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 Vivo said. “We are all in!” The company plans to feature the food drive on its envelopes, which reach 200 million households. It will also ask its 146 franchises 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 a milli- 

...