

Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive

A testament to letter carriers' creativity and determination

Three decades after letter carriers first collected food in a national one-day food drive, they continue to conduct the largest single-day food drive in the country. On May 13, the Letter Carriers' "Stamp Out Hunger" Food Drive once again brought in donated food by the truckload.

Since the NALC's first national food drive in 1993, active and retired letter carriers, with the help of volunteers from their communities, have collected a total of 1.82 billion pounds of food leading up to this year's drive. The food collected from postal patrons who leave bags of food at their doorsteps or next to their mailboxes the second Saturday each May is delivered to local food banks.

The total for this year will be announced in next month's issue of *The Postal Record*, but preliminary results pointed to a great year.

"The Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive is 31 years strong, and this year's results look promising," NALC President Brian L. Renfro said. "Letter carriers showed up again for their communities and helped ensure that the needs of the hungry are met in every city and town in the United States."

One in 8 Americans, including millions of children, senior citizens and veterans, are unsure where their next meal will come from. The May food drive helps to relieve shortages of food that food pantries experience in spring and summer after holiday donations have been depleted. And when summer arrives, most school meal programs are not available, so the need for food grows.

This year, the virtual donor drive that branches used to make up for the cancellation of in-person food collection events during the COVID-19



Left: North Texas Branch 4065
Above: Central California Branch 231
Below: Fort Collins, CO Branch 849





Above: Van Nuys, CA Branch 2462
 Below: Honolulu, HI Branch 860
 Below right: Lubbock, TX Branch 2589



Food Drive (continued)

pandemic continued as a supplement to the traditional food drive, so some of the support for local food banks came in the form of online cash donations.

The economic disruption of the pandemic caused a spike in demand for food, while squeezing food bank supplies due to canceled food drives, including the NALC Food Drive. But for some food banks, the problems didn't end with the pandemic shutdowns.

"Food banks never thought they would see client numbers rivaling the COVID-19 pandemic, when they were distributing emergency food to lines of cars at baseball stadiums and shopping malls. Alarmingly, we are seeing *more* people in need this year," Jerry Brown, director of public relations for St. Mary's Food Bank in Phoenix, AZ, wrote on AZCentral.com, the *Arizona Republic's* web news outlet.

"We are distributing more food, purchasing more food (due to sagging donations from both public and government sources)," Brown wrote, "and, like everyone else, paying a lot

more for that food than ever before."

In the days following the food drive, reports from branches and media outlets again demonstrated the dedication that postal employees and their customers have to the food drive—and also showed that food banks and the people they serve appreciated their efforts.

"It's everybody together helping out their communities in a way that touches everybody, which is food," **Devon Ranaldson**, food drive coordinator for Brunswick, GA Branch 313, told the *Brunswick News*. "Being right here, Brunswick-Glynn County, it's great motivation to get people to help each other out in a way we can all relate to."

Don Young, food drive coordinator for Vancouver, WA Branch 1104, told the *Columbian* news outlet that his goal is 100,000 pounds on each year's Food Drive Day—but any amount helps.

"Even if we can get, say, 30,000 pounds out of it, that still will feed quite a few people—I think it still has a good impact," Young said. "And because it's this time of the year when kids are starting to get out of school, it's a good time to do it, to replenish the food bank, because it's depleting."

Reno, NV, postal patrons donated a great deal of food this year, according to Reno Branch 709 President **Clarence McCarthy**.

"Some routes get a ton of food. Some of those trucks get filled to capacity a couple times," McCarthy said in a report by Reno's KTVN-TV.

"It's just a very good feeling at the end of the day," McCarthy added. "It's a lot of hard work for our letter carriers, but I think they all like doing it."

The beneficiary of Branch 709's hard work, the Food Bank of Northern



Right: Oklahoma City, OK Branch 458
Below: Levittown, PA Branch 4973
Bottom: Cherry Hill/Haddonfield, NJ Branch 769



Nevada, appreciates the letter carriers' dedication—and their timing. “One of the things that we love about this food drive in particular: It is in the spring and that is when people don't think about hunger,” Jocelyn Lantrip, director of marketing for the Food Bank of Northern Nevada, told KTVN. “They think about it during the holidays, and unfortunately it's a year-round problem.”

“Year after year, Stamp Out Hunger collects good food for local people, all thanks to our local letter carriers,” The Open Door food pantry President and CEO Julie LaFontaine told the *Salem News* of northeastern Massachusetts. “It's a sight to see, as mail trucks arrive and unload bags and bags of donations, and it is a testament to what our community can do with creativity and determination.” The *Salem News* reported a preliminary collection of 14,000 pounds of food by carriers of Massachusetts Northeast Merged Branch 25.

“The Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive makes a huge impact in our community each year, and we are so grateful to everyone in our community who so generously participated,” a representative of the Clark County (WA) Food Bank said. The food bank serves 120,000 people in the Portland, OR, and Vancouver, WA, area.

“We want to thank those people who participate, whether it's the person putting the bag of groceries on the porch, whether it the person who's volunteering to help us that day at all those locations, post offices across the state, or whether it's particularly the postal workers themselves—we just want to say thank you for giving us one day of their incredible service,” Utah Food Bank President Ginette Bott told Utah's *Deseret News*.

“The ripple effect of not eating has a huge impact on more than just a growly stomach. It impacts so many different facets of individuals, whether they're children, family members, senior citizens—we all deserve the basic three meals a day,” Bott said.

The annual food drive wouldn't be possible without the support of our national partners: the U.S. Postal Service, the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association, Vericast, United Way Worldwide, the AFL-CIO, Valpak, the Kellogg Co. and CVS Health. These partners help through such actions as paying for the specially marked postcards, donating thousands of pounds of food and thousands of dollars to food pantries, donating bags that letter carriers distribute to customers, gathering volunteers, or getting out the message about the food drive.

Branches were asked to report their food drive totals to Headquarters by June 1. The total pounds of food collected, and top branch collections, will be announced in the July issue of *The Postal Record*. **PR**

