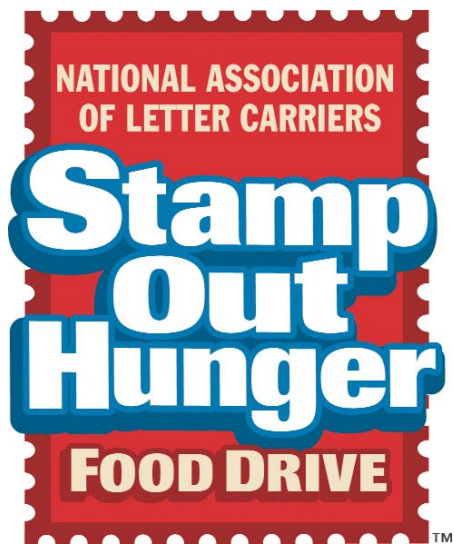


National, necessary

19th annual food drive confronts scourge of hunger in America



As this issue of *The Postal Record* reaches you, the 19th annual NALC Stamp Out Hunger food drive is mere days away.

This one-day drive, the nation's largest, provides letter carriers, other postal employees and thousands of volunteers across the nation the opportunity to meld their forces together to conduct the drive in communities throughout America. Our goals: to help restock community food banks, pantries and shelters for needy families throughout the summer, and to build upon the one billion pounds of non-perishable food collected since 1992 from millions of generous postal customers.

The drive is held each year on the second Saturday in May, and so Saturday, May 14, has for months been circled on the calendars of anti-hunger advocates who have watched as food supplies collected during winter holiday drives dwindle day by day. Demands for food assistance have reached record levels from what seems to be an almost endless line of victims of the worst recession since the Great Depression.

National and local NALC food drive coordinators hope to expand on last year's record of 77.1 million pounds of donations collected along postal routes, and with help from key national partners, they have promoted the Stamp Out

Hunger drive by filling the airwaves with radio and television public service announcements (PSAs), publishing newspaper and magazine advertisements, engaging online communities via social networks, and creating hundreds of unique events both to attract public attention and to encourage postal customers to place bags of food by their mailboxes on May 14.

National Association of Letter Carriers President Fredric V. Rolando made a special appeal to active and retired members, asking us all to make an extra effort to ensure that this year's drive will be a success. To hammer home the point, Rolando noted government reports that show that more than 50 million American families—including 17.2 million children—are living in homes lacking sufficient food.

"May 14 is the one day in the year when letter carriers take control of the conversation about hunger in America, making a loud-and-clear case for providing a chance for millions of families, and millions of children, to have a hunger-free summer," Rolando said. "Our hard work and sacrifice will not go unnoticed, I assure you."

The word is out

Rolando has announced that the Postal Service is distributing special Stamp Out Hunger buttons that carriers can wear in the two weeks leading up to the drive. Also, a special promotional food drive poster, featuring artwork by cartoonists Bil and Jeff Keane, has been distributed for display in thousands of post office lobbies across the country; thousands more are in the mail to businesses that wish to advertise the drive to their customers and employees.

Meanwhile, national partner Valpak is urging nearly 44 million postal customers to participate in the drive via an announcement placed prominently on the front of its familiar blue envelopes.

Actor and musician Nick Cannon is featured in PSAs produced by Campbell Soup and the national food bank network Feeding America, both national sponsors of the Stamp Out Hunger drive. Cannon also is featured on more than 82 million drive-promoting postcards sponsored by another national partner, the U.S. Postal Service.

Cannon, a member of the Feeding America entertainment committee (and also the husband of singer Mariah

Katrina Lindell from Centennial CO Branch 5996 displays a T-shirt promoting her branch's food drive at the Colorado Rockies' home opener on April 1.



Carey) was named "Person of the Week" by KTWV-FM/The Wave in Los Angeles on April 1 for his support of the drive. He said he feels a connection with the hunger issue because of his experience as a youth.

"Growing up, we had public assistance...and I can remember being a kid, just knowing how much that meant to me that people not only gave to us, but it made those days easier through tough times," Cannon told The Wave morning show hosts Pat Prescott and Kim Amidon. "Now, it's my duty to give back."

Can hardly wait

Many NALC branches and local charities started early to gain community support of this year's drive to build momentum toward the May 14 national event.

For example, Centennial Colorado Branch 5996 used the beginning of a new baseball season to coordinate a special food drive with the Colorado Rockies at the team's home opener April 1 in Denver, in conjunction with Campbell Soup and Safeway food stores. The result was more than a thousand pounds of food collected for the Food Bank of the Rockies, not to mention tons of good publicity for the Stamp Out Hunger effort.

In Appleton, WI, the Salvation Army-Fox Cities posted Internet alerts about the drive and encouraged community-wide participation. A posting to Connecticut's Fairfield Patch online community noted that a local Operation Hope effort last year netted collection of 45,000 pounds of food, and added: "If we all pitch in as a community, we can only hope to give more as long as Operation Hope needs our support."

Special Valpak coupons were made available to blog readers in Bismarck, ND, and Frugal Coupon Living challenged web users nationwide to make 10,000 pledges of donations to be

matched by Campbell's. Bloggers in Florida, Wisconsin and Illinois also were among the many web-based writers encouraging food drive support.

Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn jumped on board early as well, signing a proclamation that designates Saturday, May 14, as National Association of Letter Carriers Food Drive Day in the Prairie State "in recognition of the NALC's efforts to combat hunger."

Early editorial support for the Stamp Out Hunger drive could be found in Florida, in both the *Naples News* and its companion publication, the Marco Island *Eagle*. The papers noted that the food drive is an ideal opportunity for temporary winter residents to put their unused non-perishables to work for a good cause before those so-called "snow birds" head back north.

"Seldom has it been so easy to help so many people," the newspaper said. "The food drive is a model of efficiency."

The drive's national partners help bolster that efficiency. In addition to the aforementioned U.S. Postal Service, Campbell Soup, Valpak and Feeding America, national Stamp Out Hunger partners this year are the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association, the AFL-CIO, United Way Worldwide and its local United Way organizations, and Uncle Bob's Self Storage. ☒

Branch food drive coordinators should return the official results form to National Headquarters as soon as possible, but in all cases, to arrive at NALC no later than the May 27 deadline for publication in *The Postal Record* and for inclusion in the national total. Action photos, video clips and news media items also should be forwarded to Headquarters as soon as possible.



Arigato, NALC

On March 11, a historic magnitude 8.9 earthquake occurred 15 miles off the coast of northern Japan. The temblor and resulting tsunamis killed thousands and left thousands more homeless. NALC President Fredric Rolando encouraged letter carriers to give money to relief efforts, and led the way by sending a donation from our union to our brothers and sisters in the Japan Postal Group Union. A few weeks later, JPGU President Norinaka Takeuchi sent Rolando a letter thanking the NALC for our generosity.