

How-to Guide for Drop Your Drawers

Drop Your Drawers (DYD) is an annual campaign that collects packages of new underwear for children. The Campbell County (KY) Public Library began a DYD campaign in 2015. The remarkable success that year sparked interest among other libraries and in 2016, nearly 50 libraries throughout Kentucky implemented a DYD campaign.

This information and downloadable content was developed in 2019 so any library interested in starting DYD in their own community could do so with minimal effort and cost. Campbell County Public Library received permission each year from author Dav Pilkey to use his Captain Underpants image in our promotional materials. That permission is now extended to any library to use the Captain Underpants image, but only in conjunction with a Drop Your Drawers campaign.

Benefits of DYD

DYD provides an opportunity to benefit children and educate communities about a real need in our schools. Clean underwear that fits is a problem for many students in schools. The reasons are varied, but a short list includes kids having accidents in schools, medical issues, transient/homeless issues and financial issues. The campaign helps solidify and enhance library relationships with local schools and the community at large. People also like donating to a worthy cause knowing 100% of their donation is being used locally and knowing exactly who it helps.

First Steps

The first step in starting a fundraising campaign is to partner with local schools to identify needs in your area. Schools may employ educators, such as Family Resource Coordinators (FRCs), who provide services that keep children in the classroom to learn. Establishing strong relationships and partnerships with school personnel who focus on eliminating non-cognitive barriers to learning is essential.

Identify what to Collect

Confirm with your local schools that donations of underwear would indeed be helpful. The idea is to collect whatever will help keep children in the classroom learning, within the bounds of what your library is able to collect, store and eventually distribute. Libraries throughout Kentucky have collected underwear, T-shirts, socks and sweatpants.

Donations

Decide upfront what items you will accept and any particulars about those items. Boys, girls, specific sizes, only new unopened packages or whatever. Promote specifics so people who donate are confident that what they purchase will be useful. Our library only accepts new underwear in its original packaging. Anything not in original packages are given to organizations that accept clothing donations. Whether or not to accept monetary donations to purchase needed items is up to you. While our library accepts monetary donations, we do not advertise nor promote that in any way.

Who gets Donations?

Your library can donate to any entity that will connect children with the underwear. Some libraries work with public schools, parochial schools or other nonprofits. You should make it clear in your promotions, however, what entities will receive the donations.

Timing the Campaign

The campaign can be conducted at any time of the year. Some libraries have found better success during the summer months when there are many back-to-school sales. Summer is also typically a busy time for libraries. Whether stressing staff with something else during that time is good or bad is something to consider.

Choose the timing of your campaign carefully, make it a centerpiece of publicity during the campaign time frame and stick with the same time each year. Consistency is best.

Recognizing Donors

It's a good idea to seek donations and publicly recognize organizations that participate. Gaining the support of groups such as Kiwanis, Optimist Clubs, Daughters of the American Revolution, Women's Clubs, Disabled American Veterans, Kiwanis, etc. helps solidify a library's image as part of the community, and organizations have the ability to bring in several hundred pair with one donation.

Applaud individual donations, as well, but seek permission before publicizing the names of individuals. Some libraries have incorporated Drop Your Drawers into a "giving tree" display and will put a picture and name of donors on the tree. Others have paper underwear that patrons can write their name on to go in a display to get individuals recognized. These are great ideas that allow for individual recognition.

Creating Challenge Drives

Some libraries have had success in getting organizations to compete against one another. In our library system, we have a friendly completion among branches to see which branch reaches its goal first. We've heard of competitions between cities/towns/communities that donate the most and churches that donate the most. You could set up friendly competitions between Girl Scouts vs. Boy Scouts; Kiwanis vs. Rotary Club or whatever your community would support.

Publicizing the Campaign

The best campaigns are well-advertised. Use all of your resources to get the word out. Distribute flyers/posters, write stories in your newsletters, promote on social media, write blogs, use your websites and create/post videos.

All libraries should create some kind of display to go along with the campaign. Many libraries will use laundry themes (like a laundry basket that also serves as a collection device) or underwear themes (such as paper underwear hanging on a clothesline). One library uses an actual toilet as a focal point. Many libraries advertise books in the Captain Underpants series to accompany their displays.

