

Down to the wire

Feverish preparation for food drive



A special Spanish-language poster promotes the drive in Puerto Rico.

Members of nearly 1,500 NALC branches across the nation were working feverishly as this *Postal Record* went to press in anticipation of the 16th annual Letter Carriers “Stamp Out Hunger” Food Drive on Saturday, May 10—the nation’s largest one-day effort to fight hunger.

This year’s collections from patrons are especially important as food bank after food bank has reported record numbers of new clients. Many are working families victimized by the souring economy and soaring prices, particularly for food and fuel.

Although the task will be daunting, President William H. Young is leading a spirited band of food drive coordinators who are optimistic their hard work and the NALC’s tradition of helping those less fortunate will mean a drive even better than last year’s. In 2007, letter carriers delivered 70.7 million pounds of food for the tables of millions of hard-pressed families in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and Guam.

“In times like these, when more and more families are caught in a shock wave of poverty, our effort in this drive is most essential,” Young said.

“Every day, we see more layoffs or businesses closing or cutting work hours. Across the country, workers’ purchasing power is shrinking while the cost of gasoline and groceries continues to rise,” he said.

“Our charity is needed now and I am urging all letter carriers and their families to pitch in and help.”

Again this year—as they have for many years—members of the National Rural Letter Carriers’ Association will work hand-in-hand with city carriers to restock the shelves at food banks, pantries and shelters in their communities. Other postal employees and countless citizen volunteers will play critical roles in making the drive successful across the country.

NALC branches have drummed up community awareness of hunger and encouraged postal customers to donate nonperishable foodstuffs.

In Austin, Minnesota, NALC Food Drive Coordinator Bob Rosel told the *Daily Herald* that a friendly competition with carriers in nearby Albert Lea helps drives in both cities. “Of course, the winners are the needy in our counties as we restock the food shelves for the summer season when many children no longer get school lunches,” Rosel said.

Bill Carnegie, head of the Community Food Bank in Nogales, Arizona, told local media that the letter carriers’ drive is especially important because the number of people seeking assistance has increased by 25 percent over the past year.

In Clarksville, Tennessee, Branch 364 Vice President Eddie Campbell told *The Leaf Chronicle* that the 50,000 pounds collected last year for Urban Ministries, Loaves and Fishes, and the Salvation Army kept the food banks stocked until the traditional winter holiday drives.

“It makes us feel good that we’re doing this small part to help the community,” Campbell said. “People can take for granted how much food they have in their own household as compared to their neighbors.”

A number of governmental proclamations endorse the drive each year, and among the first in 2008 was from Florida Gov. Charlie Crist. He cited the tremendous contribution from Publix Supermarkets in supplying millions of plastic bags throughout the state, and Florida-based Valpak, which has again mailed out more than 44 million envelope packets featuring a promotion of the food drive.

Use of the Internet to promote public response to the drive will be at its height this year, with the site www.helpstampouthunger.com offer-



ing facts on hunger in America and promotional material.

Residents in New York City and Chicago will have the opportunity, for the first time, to make an online monetary donation to their local America's Second Harvest food banks May 3-10 or take a food donation to their local post office. (Donations are not collected at mailboxes in those cities because of transportation difficulties.)

The drive's major national supporter, Campbell Soup Company, has again placed scores of advertisements in major magazines; produced national radio public service announcements featuring President Young and Vicki Escarra, president of America's Second Harvest, and television PSAs featuring the Harlem Globetrotters; and will place a special Stamp Out Hunger coupon in hundreds of major newspapers on the Sunday before the drive.

That effort is in addition to the nearly 124 million postcards produced jointly by Campbell's and the Postal Service to alert postal customers just before the drive.

In Puerto Rico, a special Spanish-language poster has been developed to promote the drive along with more than 1 million Spanish-language Campbell's-Postal Service postcards.

Reporting results

The top NALC branches in 10 membership categories will be honored by NALC and Campbell Soup at the 66th Biennial Convention in Boston. Accompanying the award will be a 1,000-can donation from Campbell Soup to food banks designated by the winning branches.

Shortly before the drive date, branch food drive coordinators will receive an official reporting form for final results of their drive, with instructions to return it to NALC Headquarters as quickly as possible. A list of branch totals and a complete story on

the 2008 drive will appear in a future issue of the *Postal Record*.

The form must be received at NALC Headquarters no later than Wednesday, May 28 for the branch to be included in the *Postal Record* list and to be considered for the 10 Campbell Soup/NALC Branch Awards. No results will be taken by telephone.

The Official Report Form should be mailed to: NALC Food Drive Results, 100 Indiana Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001-2144. (Branches may fax the form to 202-737-1540; it should also be mailed in as a backup.)

Send photos, other materials

The NALC needs information and materials about local branch food drives for articles in the *Postal Record*, *NALC Bulletin*, and future food drive videos:

- Color photos should be mailed in quickly, and should *include identification of people pictured*. Digital photos sent by e-mail are welcome, but branches should limit submissions to their best photos and include identifications.
- Videos (DVD or Beta tape) should be of high quality and especially of carriers picking up food from homes. Local news coverage of the drive will receive highest consideration.
- Other materials sought include plastics bags, T-shirts and buttons that show the range of food drive activity; proclamations; letters of thanks from food banks, pantries and shelters; letters-to-the-editor and other expressions of appreciation; full-page tear-sheets of newspaper articles and editorials; and other materials, such as fliers.

The items should be sent to Drew Von Bergen, NALC Director of Public Relations, at the Headquarters address above. Questions about the drive should be directed to Von Bergen at 202-662-2489 or by e-mail at vonbergen@nalc.org. ✉

Make sure you mark May 10 on your calendar.



Top: A proclamation from Gov. Charlie Crist declaring a Florida Letter Carriers Food Drive Day.

Above: Oshkosh, Wisconsin Branch 173 food drive coordinator Mark Wortman (l) receives a Community Service Award in a March ceremony from Oshkosh Area United Way 2007 Campaign Chair Bill Whitlock. United Way Oshkosh Executive Director Sue Panek is at podium. (United Way photo)