

As Food Drive nears, preparations intensify

As Saturday, May 10, draws ever closer, letter carriers in more than 1,200 branches nationwide are full steam ahead to get ready for the 22nd annual Letter Carriers' Food Drive.

"Too many people in this country are still going hungry every day," NALC President Fredric Rolando said. "As letter carriers, we see this firsthand in just about every community we serve. But we aren't the type of folks who simply move on to the next delivery and hope someone else will do something about it. Instead, for more than two decades now, our members have taken the lead in the effort to help solve this ongoing national problem."

And we've done so with gusto, Rolando noted. Last year, with the help of thousands of volunteers, letter carriers all across America collected more than 74.4 million pounds of non-perishable food—the second-highest amount since the drive began in 1992, bringing the grand total to just under 1.3 billion pounds.

"It's such an easy way for our customers to help people in their own communities," the president said. "All they have to do is leave a non-perishable food donation in a bag by their mailboxes. And that's it! Then, just like we do every Saturday of the year, letter carriers will swing by—only on Saturday, May 10, we'll be ready to pick up the food donations and make sure they get to a local food bank or other charity within that community."

Food banks and shelters usually benefit from an upswing in charitable donations during the winter holiday season. By springtime, however, their stocks tend to dwindle to critically low levels. "Helping local support organizations deal with this post-holiday lull in donations is the main reason we hold our national drive on the second Saturday in May," Rolando said, adding that since many school meal programs

are suspended during summer months, millions of children are left scrambling to find alternate sources of nutrition.

Fortunately, we aren't alone in pressing forward with this effort, Rolando said. "We're grateful for the helping hand we get from family members and friends, from other postal employees, and from groups like local National Guard units, the Boy and Girl Scouts—not to mention food bank workers."

As usual, support from national sponsors and partners also will prove crucial to the food drive's success this year, and Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe has pledged the Postal Service's full backing to the drive. "We'll continue to encourage all postal employees across the country to support the food drive by collecting donations, delivering postcards and promotional bags, and doing everything they can to make this year's food drive the best in our history," Donahoe said. "Working together, we will continue to make a difference in the lives of millions of Americans in need."

United Way has committed its continued national partnership of the drive as well. "This effort is a tremendous example

of the importance of working with organized labor to advance the common good in communities throughout the United States," United Way Worldwide President Stacey Stewart said.

Also on board is national sponsor Feeding America. "The Stamp Out Hunger food drive is the single largest food drive for our network," Feeding America Chief Executive Officer Bob Aiken said. "The investment of your time and resources in the drive means a lot to us at Feeding America and even more to the families and children who benefit directly from your support."

Campbell Soup Company is teaming up with AARP and Publix to print reminder postcards advertising the drive to some 121 million postal customers. The Postal Service generously provides the permit for delivery of all these cards and the promotional bags.

"At Campbell, we are committed to making a measurable difference in the communities in which we live and work," Campbell's President and CEO Denise Morrison said. "We are honored to be a partner in the program for more than 20 years and know that together, we can make the 2014 drive the most successful ever."



Direct-mail marketing company Valpak has returned this year as well to create a special envelope and coupon-style insert to promote the drive. “We are pleased to passionately help promote this campaign for the 11th consecutive year,” Valpak President Michael Vivio said. “We are all in!” The company plans to feature the food drive on its envelopes, which reach 40 million households. It also will ask its 160 franchisees to spread the word and serve as food collection sites.

Another direct-mail marketer, Valassis Communications, also will again help spread the word across America. “Thank you again for all that you do to help fight hunger in America,” Valassis Senior Vice President Steven Mitzel said, “and thank you for allowing us to take part in what is arguably one of the best public-private philanthropic activities in this country.”

AARP Foundation notes that 9 million adults age 50 and older face the threat of hunger every day. “That’s why AARP Foundation over the last few years has donated over 30 million bags to be delivered to homes in targeted parts of the country,” AARP Foundation President Lisa Marsh Ryerson said. “We know that these bags helped to boost donations in many of those areas.” The foundation is again supporting the drive this year through a multi-pronged effort that includes the purchase of bags and postcards, as well as targeted advertising.

Moving the food from post office to food bank is an annual challenge, and Uncle Bob’s Self Storage again has stepped this year to help. “Your continued work to help the millions of Americans living in food-insecure households is to be admired,” Uncle Bob’s President and Chief Operating Officer Kenneth Myskza said. “We are proud to support the effort through the donation of our fleet of rental trucks to assist with food collection.”

Members of our sister unions will be out in force on May 10, too. President Rolando—a member of the AFL-CIO Executive Council—made a special pitch for food drive support at a council meeting in February, and the council, led by federation president Richard Trumka, responded enthusiastically. “With America still reeling from devastating unemployment, the 22nd annual food drive comes at a critical time,” Trumka said. “With the support of unions all across America, the NALC can set a record in collections, helping those who have lost their jobs and the millions more facing economic uncertainty.”

Some of the NALC’s sister unions that already have pledged their members’ full support include the American Federation of Teachers, Communications Workers of America, American Federation of Government Employees, International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, and American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees.

Meanwhile, the National Rural Letter Carriers’ Association is again a national food drive sponsor, and NRLCA President Jeanette Dwyer has urged her members to continue their participation this year. “In what has become the largest one-day food drive in the nation, it has become clear how such a small act of charity on the part of one person can resonate so profoundly in the communities in which we live,” she said. “Our association is proud to align ourselves with such a noble and distinguished cause.”

