

Got food?

Carriers prepare to 'Stamp Out Hunger' once again

The 20th annual NALC Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive is Saturday, May 12—mere weeks away—and letter carriers from nearly 1,300 branches across America are putting the finishing touches on their preparations for this national event, which helps replenish the food banks that serve our neediest customers.

“Too many people in this country are still going hungry,” NALC President Fredric Rolando said, “and because we deliver to every address in America six days a week, we see just how widespread the problem really is.”

Since the national drive began in 1992, letter carriers in every corner of the United States—alongside our family members, friends, co-workers from other crafts and allies—have set aside the second Saturday in May as the day to give something back to the communities we loyally serve.

Last year's drive brought in 70.2 million pounds of non-perishable food (including pet food), raising the total amount of donations picked up over the 20-year history of the drive to more than 1.1 billion pounds.

A great need

Food banks and other charitable organizations' shelters receive the bulk of their donations during the winter holiday season. By the time our national drive rolls around, their stocks often are nearly tapped out, turning our effort into a timely rescue as the summer months approach.

While letter carriers lead the collection effort, we get a big boost from the many sponsoring organizations that help make the food drive a reality.

This year's official sponsors are the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association, Campbell Soup Company, Valpak, U.S. Postal Service, United Way, AFL-CIO, Feeding America, Uncle Bob's Self-Storage and AARP.

And the sponsors don't merely attach their names to America's largest one-day drive—they provide tangible support that builds postal customers' participation.

For example, Campbell's is helping us spread the word about the May 12 drive by donating 75 million postcards. These mailers will complement the promotional announcements about the drive that will be featured on the front of Valpak's distinctive blue coupon mailers, which reach 40 million American households each month. AARP also will provide promotional articles and advertisements in its membership magazine, as well as volunteers on Food Drive Day.

Spreading the word

Another proven strategy in drumming up backing for the drive, employed by the Publix grocery store chain among others, is distribution of special promotional grocery bags. Campbell Soup is pledging a donation of 1 million “Stamp Out Hunger” bags for handing out in key locations throughout the country, while International Paper and AARP will join Publix in placing bags specifically in communities that continue to struggle to recover from the effects of the recent recession, the worst since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

And on May 12, Uncle Bob's Self-Storage will donate its fleet of rental trucks to collect donated food in the areas the company serves.

Cartoonist Bil Keane, a longtime drive supporter who provided special “Family Circus” artwork that promoted the drive for many years, died in November. The cartoon his family donated for this year's event pays special tribute to Keane. Also, singer and “America's Got Talent” host Nick Cannon remains on board as the drive's celebrity spokesperson.

Questions regarding the food drive should be directed to NALC Director of Community Services Linda Giordano at 202-662-2489 or at giordano@nalc.org. ✉

