United is the Way to Canned Structures

 Official Rules & Guidelines Packet

Presented by

United Way of Mid Rural New York

 For Participants

# Introduction

Canned Structures is a design and build competition where teams create large structures made entirely from canned goods and other non-perishable food items. The competition showcases creativity, engineering, and teamwork—while raising awareness about hunger. The structures are built on-site at the corporation, school, community group, or organization participating in the challenge. After the competition, all food used in the competition is donated to local food pantries or hunger related organizations.

# Team Eligibility

Teams may represent corporations, architecture/engineering firms, schools, community groups, or other organizations. Each team must designate a Team Captain (primary contact) and a Structure Designer (responsible for structure planning and designing). Teams may then have up to ten additional team members.

# Registration & Deadlines

* Team Registration Forms must be submitted to the United Way of Mid Rural New York by November 15, 2025.
* The Canned Structure build must occur between November 1 and November 30, 2025 and be completed fully by November 30, 2025.
* A photo of the structure and a count of the number of food items used in the structure must be submitted to the United Way on completion of the build (on or before November 30).
* Judging by representatives from the United Way will occur during the week of December 1-5, 2025.
* The corporation/organization is responsible for delivering all of the cans/food to a local food pantry/hunger organization at a time convenient for the pantry/hunger organization, once the judging is completed.

# Design Guidelines

Structures must be original, family-friendly, and visually engaging.

# Materials & Construction Rules

Allowed: full unopened cans, non-perishable food items, cardboard, foam-core, tape, fishing line, thin plywood, etc. Not allowed: glue, nails, glass, perishable items, or damaged cans. Outdated, expired food is not allowed and will be disqualified. Food labels must remain intact.

# Size & Space Limitations

Maximum footprint is typically 10’x10’. Maximum height is 8’. Structures must be freestanding and self-supporting without permanent frames.

# Build Day Procedures

Teams are given a fixed build time, November 1-November 30, 2025. Only registered team members (a maximum of 10, not including the Team Captain and Structure Designer) may work on the building project. Safety inspections will be conducted before judging.

# Takedown & Donation

After the competition, structures must be carefully dismantled. All cans and non-perishable food must be boxed and donated to a local hunger relief organization.

# Judging Criteria and Awards

A trophy will be awarded for best overall structure in each of the four counties: Chenango, Delaware, Madison and Otsego. Certificates will be awarded for 2nd and 3rd place in each county.

# Recognition

Winners will be announced in local press and on social media at the conclusion of the competition. Winners will also be recognized in the United Way’s Annual Report.

# Safety & Conduct

Teams must follow their organization’s safety rules, maintain proper conduct, and avoid unsafe practices. No climbing on structures.

# Helpful Tips

Use heavier cans at the base, keep extras on hand (in case needed), test your design, plan color use, and have repair materials on hand, like tape and cardboard.

# Contact Information

For questions, contact the United Way of Mid Rural New York at 607-334-8815 or kyli@uwmrny.org.