

# NALC Food Drive May 14, 2011



## A beautiful day



Top right: Lincoln, NE Branch 8 carrier Kris Divis proudly shows off the food she collected.

Top left: Carrier Pereira of San Juan, PR, collected the most food in his station.

Above: Grandview, MO Food Drive Coordinator Lucas Morkus unloads food with officials from local charities.

**F**or the 19th consecutive year, letter carriers all across the nation showed their concern, compassion and commitment to their postal customers and the communities in which they work and live by participating May 14 in the labor movement's largest humanitarian effort, the NALC Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive.

Branch drive leaders were buoyed in much of the country by generally good weather, which might help offset the negative impact of the lingering economic downturn on donations at a time when the ranks of those who seek help from food agencies has swelled.

As this issue of *The Postal Record* went to press, branches were still collecting and counting initial donations as well as residual contributions. A final national total for the drive was scheduled to be announced in early June, and a complete report on the drive, including branch-by-branch results, will appear in the July issue of the magazine.

Food drive coordinators across America were hopeful that the 2011 drive would exceed the record of 77.1 million pounds collected a year ago, which had boosted the total for the drive's 18 years to more than 1 billion pounds. This year's drive involved more than 1,400 NALC branches and more than 100 rural carrier sites in more than 10,000 cities and towns in all 50 states and U.S. jurisdictions.

NALC President Fredric V. Rolando applauded the hard work and dedication of NALC members as well as the thousands of members of the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association, a food drive national partner, plus the countless postal employees and volunteers who helped with the largest one-day effort to combat hunger in America.

"It is gratifying to see so many NALC members and other volunteers sacrifice their time and energy to make sure this humanitarian effort is a success, year after year," Rolando said. "I'm sure that the recipients of our efforts appreciate it during these difficult economic times."

Rolando thanked the union's other national partners in the drive: the U.S. Postal Service, Campbell Soup Co., Valpak Direct Marketing Systems, United Way Worldwide and its local United Ways, the AFL-CIO, the Feeding America food bank network, and Uncle Bob's Self Storage. He also thanked "Family Circus" cartoonists Bil and Jeff Keane, who yearly provide special artwork.

The drive was also helped by extensive public service advertising by Campbell Soup and Feeding America, which reached out to millions of Americans via the Internet, newspapers and magazines, and radio and television. Campbell's made a sizeable donation of food to Feeding America on behalf of the drive.

Actor and host of "America's Got Talent" Nick Cannon played a critical role in the drive this year by promoting it in public service announcements for weeks before the drive. The drive came at a busy time for Cannon—his wife, singer Mariah Carey, delivered twins only days before the drive.

### Media attention

Reports came in fast and furious on food drive day, May 14, and were spread across the news media.

KTTS 94.7 in Springfield, MO, put out a call for help at the food bank after the Salvation Army reported a "major success" in the drive. "It's a good problem to have: not enough hands to sort through a massive pile of food collected by postal workers," station managers said.

West Virginia Association of Letter Carriers President Joe Paden described to WOWK-TV in Huntington what the drive was all about.

"Letter carriers going throughout the neighborhoods, they see the need,"

Paden said. "A lot of people don't see it out there. They know toward the end of the month people are running out of food."

Mark Westphal, president of the Fox Valley Area Labor Council in Wisconsin, cited the NALC drive in a newspaper column on how union members do good work in that community. And columnist Neal Rubin in *The Detroit News* wrote that the food drive is "still the easiest way ever invented to do something useful and generous."

Carrier Janie Savage in western North Carolina said she doesn't mind the extra work on food drive day because she knows what it's all about.

"I grew up very poor," she told the *Asheville Citizen-Times*. "I know hunger. And I think a lot of people still have a lot of compassion even if they have never known hunger."

## Weather worries

The tornadoes that struck through the South, especially in Alabama, had an impact on the drive in those areas, and food bank officials were worried that many people already had given to emergency disaster relief and wouldn't have anything left for the NALC drive.

"We really rely on the food from the Stamp Out Hunger food drive in a major way to get us through the (summer months) slump," Mary Michael Kelly of the Community Food Bank of Central Alabama told *The Birmingham News*. By Saturday afternoon, lots of food was coming in, thanks to the work of carriers and bags donated by AARP.

Tornadoes also had caused severe damage in southwestern Virginia, and food bank officials planned to distribute some of the donations to those victims, according to WSLN-TV in Roanoke.

In Biloxi, MS, resident Barbara Brewer told WLOX-13 how she feels about the NALC drive. "I just think it's a wonderful thing for the mail carriers to help the people that are needy," she said.

The drive went well in San Angelo, TX, for the Concho Valley Regional Food Bank.

As carrier Ron Briley sorted his collection, he commented to the San Angelo *Standard-Times* about an insight experienced by many carriers across the nation. "The thing that surprises me the most," he said, "is the people you think have the least, they give the most."



The kickoff event for Charlotte, NC Branch 545.

In Decatur, IL, Larry Butler of the Trades and Labor Assembly helped in bringing food back to the collection points by offloading full mail trucks. Despite his own generosity, he took time to praise the letter carriers to the *Decatur Herald-Review*.

"The mail carriers are doing a wonderful job," Butler said. "It's like three or four times their usual workload on this day and you don't ever hear them complaining. I think they're a special group, and I admire them immensely."

Several members of the equestrian team from the University of Scranton in Pennsylvania put together special bags of groceries at Gerrity's and Weis stores that could be purchased and then donated to the drive. By Saturday afternoon, more than 700 bags of groceries had been bought and donated by customers.

## Lending a hand

Many officials joined in to help in the drive, too.

On May 7 in Utah, Salt Lake City Mayor Ralph Becker and Provo Mayor John Curtis used a 50-mile Rivalry Ride bike event, mainly a competition between Brigham Young University and the University of Utah, to spur interest in the Stamp Out Hunger food drive and boost donations.

Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ) didn't just talk about his support of the drive—he showed up in Hoboken on food drive day to help unload trucks at the River Street post office.

"This is a great way for New Jerseyans to help their fellow New Jerseyans and is a great opportunity to show a sense of community," Menendez told *The Jersey Journal*.

The Stamp Out Hunger drive doesn't stop at the Pacific shore, or even in Hawaii. Agana, GU Branch 4093 President Andrew Bautista emphasized on guampdn.com that the local drive there benefits the Catholic Social Services and the Salvation Army pantries.

"Everything we collect here on Guam actually stays here and goes to our registered food banks to our people," Bautista said. "Nothing goes off-island." ✉

Below: West Palm Beach Branch 1690's Helen Hoppman with a bagful of food.

Bottom: It's all smiles for the Englewood main dock crew for Centennial CO Branch 5996.

