

# Food drive in final push



## Four-wheeled support

Uncle Bob's Self Storage, which serves more than 170,000 customers in 24 states and is one of the five largest self-storage companies in the U.S., has generously offered to help branches deliver food collected during the drive to local food banks and pantries.

In the past, the Buffalo, New York-based Uncle Bob's has helped food banks in Buffalo and in Florida, and now has expanded its offer to all 24 states where it operates: Alabama, Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia.

Founded in 1982, Uncle Bob's offers products and services such as Dri-guard, its state-of-the-art dehumidifying system; Uncle Bob's Rental Trucks; and a national sales and reservation system for the company's rental spaces.

**A**fter nearly two decades of helping American communities fight hunger, the NALC National Food Drive is primed to break through a benchmark level in the country's largest one-day humanitarian effort—surpassing 1 billion pounds of food collected from postal customers and delivered to food banks, pantries and shelters.

As the May 8 drive date neared, the effort stood at 982.7 million pounds collected since the nationwide drive began in 1993. Last year, a record 73.4 million pounds of non-perishables was collected.

More than 1,400 NALC branches and scores of rural-only post offices were going all out in the weeks before the drive, fully aware of how critical this year's drive will be to millions struck by the national economic downturn.

NALC President Fred Rolando underscored the size of America's hunger problem as he urged all carriers to enthusiastically join in the effort and encouraged citizens to donate food items.

"The startling statistics from the Agriculture Department last November—that people living in 'food insecure' homes had risen in just one year from 35 million to more than 49 million—shows how severe this problem is in our country," Rolando said. "Many families are finding, for the first time in their lives, they need help to put enough food on the table.

"We must make a full-scale effort to help stock community food banks and pantries," Rolando added. "What carriers do on May 8 will make a major impact all across the nation."

More than 125 million postcards, sponsored by the U.S. Postal Service and Campbell Soup Company, were set for delivery just before the drive to remind residents along postal routes to leave food by their mailboxes on Saturday, May 8. These followed more than 40 million Valpak direct-mail marketing envelopes delivered in April and May that also promoted donations.

"By making it easier for people to donate food, NALC is making a big difference in the fight to stop hunger," said Valpak corporate communications director Deanna Willsey. "Valpak proudly supports the NALC and promotes Stamp Out Hunger again this year."

Also supporting the drive as national partners, alongside USPS, Campbell Soup, and Valpak, were the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association, AFL-CIO, United Way and Feeding America.

### A crucial role

Food banks are having it rough these days, as many are forced to turn away folks in need.

"This drive in May, when we go into a quiet time period for donations, is very critical and very important to us," Tom Newell, board chair of the Denton, Texas Community Food Center told *The Pegasus News*. "This is the single largest drive we do all year."

"For many, this food is expected to get them through until the holidays," said Sara Waggoner, of the Community Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma.

Dan Taivalkoski, executive director of the Racine County, Wisconsin Food Bank, told *The Journal-Times* that he was worried because a recent Boy Scouts drive was down 28 percent from 2009.

The *Belleville (IL) News-Democrat* heard from Branch 155 food drive coordinator Dan Davis on carriers' concern.

"A lot of carriers on the street see people in real life situations and see a lot of them hurting," Davis said.

And the *Pensacola News Journal* quoted Glenn Corbett, food drive chair in Warrington, Florida, as saying Food Drive Day "is the best day of the year to be a letter carrier. Year after year, it brings out the best in people."

### Friends pitch in

Government officials, our corporate partners and NALC branches all made

# Post office helps hungry patron

NALC's annual food drive is the largest single-day drive in the country, helping needy people everywhere. But sometimes a person going hungry needs more than what the drive can provide. And no one knows what members of our communities need more than letter carriers.

On his daily rounds, Pittsburgh letter carrier James Gambrell usually knocks on the window of his customer Lucille Zolkoski's house to check on her. During the past two years that the Branch 84 member has been delivering his current route, he's gotten to know Zolkoski, who on most days tells him stories about her life and shares her ideas.

"One day, she was telling me that she only had bread and butter to eat," Gambrell told *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. "I was worried about her. It could be my mom or aunt" in a similar situation, he said.

The customer's challenge was that she doesn't drive and couldn't get to a grocery store. A Catholic nun used to

visit her and deliver groceries, but she no longer has a car. And although Zolkoski likes to walk, she couldn't get out of her house or neighborhood during the major snowstorms that hit the East Coast over the winter.

Hearing all of this, Gambrell took the situation into his own hands. He approached a neighbor who's a fire fighter to fill him in and gave him some money. The neighbor threw in some of his own cash as well and brought Zolkoski food from the grocery store.

But Gambrell didn't stop there. "I took the idea to my station and everybody gave," he said. "Everybody in my post office."

Soon after, the 12-year postal veteran was delivering five postal bins filled to

the brim with food donations from himself and 35 co-workers at the Oakland station. As he carted the care packages off his truck, Zolkoski hid her face behind her hands and said, "I can't," and "Why me?" before showering Gambrell with thanks in Polish, French and Greek.

"I want you to accept what my post office thinks about its customers," the carrier told her.

For a more long-term solution, Gambrell and a co-worker are arranging for a social worker to meet with Zolkoski to figure out her needs and get assistance for her from local food banks.

"You know what," Zolkoski said to her carrier. "God put certain people on this Earth for a reason." ✉

sure everyone knew May 8 was special.

Among governors issuing early proclamations were Democrat Christine Gregoire in Washington and Republican Bob McDonnell in Virginia.

Special public service announcements were being aired, featuring Courteney Cox and David Arquette, who are strong supporters of Feeding America, and "American Idol" host Ryan Seacrest, who provided a nationwide radio message.

Campbell Soup, which has been the drive's hallmark corporate supporter for more than 15 years, also arranged ads in numerous magazines and coupon fliers in Sunday newspapers just before the drive, sent participating NALC branches promotional inflatable soup cans, and provided Facebook and Twitter updates.

## Awards

NALC and Campbell Soup will again honor the top branches in 10 membership categories. President Rolando will present plaques to representatives of the winning branches at the 67th Biennial Convention in Anaheim, and Campbell Soup will provide a 1,000-can donation of soup to a food bank or pantry designated by each of the 10 branches.

**The top branch in the following 10 categories will receive awards:**

Category I: 1 to 49 members

Category II: 50 to 99 members

Category III: 100 to 199 members

Category IV: 200 to 349 members

Category V: 350 to 499 members

Category VI: 500 to 699 members

Category VII: 700 to 999 members

Category VIII: 1,000 to 1,499 members

Category IX: 1,500 to 1,999 members

Category X: 2,000 members and more

## Results and coverage

Preliminary coverage of the drive will appear in the June issue of *The Postal Record*, with a complete report, including photos and branch results, in July.

Coordinators have been mailed an official form to report collections, with instructions to return it to NALC Headquarters by May 25 in order to be included in the branches list in *The Postal Record* and to be considered for special Campbell Soup/NALC branch awards.

The form should be mailed to: NALC Food Drive Results, 100 Indiana Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20001-2144.

*Branches may fax the result form to 202-737-1540, but it must also be mailed in.*

Information and materials about local drives is needed for articles in *The Postal Record*, the *NALC Bulletin*, and for videos, including color photos with identification; high-quality videos, especially of local news coverage; and other materials, such as proclamations, letters of thanks, and newspaper articles and editorials.

These should be mailed immediately to Drew Von Bergen, National Food Drive Coordinator, at the Headquarters address listed above. ✉