The Counting Board also generations donations. Patrons are inspired to help you reach your goal.

Be sure to promote where the donations will be distributed. One of the great selling points about Drop Your Drawers is that it is entirely local. Anyone who donates knows where their donation will go and who will benefit.

Promotional items on this site that are available for use include:

- Counting board – A counting board is displayed at all of our locations to show patrons how many pairs of underwear have been collected at that branch. We use a small image of either pink or blue underwear to represent every 20 pairs that are donated. Set your goal and then

determine the quantity each underwear represents so that when the board is full, the goal is met.

- Sticker – We offer a “I dropped my drawers @ the library” sticker (the same idea as an “I voted” sticker) to patrons after they have donated to the campaign as a fun way to inspire and promote participation.
- Flyer – The flyer can be customized with the names of the recipients of the donations, whether a school or other entities, along with the library’s name and dates of the campaign.
- Logos – We have two versions of the “Drop Your Drawers” logo featuring Captain Underpants. One is more horizontal and the other has a more vertical orientation.
- A generic press release and fact sheet is provided that can be customized for specific campaigns and sent to local media. In addition to sending out press releases, we pitch the story directly to reporters (print, radio, and television). Because of the unique nature of the campaign and the catchy name, we’ve been able to get television interviews during local morning news segments.

We’ve also had a lot of luck in getting city governments, school boards and county government to donate for a photo opportunity. It’s a double win as their meetings are typically videotaped and made available through local community television, websites and other sources. Plus, reporters often attend the meetings.

Dav Pilkey and Captain Underpants

Dav Pilkey, author and illustrator of the Captain Underpants children’s books, allows limited use of his Captain Underpants image in promotional materials. In 2019, Mr. Pilkey generously gave permission for all libraries to use the Captain Underpants image when promoting Drop Your Drawers campaigns.

That said, there are some restrictions:

- You cannot attribute any quote to Mr. Pilkey. He would need to approve any representation of his words.
- You may only use the image of Captain Underpants from his printed materials. We are not allowed to use the Captain Underpants image from the movie versions.
- You may not connect Captain Underpants to a particular brand of underwear or business.

Please respect the use of Captain Underpants and Mr. Pilkey’s generosity.

Free promotional materials available

The Campbell County (KY) Public Library created promotional pieces to promote Drop Your Drawers and obtained specific permission from Dav Pilkey to use the Captain Underpants image. Those pieces are available to download. Free downloadable materials include original art, logos, counting boards, stickers, posters and more.

Distributing the donations

We have done the distribution in several ways. We have found the best way is to ask the receiving schools to help divide the underwear. The benefit is that the schools see the underwear is divided equally and are able to immediately take their share back to their schools.

One year, we made the “sorting” and distribution into a PR opportunity. When our director and his children divided up the underwear, we took a fast-motion video of the process. That turned into a fun video for our library. We’ve also delivered the underwear to each school, making an appointment beforehand, and took pictures with each principal.

Benefits and Beyond

Libraries need to be seen by their communities as partners in education. Libraries are a community asset and a vital part of the communities we serve. While schools and libraries are natural partners in educating children, establishing those partnerships can be difficult, and maintaining those relationships often depend on the people involved. A change in superintendents or school librarians often affect established relationships for the classroom or after-school activities, or even to distribute summer reading materials. Drop Your Drawers helps solidify relationships between libraries and schools beyond individuals involved.

Contact Us

We sincerely hope you will consider starting a DYD campaign in your community. It's a win-win – for the recipients, of course, but your library will reap many benefits as well. If you start a campaign, please send the total number of donated items from your campaign to JC Morgan, director of the Campbell County Public library at jcmorgan@cc-pl.org. If you have any comments, or suggestions for how we can improve this How-to Guide or the website, please feel free to write.

Just go for it

In the end, there really aren't many rules other than the appropriate use of the Captain Underpants image. You'll learn as you go. Experiment, have fun and do good.

Good luck!