

Food Drive around the corner

Usually by this time of year, a lot of NALC branches across the country have already begun gearing up for our annual Letter Carriers' "Stamp Out Hunger"® Food Drive. This year, however, we're marking a significant food drive milestone: the 25th anniversary of the Food Drive.

"All of our food drives have been special," NALC President Fredric Rolando said. "The fact that this year marks the 25th anniversary makes this one a bit more special."

Enthusiasm for the silver-anniversary drive is already running high, Rolando said, even with the nation's largest one-day food-collection event still three months away.

Scores of NALC branches have already signed on to take part in this year's drive on Saturday, May 13.

"But the months can fly by just like that," the president said, "so I'm encouraging all branches who haven't signed up yet to do it now."

Getting registered now can only help things run more smoothly as Food Drive Day approaches. And signing up couldn't be easier, thanks to the NALC website's new "Members Only" portal.

"Our first-ever online food drive sign-up has proved to be an effective introduction to the portal," Rolando said. "Branch presidents can simply log into the portal to register their branches and order materials."

Later this month, the president will be mailing letters to branches that have not yet registered, encouraging them to get involved with this year's drive. A registration form will be included with the letter, for the convenience of those who aren't yet comfortable with signing up electronically.

Partnering with NALC on this year's Food Drive are the U.S. Postal Service, the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association, United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW),

Valpak, the AFL-CIO, United Way Worldwide, AARP Foundation and the direct-mail marketing company Valassis.

Postmaster General Megan Brennan wrote a letter to President Rolando in January, affirming USPS' full support of the silver-anniversary food drive.

"All postal employees are encouraged to support the Food Drive by collecting donations, delivering postcards and promotional bags, and doing everything we can to make the 25th anniversary a huge success," Brennan wrote.

Last year, active and retired letter carriers, with help from countless thousands of volunteers, collected and processed 80.1 million pounds of food, bringing our 24-year grand total to 1.5 billion pounds.

Thanks to NALC's partnerships with UFCW and with Valpak—the direct marketing company behind those familiar coupon-stuffed blue envelopes—every postal customer will receive a reminder postcard in the mail a few days before Saturday, May 13.

"Registering now helps us figure out who needs postcards and how many they need," Rolando said, "so it's crucial that branches sign up as soon as possible to help us start mapping out a plan to ship out the pallets of postcards."

New Food Drive art revealed

Thanks to a close relationship between cartoonist Bil Keane and his letter carrier, Keane's popular "Family Circus" comic strip had been associated with local letter carrier food drives even before the Stamp Out Hunger drive went national in 1992.

Since Bil died in 2011, his son Jeff has followed in his father's footsteps, creating and donating special artwork to help spread word about the annual event. This year's drawing (above) no doubt will find its way onto any number



of promotional items such as posters, T-shirts and yard signs, not to mention paper and plastic Food Drive bags.

"Many branches work out partnerships to procure specially branded bags," said NALC Director of Community Services Pam Donato. Local businesses—from grocery stores to car dealerships to banks—benefit from the positive exposure they get by associating with our national food drive, and many times are happy to chip in toward the cost of bag production.

"Working with International Paper, and its workforce represented by the United Steelworkers," Donato said, "we can accommodate most branches that need branded Food Drive paper bags. But remember—bag production takes time, so waiting until the last minute to place a bag order might result in your missing out on getting bags—which would surely mean that you collect less food for customers in need in your community."

Of course, all food-filled bags are accepted, she said, noting that paper grocery bags are large and hold a lot of food, while plastic bags are weather-proof and strong. All bags are recyclable, but food drive coordinators need to be aware of municipalities' rules regarding the use of plastic versus paper bags.

Stay on top of the latest food drive news at nalc.org/food, and follow the Food Drive on Facebook at [facebook.com/StampOutHunger](https://www.facebook.com/StampOutHunger) and on Twitter at [@StampOutHunger](https://twitter.com/StampOutHunger). **PR**