

# Partnerships are crucial to food drive's success

**T**he deadline for branches to register for the 24th annual Letter Carriers' "Stamp Out Hunger®" Food Drive was March 1. So with that milestone now in the rearview mirror, branch food drive coordinators around the country can now concentrate on spending the next couple of months doing what they can to ensure the success of this year's national effort on

"These are folks who are doing everything 'right,'" Rolando said, "often working more than one job but still unable to make ends meet."

## Crucial partnerships

Since the NALC's first national food drive in 1993, countless letter carriers across the country have spent the second Saturday in May leading the effort to help replenish food shelves, food pantries and food banks in our local communities. But it's a massive undertaking that can't be handled by letter carriers alone, which is why NALC has been grateful for the help of partners at the national and local levels.

One national partner that has helped extend our reach beyond the cities and towns we serve has been the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association. "The NRLCA proudly continues its support of the NALC's annual food drive," said Jeannette Dwyer, the union's president. "We are proud to align ourselves with such a noble and distinguished cause."

And this massive effort in fact would be impossible without the ongoing support of the U.S. Postal Service. "Studies have shown that lack of adequate nutrition affects cognitive and behavioral development in children," Postmaster General Megan Brennan said. "I am strongly encouraging all postal employees across the country to support the food drive by collecting donations, delivering postcards and promotional bags, and doing everything they can to make this year's food drive the best in our history."

Also returning as national food drive sponsors are United Way Worldwide, the AFL-CIO, Valpak and Valassis.

Saturday, May 14, to help solve the problem of hunger in the United States.

"Because letter carriers serve every neighborhood in this country at least six days a week," NALC President Fredric Rolando said, "we are all too familiar with the staggering numbers of people in need."

Rolando noted some particularly sobering statistics:

- The availability of nutritionally adequate and safe food, or the ability to acquire such food, is limited or uncertain for 1 in 6 Americans, many of whom are in households with at least one person working.
- Such households include single parents with young children, grandparents helping to raise their grandchildren, college students or households with one parent actively serving in the military.

The 2016 food drive poster with artwork courtesy of Jeff Keane



The artwork that is being prepared to appear on Valpak mailers

**Fill A Bag. Help Feed Families.**

- 1. Collect and bag nonperishable\* food items**  
*Coloque los alimentos no perecederos en una bolsa junto a su buzón de correo*
- 2. Place by mailbox for letter carrier to deliver to a local food bank or pantry**  
*El cartero las entregará a un banco de alimentos local*

\*Donate items like canned meats, fish, soup, juice, vegetables, pasta, cereal, peanut butter and rice. Please do not include items that have expired or are in glass containers.

**Saturday, May 14, 2016**

Logos: AFL-CIO, UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE, valpak, LIVE UNITED United Way, UFCW, LOCAL FOOD PANTRIES, STAMP OUT HUNGER, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS.

Facebook.com/StampOutHunger @StampOutHunger

New to the food drive's fold as a national sponsor is the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW). "Our 1.3 million-plus members are honored to be part of the food drive," UFCW President Marc Perrone said. "Our members work around the clock, feeding and clothing America—in your neighborhood grocery stores, at the meatpacking or food manufacturing plants, or at the department store down the road. Every time someone comes through a grocery checkout line and has to put an item back because they cannot afford it, or every time a pharmacy customer has to choose between their medicine and their food, we see the pain it causes, and it motivates us to help fix it."

President Rolando warmly welcomed the solidarity shown by such a large and prominent organization as UFCW. "Regardless of the union we belong to or the jobs we do," he said, "all of us share a responsibility to help improve our communities as well as our workplaces."

Rolando also noted that UFCW's support, added to that of the other national food drive partners, means that postcards for 2016 are completely funded. "Among other things," he said, "this means that we can all focus our attention on planning and organizing a successful food drive without having to worry about whether we'll have enough reminder postcards to give to our customers."

### A boost from bags

While the postcards on their own have a proven track record as power-

ful reminders to customers about the drive, it's no secret that specially marked food drive bags—paper or plastic—can often dramatically raise the amount of food collected.

"But bags aren't cheap," NALC Director of Community Services Pam Donato said. "That's why we ask branches to push hard to find bag sponsors." To that end, branch food drive coordinators can request special partnership materials—including a DVD and brochure—to help them explain the many benefits of local-level food drive partnerships.

"The most common sponsors for bags are local grocery stores," Donato said. "They have a lot of experience with bag manufacturers, and they often are motivated to connect themselves to our food drive, since their customers will likely purchase food from their stores for donation purposes."

Also, she said, having UFCW as a national partner means access to local UFCW representatives—access that could then translate into successful alliances with union grocers.

### A proven tradition

The food drive will once again be held on the second Saturday in May, a date identified by many food banks

and pantries as a prime time for the drive.

Most charities understandably benefit from a massive influx of holiday-driven donations through November and December. But by springtime, food shelf stocks often are depleted—if not completely wiped out. Worse, in many locales, subsidized school breakfast and lunch programs are not available during the summer months, a reality that places even greater stresses on local food pantries and food shelves.

"Food Drive Day is one of the toughest days of the year for letter carriers," Rolando said, "but it's also one of the most gratifying, since each bag of donations represents a meal for a family in need."

Last year's drive gathered 70.6 million pounds of food, marking the 12th consecutive year that the drive surpassed 70 million pounds of food collected. That brought the grand total to more than 1.4 billion pounds since the annual national drive began.

If you have questions about the food drive or need help, get in touch with your branch or regional food drive coordinator. The latest contact lists can be found at [nalc.org/food](http://nalc.org/food). **PR**