

2014 Food Drive



A day of action to help feed America's hungry

On Saturday, May 10, NALC members across the United States once again used the U.S. Postal Service's universal delivery network not just to pick up and deliver mail, but also to collect and distribute food to the hungry in our communities—all part of the 22nd annual Letter Carriers' Food Drive.

In more than 10,000 cities and towns in all 50 states and U.S. jurisdictions, letter carriers could be found collecting sacks of non-perishable food items left by customers' mailboxes. Volunteers from the other postal crafts, alongside postal managers, community groups and local food banks, pitched in to help retrieve the heavy bags of food from loaded-down postal vehicles and transport this much-needed nourishment to local charitable organizations dedicated to serving the hungry.

NALC President Fredric Rolando congratulated all those who helped out on Food Drive Day in ways large and small.

"Year after year, it's tremendously impressive to see so many NALC members go that extra mile to help ensure that America's largest one-day food collection effort is such a success," Rolando said. "And there is little doubt that the customers we see struggling with hunger every single day appreciate our efforts as well."

Many who run food banks expressed their gratitude, too.

"We are so thankful to the letter carriers, the U.S. Postal Service and the community for their tremendous support," Al Brislain, president and chief executive officer of the Harry Chapin Food Bank in Fort Myers, FL, told the *News-Press*. "In one day, they came together and made an exceptional contribution to the fight against hunger during the difficult summer season."

Rolando also thanked the union's national partners in this year's Food Drive: the U.S. Postal Service, the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association, Campbell Soup Co., Uncle Bob's Self Storage, AARP Foundation and its Drive to End Hunger campaign, Publix grocery stores, Feeding America, Valpak, the AFL-CIO, United Way and the Valassis marketing firm. He especially praised "Family Circus" cartoonist Jeff Keane, who again provided special Food Drive artwork this year.

Serving notice

It seemed that no medium was left unused to spread word about this year's drive. For example, thanks to the generous donation of more than 120 million postcards—courtesy of the Postal Service and Campbell's—every food drive coordinator who asked for postcards got them. The cards were then mailed out as "save the date" reminders to postal customers in the weeks leading up to the drive.



Top right: Volunteers at The Sharing Center in Longwood, FL, receive food collected by Central Florida Branch 1091 carriers.

Above: A Denver, CO Branch 47 member

A team effort in Mannington, WV Br. 2042





Far left: A retired letter carrier and a new city carrier assistant help at the Oklahoma City, OK Branch 458 drive.

Left: AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Liz Shuler donates to Washington, DC Branch 142.



Also, public service announcements for radio and television, in English and Spanish, were employed by many broadcast and cable outlets across the country to help drum up support for the drive. Additionally, more than a few local outdoor advertising companies donated space on prominent billboards next to busy highways and well-traveled intersections.

And, as a sign of the NALC's ongoing embrace of online communication, an increased Internet-based effort helped generate interest in this year's drive, ultimately reaching the tens of thousands of people who follow the Food Drive's official Twitter and Facebook accounts. That social media outreach was further boosted through the use of an online "flash mob" campaign via a service called Thunderclap. Using Thunderclap, more than 1.5 million people received an online reminder the day before the drive, telling them to make sure to place food by their mailboxes before their regular pickup on Saturday.

Positive outlook

As food collection result reports rolled in to NALC Headquarters in Washington, DC, it seemed that good weather over most of the country helped make for a rather successful Food Drive Day, with only a handful of locations reporting truly soggy conditions.

"It went very, very well," said Broomfield, CO, food bank manager Mike Lutz, who told *The Broomfield Enterprise* that he believed this year's drive brought in to his operation more than triple the prior best-ever food drive amount. "I'm very, very happy. It was awesome."

"The amount of food we received was staggering," Jody Bender, director of community engagement for Naperville, IL's Loaves & Fishes Community Pantry,

told *The Naperville Sun*. "Yesterday, 60 volunteers were on-site sorting so that we could open the aisles for client shopping. Another 50,000 pounds has been taken offsite."

"Food is a year-round problem," Sabine Mehnert, head of community engagement for the Food Bank of South Jersey, told *The South Jersey Times*. "This program holds us over during the summer and early fall, because it isn't harvest time yet. It's also important to parents who have to buy school supplies for September, and money is low."

With food supplies dwindling, North Bartow (GA) Community Services' director Kay House told Cartersville's *Daily Tribune News* that she was delighted by the result of this year's effort. "Our shelves were practically empty before this food drive," she said. "I was very surprised [by the number of donations]."

One factor that continues to help drive increases in food donations is the use of specially designed food drive bags. As more and more branches secured local or regional sponsorship of such bags—paper or plastic—some regions of the country noted significant spikes in customer generosity.

Collection results still were being tabulated at NALC Headquarters as this article was being prepared. 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 August issue of *The Postal Record*. **PR**



Top: The bags stack up for Phoenix, AZ Branch 576.

Above: Unloading at the post office at San Francisco, CA Branch 214.

The 2014 drive gets two thumbs up in San Antonio, TX Branch 421.

