

# The 2016 Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive

## There's something for everyone



Community and Membership Outreach Coordinator Pam Donato

**E**ver want to help set a world record? You can, while at the same time you can help your neighbor, the older couple down the block, your children's friends at school, or the family of the soldier serving overseas.

We have the chance to do it with our 2016 Letter Carrier Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive on Saturday, May 14.

First, the "world record" claim. After much research, including a notice from representatives of Guinness

World Records, we now know that NALC owns the current record to beat. The 77.1 million pound food collection total we reached in 2011 is considered the number to surpass for any other group or organization holding a one-day food drive (conducted at multiple locations). So with a serious collective effort for our 2016 Letter Carrier Food Drive, we could set a *new* world record.

While being part of a world record setting is an exciting and admirable objective, this food drive began with, and has continued to work toward, a singular goal for over 23 years, to help those in need in our own communities.

Remember, the people who need help are not unlike your own family, immediate or extended. They are working families, the elderly and children. They are the families of those actively serving in the military. They are single parents, grandparents raising grandchildren, parents dealing with a child's serious health condition and families in which a parent has lost a job. These are folks doing everything "right," often working more than one job, but still unable to make ends meet.

They go to your place of worship. They have the same values and goals as you do. And as we learned from our own members last year, some in the NALC have been on the receiving end of this kind of help at some point in our lives.

The NALC began preparing its 2016 food drive efforts well before the 2015 haul was stacked on food pantry shelves. This mammoth food drive, NALC's national day of giving, takes more than a full year to plan and organize. It's one of the toughest days of the year, but it's also one of the

most gratifying. Each bag of donations represents a meal for a family in need.

This early, branch leaders are developing their strategies for the May 14 food drive. So here's what *you* can do to help: Reach out to your community. Do you have a food pantry on your route you'd like to have receive some of the food we collect? How about your church or faith community; does it have a food shelf that needs help? Are you aware of an afterschool program that could use donated food?

Figuring out where the food goes is part of the planning. Those who work inside these hunger organizations can be creative and resourceful planning partners, too. It's best to start making these connections *now*.

Early planning is also needed to harness the spirit (and healthy, strong legs) of groups your children might be involved with. Our food drive is an excellent volunteer opportunity that provides community service hours, often needed for college applications and résumés. Help connect us to student youth groups from high schools, colleges and universities. Boy and Girl Scouts and church youth groups are well organized and eager to participate.

Don't forget adult volunteer organizations, such as the American Legion, VFW and veterans' organizations, Rotary Clubs, Lions Clubs, etc. If you are a member of one of these groups, help connect your branch president to the person in charge of that group to coordinate a food drive volunteer opportunity. The addition of these "official volunteers" can help lighten the load for all the carriers in your branch. Volunteers could also provide a cookout for carriers and helpers when they come back off the routes on Food Drive Day. This is great for morale and can build wonderful partnerships in your community.

Let your branch president know right now that you'd like to help. We're still about five months away from our food drive, but your help and the connections you may have are needed right now. Please share your ideas with your branch president or national business agent.

Please help make May 14, 2016, the best food drive ever. There are so many in our communities who are counting on us and you can make a big difference and maybe even help set a new world record at the same time. That's how we *live* the holiday spirit.