

24th annual Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive



DELIVERING

FOOD

AND

HOPE



Top left: Aurora, IL Br. 219
Above: Columbus, OH Br. 78

For the 24th year in a row, letter carriers across the United States could be counted on to display concern, compassion and commitment to their postal customers—and to the communities in which they work and live—by participating on Saturday, May 14, in the Letter Carriers' Stamp Out Hunger® Food Drive, the nation's largest one-day food collection effort.

"It is gratifying to see so many NALC members and other volunteers sacrifice their time and energy to make sure this humanitarian effort is a success, year after year," NALC President Fredric Rolando said. "I'm sure that the recipients of our efforts appreciate it."

Branch food drive coordinators and participants in most of the 10,000 cities and towns taking part in the

drive had their local organizing efforts boosted by generally good weather. Even the cooler-than-normal temperatures in the country's northern and eastern sections did little to chill the spirits of participating letter carriers and their family members, friends and countless volunteer food drive helpers.

This issue of *The Postal Record* was heading to press just as many branch collection results forms were on their way to NALC Headquarters. But there were lots of other branches that were simply swamped by the overwhelming generosity of postal customers, and coordinators in those places were still busily calculating just how much non-perishable food had been donated.



UFCW's volunteers, Donato added, recruited by countless thousands



Top: Upland, CA Br. 2168
Above: Pocatello, ID Br. 927
Below: Boston, MA Br. 34

Still others could be counted on to be continuing to collect bags of food on the Monday *after* the drive's official second Saturday in May. For a variety of reasons, countless postal patrons each year miss their letter carrier's pickup on the second Saturday in May. But they could still be assured that their donations would make their way to a local food bank the next time the carrier stopped by their mailboxes.

As totals were tabulated, local and regional food drive coordinators across America were optimistic that the 2016 drive's national total would exceed last year's figure of 71 mil-

lion pounds, worth an estimated \$150 million. (From the national drive's beginning in 1992 through last year, the drive had collected more than 1.4 billion pounds of food.)

"It's too early to tell what the final results will be," NALC Community Service and Outreach Coordinator Pam Donato said, "but it's never too early to hope for the best."

Donato said that a number of factors were making her think positively.

"For one thing, every address in the country got a reminder postcard," she said, "thanks to our partnership this year with the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union."

of that union's 1.7 million members, helped make food collection efforts a little easier, as did many others.

A concerted social media campaign designed to get the attention of the tens of thousands of followers of the Stamp Out Hunger Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts also helped spread the food drive message far and wide. And more than 1.2 million social media users saw that message through the special online flash-mob campaign via the Thunderclap service.

"The other national partners really stepped up, too," Donato said, whether it was with a well-placed blog post by the AFL-CIO, near-constant tweets from Valpak on the endlessly scrolling Twitter platform, Facebook posts from USPS, or any of a variety of other types of outreach efforts by United Way Worldwide and its local affiliates, by the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association and by Valassis.

Food drive friends such as the American Postal Workers Union, the National Postal Mail Handlers Union and Union Plus lent an invaluable hand, too, in getting out the good word about the food drive, she said, as did a host of AFL-CIO member unions and other labor organizations.

"It wasn't hard to find evidence that there was some sort of national charity effort under way on Saturday, May 14," Donato said, "and in plenty of locales across the country, you could easily catch sight of Jeff Keane's Family Circus food drive art in post offices and countless other venues."

As this magazine was being prepared, news media reports about the





Los Angeles, CA Br. 24

drive—before, during and after Saturday, May 14—were still being gathered.

Scottsbluff, NE Branch 1836 letter carrier Randy Wallerich told *The Star Herald* that nobody in this country should have to go without food.

“I spent 31 years in military as an enlisted man,” Wallerich said, “and it was difficult to make ends meet, so my wife and I had to go to food banks for food.”

Columbus, GA Branch 546 President James Cadien told WRBL-TV that one of the reasons he looks forward to the yearly food drive is that he also has seen the consequences of hunger firsthand—for him, it was an elderly customer who was forced to make a choice: pay for food, pay bills or buy medicine.

“She was passed out on the floor from a lack of nutrition,” Cadien said. “Ever since then, it’s meant a lot to me.”

In a commentary in Canton, OH’s *The Repository*, author William Lambers called hunger “a silent crisis in America.

“The National Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive is critical for keeping emergency pantries stocked,” Lambers wrote. “In addition, when summer comes many children lose access to the free school lunch program.”

In Hartford, CT, United Labor Agency Community Services Coordinator Greg Vavrek said that drives such as Stamp Out Hunger “are very important to helping our community, our children, our vets, our families that live just down the street or right next to us.”

Roadrunner Food Bank’s Julie Anderson told Albuquerque, NM’s KOB-TV, “We use all of the food that we get from this food drive to help sustain us over the summer, because, as everyone says, hunger does not take a vacation.”

Mandy Lown, assistant director for Carthage, MO’s Crosslines Ministries, called the letter carriers of Southwest

Missouri Branch 366 “amazing.”

“Last year, we had rainy weather,” Lown said, “and some workers brought in hundreds of donations—they had to make two trips. The workers do an awesome job. We are blessed to have such a post office like ours.”

And despite rain in some areas of Hawaii, Aiea-Pearl City Branch 4682 Food Drive coordinator Adele Yoshikawa told KHON-TV that many postal customers still left bags of canned and packaged food by their mailboxes—food that was then sorted by volunteers along with friends and family members of letter carriers.

“Every year, we always hope and expect to beat last year’s total,” Yoshikawa said.

Branch collection results forms are due at NALC Headquarters by June 10. A final national total for the drive was scheduled to be announced shortly after that; a detailed report on the drive, including branch-by-branch results, will appear in a future issue of this magazine. PR

Below: Carmel, IN Br. 888

Bottom: Roswell, GA Br. 4862

