

Food Drive fills gaps in economic recovery

Hard work and dedication have served as the key ingredients to a successful Letter Carriers' Food Drive ever since it went national back in 1993—and there is no question that the same will be true again this year on Saturday, May 10, when the NALC holds its 22nd annual national drive.

On that special day, hundreds of thousands of letter carriers, retirees, family members and volunteers will take to mail routes in every state and territory across America, pick up sacks of non-perishable food and deliver the goods to the food banks and pantries that serve their local communities.

"It's quite impressive that our drive has managed to collect just under 1.3 billion pounds of food over the past two decades," NALC President Fredric Rolando said. "But what really counts is that our extra effort each year on the second Saturday in May means that some of the people who are most in need and who live in our own back yards will be able to put a little more food on their families' tables."

The economy might be recovering, but America's hungry aren't feeling it. According to national Food Drive partner Feeding America, 49 million Americans may not know where their next meal is coming from. This sad figure includes nearly 16 million children.

And while one in seven Americans rely on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits right now, proposed changes to SNAP could mean that fewer people will be able to access these crucial benefits, forcing them to lean harder on local food pantries for help.

Stepping up to help solve this problem are this year's other national food drive sponsors: the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association, Campbell

Soup, AARP's Drive to End Hunger, United Way, Publix grocery stores, the AFL-CIO, Valassis, Valpak and Uncle Bob's Self Storage—not to mention the U.S. Postal Service.

"We'll continue to encourage all postal employees across the country to support the food drive," USPS Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe wrote in a letter to President Rolando. "Working together, we will continue to make a difference in the lives of millions of Americans in need."

With the drive only two months away, NALC Community and Membership Outreach Coordinator Pam Donato has been busy processing registration forms from NALC branches, with a fresh batch of forms arriving with each day's mail delivery.

"It's not too late for a branch to register," Donato stressed. "All branches are encouraged to mail in their registration forms as soon as possible." The form is available for download from the Food Drive page at nalc.org.

Also found on that page are links to a food drive coordinators' database, as well as the ever-popular food drive tool kit, where drive coordinators and local partners can locate downloadable graphics and logos, order forms and other important information.

Once a branch's registration form is processed, a special packet is sent by return mail to the branch coordinator. The packet includes the promotional food



drive DVD, a coordinator's manual and other important food drive information.

Getting the word out will be key to the drive's success, Donato said. "To help us with that, this year we'll have 120 million postcards to distribute," she said. "That means that any branch that wants postcards will get postcards."

Special bags that promote the food drive have helped to make collection totals soar, and branches are strongly encouraged to secure local bag sponsors. Links to national manufacturers of bags—paper and plastic—as well as tips for getting a bag sponsor are posted on the Food Drive tool-kit page. (Read Donato's report on page 15 for more information on ordering bags.)

Questions regarding the food drive should be directed to Donato at 202-662-2489 or at donato@nalc.org. **PR**