New ideas to help us 'Stamp Out Hunger'


Community and Membership Outreach Coordinator Pam Donato

This year's Letter Carriers' Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive is in full preparation mode. While much is the same from previous years, there are a few new and exciting changes this year. Campbell's has stepped up to provide 100 million postcards which, when coupled with 20 million postcards from a joint venture of Publix and AARP Foundation, will help to remind even more patrons of the Food Drive. This year they will all be in both English and Spanish.

Also new, AARP Foundation will be sponsoring a combined "bag and postcard" piece mailed to more than 1 million addresses. Last year, we tested 75,000 of these combined pieces in four cities, with a fantastic response in food donations. They were popular with letter carriers, too, being easy to deliver and with handles on the bag making the pickup of donations simpler.

But with only a million bags to go around, we'll all have to creatively find local bag sponsors of our own. Please visit our Food Drive Tool Kit at nalc.org/commun/foodrive/toolkit.html for tips on finding a bag sponsor.

NALC Headquarters has worked with International Paper (manufacturer of AARP's paper bags in previous years) to set artwork and make ordering easier for locals in the field. International Paper is a union paper-bag manufacturer that produces its bags in Texas. The artwork it has created has all of the important information (date, logos, simple instructions about how to participate) and includes an empty space for a local sponsor name and logo. All the necessary information to order these can be found on the Food Drive Tool Kit page, or by calling Caty McCoy at 704-451-5658.

We also have artwork arrangements with Bags by CMG, a biodegradable plastic bag manufacturer (again, specific pricing and ordering information is on our Food Drive Tool Kit). Sean Cherry can be reached at Bags by CMG at 970-206-4644.

We also have the generous gift of a new Family Circus food drive cartoon from Jeff Keane. New this year will be the production of a full-sized Family Circus Food Drive cartoon poster in Spanish. Both English and Spanish full-size posters can be ordered using the form included in your food drive coordinators materials; the order form also can be downloaded from our tool kit page.

We continue to grow the food drive, in ideas and in our commitment to help those in our communities who are in need. It will take all of us, working together, to make a difference.

Why a chained CPI would be bad for your retirement


Research Director Jim Holland

Over the past two years, as part of ongoing budget debates, some politicians have advocated for changing the price index used to calculate benefit levels for Social Security and other government programs from the CPI-W (Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers) to a 'chained CPI.'

Some advocates for a chained CPI say that it is a better measure of costs to consumers because it takes into account the tendency for consumers to cut back on items that rise in price. In reality, however, the push for using a chained CPI is entirely about the federal budget. Switching to a chained CPI would cut the forecast for future benefit payments.

Currently, Social Security is adjusted each year based on the change in the CPI-W. The CPI-W measures the price changes for a basket of consumer goods over time, with the weighting of each of the goods kept constant. A chained CPI also measures the price changes for a basket of consumer goods over time. However, the chained CPI has an evolving weighting of goods in the basket. When the price of one item goes up, its weighting in the chained CPI basket goes down, because the chained CPI assumes that people will buy less of it.

Due to this weighting feature, the chained CPI has historically lagged behind the CPI-W by about 0.3 percent each year. This means that over a 10-year period, benefits would have been about 3 percent less using a chained CPI than what recipients are now receiving.

If a change like this were made, it would have a negative financial impact on workers who rely on Social Security for all or part of their retirement benefits. While this issue has not been discussed much recently, it could still be on the menu of options under consideration in future budget negotiations.