large pieces of furniture
- ✗ Mattresses
- ✗ Beds & cribs
- ✗ Children's walkers
- ✗ Car seats

in that its focus is on the family. A diverse range of items like household goods, linens, and small furniture items, as well as an array of items from clothing to accessories for men, women and children are on our 'do donate' list. However, cribs and car seats are not acceptable

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due to possible safety risks or associated recall hazards. Electronics, computers, and large furniture items are not accepted, and removal of such items uses resources that could be better used in the community. Additionally, criteria for non-acceptable donations include: stained, soiled, torn, broken, malfunctioning items. For example, outdated small electrical appliances, incomplete board games, and opened toiletries are among some of the items on the 'don't donate' list. Never donate hazardous household items, like out-of-date fire extinguishers or items containing dead batteries.

A small army of volunteers is involved in turning donations into merchandise. Bagged and boxed items that are dropped off in our easily accessible double-door shed at the rear of the 169 Chestnut Street site are hauled into The Shop. Security cameras now monitor the NFSB drop-off area for the safety of donors and patrons. Initially, items are evaluated for retail quality. Items undergo a final inspection in a second sorting process, then are priced, hung, arranged, and placed on the sales floor. The effort to make The Shop a successful enterprise is time-consuming and labor-intensive. For example, for every 10 bags of clothing that is donated, The Shop realizes only one bag of resaleable merchandise. Careful consideration of the items being donated will increase NFSB's storage space, save volunteer time, and increase potential revenue.

When wondering about the do's and don'ts of

donating, please consider the following, and you will be on the right track:

The Shop at NFSB welcomes new or gently used items that patrons are pleased to purchase and proud to own.

The Pantry at NFSB accepts wholesome and shelf-stable items that enhance nutrition and well-being.

And as always, NFSB is appreciative of the generous community partners and individual support for all our services and programs. For more information, please go to [www.nutleyfamily.org](http://www.nutleyfamily.org) ■

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