In addition, cartoonist Jeff Keane has continued his family’s connection with the drive by drawing a special Family Circus cartoon perfect for use on flyers, T-shirts, posters and other promotional items. For information on ordering these and other materials, visit nalc.org/food and click the link for the food drive tool kit page. The tool kit page also contains links to food drive artwork and handouts, plus promotional

public service announcements designed for radio and television station use.

Get the latest food drive information from the NALC website at www.nalc.org/food. Those with questions about the drive should contact NALC Community and Membership Outreach Coordinator Pam Donato at 202-662-2489, or send an e-mail to donato@nalc.org.

Food Drive Tool Kit

New this year to the Letter Carriers’ Food Drive is the coordinators’ tool kit, a web page at nalc.org that serves as a sort of clearinghouse for all things related to the drive.

Although it’s designed with branch food drive coordinators in mind, anyone can use the page to find the resources they need to support our annual effort and help make it a success.

Perhaps the most sought-after download is the Family Circus artwork, generously donated for use again this year by cartoonist Jeff Keane. The cartoon is perfect for use on T-shirts, posters, billboards—whatever medium will help spread the word about how special the second Saturday in May is.

Also on the tool kit are links to portable document format (PDF) files for the official food drive poster, the branch coordinators’ manual, plus letters of support from Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe, USPS Chief Operating Officer Megan Brennan, and the leaders of the organizations that have signed on as national food drive sponsors.

Don’t know who your branch’s food drive coordinator is? There’s a link for that! Under “Coordinator Resources,” click on “Branch coordinators list” and you’ll download an Excel file containing the latest contact information available. The list is updated frequently, right up until Food Drive Day.

The Frank Doolittle Company is a new official supplier of T-shirts, buttons, lapel pins, hats, yard signs and banners, and the company is committed to building a successful and lasting relationship with the food drive. A flyer containing sample images and an order form can be accessed from the tool kit page.

A proven strategy in generating larger amounts of non-perishable food is the distribution to customers of food drive-branded bags. International Paper is a national, union manufacturer of paper bags, while Aurora Plastics and Packaging manufactures made-in-U.S.A. plastic bags that are both biodegradable and recyclable. Access the tool kit to locate pricing and ordering details. (But if you have an existing relationship with a local bag vendor, please feel free to keep using them!)

Audio and video public service announcements (PSAs), perfect for broadcast use, also can be downloaded from the food drive tool kit. A special PSA recorded by the food drive’s celebrity spokesperson, “America’s Got Talent” host Nick Cannon, is available for viewing and download.

Visitors to the tool kit page will find useful links to partner resources, such as the locations of Uncle Bob’s Self Storage facilities, AARP office locations, and hunger statistics provided by Feeding America. And the drive is made more successful through the use of social media channels. Connect with thousands of Facebook and Twitter followers via the links to both of those official accounts listed along the right side of the tool kit page.

As the drive draws closer, more and more people will be relying on the tool kit for valuable information and support. If you don’t see something on the page that you think should be there, let NALC Community and Membership Outreach Coordinator Pam Donato know at 202-662-2489, or send her an e-mail at donato@nalc.org. **PR**

Pushing hard all the way



Community and Membership Outreach Coordinator Pam Donato

After many months of planning, the NALC Food Drive is only a little more than a month away. It seems that no matter how early we start the actual date of the food drive closes in fast as if it came

out of nowhere.

Thanks to all of you for your hard work, creativity and absolute passion to assist those in our communities who need a little help. We are poised for a fantastic day on Saturday, May 10! But there are still things we can do to increase the food we collect. Let’s run down a simple checklist.

Posters

Available in English and Spanish, these full-color beauties are ready for prime time, in storefront windows, business lobbies, bus and public transportation stops, and apartment complexes. Most anywhere people are gathered, you should consider hanging a colorful food drive poster.

Public service announcements (PSA)

We’ve got something for every size media market. Whether the medium is TV or radio, local cable or national, talk radio or Top 40 of any genre, just call and ask if they’ll run any version of these PSAs. They are easy to access on our food drive tool kit. Also, use your own Facebook, Twitter and other social media forums to share these PSAs with your friends and family and have them do the same.

Billboards

It’s not too late to ask for donated time for electronic billboards. Review our tool kit and coordinator manual to find out

more, or call the local billboard companies along your roadways now.

Local community meetings

Go to a meeting at your city hall, community services or county government. Bring flyers, postcards and posters. Ask each of these bodies to promote the simple message of our food drive by hanging a poster or by promoting the drive on their website, Facebook page, or on Twitter.

Lawn signs

Whether ordered or homemade, these yard signs are effective. Have a contest for kids, your church group or high schools to create colorful messages as reminders to put out food donations. Or refer to the tool kit to order. Then place them at busy traffic intersections and along well-traveled local roads.

Flyers

Print out page-size color or black-and-white copies from our tool kit and ask to place them on bulletin boards at locations on your route and in your own neighborhood.

Social media push

“Like” us at the food drive Facebook page (facebook.com/StampOutHunger) and follow us on Twitter (twitter.com/StampOutHunger). Your reminder will make a difference, as will your friends and family when they “like,” “share” and “retweet.”

Continue to check our tool kit

Our tool kit has the latest and greatest information and we’ll update it through the drive.

Our food drive helps so many in need. Its success depends on our ability to raise awareness. This work is not done until Saturday, May 10, when we will shift gears to pick up all that food. Thank you all in advance. Let’s do this!

Find the tool kit at www.nalc.org/commun/fooddrive/toolkit.htm