

# Strong through the finish, our 25th anniversary drive has many heroes



**Community and Membership Outreach Coordinator Pam Donato**

**W**e've spent the last 10 months planning, organizing and then physically pulling off the largest one-day food drive in the country. Congratulations—well done!

Though our bodies are likely still recovering, the month of June is busy with tying up loose ends and with saying “thank you” to so many who help make the Letter Carriers’ Stamp Out Hunger® Food Drive possible. At the end of this article, I’ve included a small checklist of items for all of us to go through, but I want to make sure

that every letter carrier does one additional task this year: Take a personal victory lap. You’ve certainly earned it.

Thank you, and I hope you have received heartfelt thanks from those on your route for your work on Saturday, May 13.

**Some special folks who shoulder so much additional responsibility** for the food drive are our branch and regional food drive coordinators, the local representatives who lead all local food drive efforts. Their usual tasks involve phone calls, emails and meetings to lay out a plan—from logistics (postcards and bags) to media (interviews and articles) to, finally, food collection.

This year, many branches added to coordinators’ task lists special events to celebrate our milestone 25th anniversary. This meant more interviews, expanded kick-off events, ordering specially designed shirts and all sorts of other commemorative festivities. It takes a ton of work to turn ideas into doable tasks, and then working through those tasks to completion.

Food Drive coordinators meet with USPS managers and community partners. They determine roles and responsibilities and finances. They seek and obtain approval and permits (and permission) for space and materials. They solicit and secure volunteers for various chores. They get to work early and stay late. They become masters in dealing with Murphy’s Law. And they spend a lot of time worrying.

Such is the life of a branch or regional food drive coordinator. They do the work with passion and integrity and compassion in their hearts. And though I heard many a time at the beginning of the year that “this is my last year as coordinator,” I know from experience that we’ll see them again as we work to Stamp Out Hunger next year—and I smile.

Thanks to all letter carriers for your work in getting through Food Drive Day. You all deserve a ticker-tape parade down your town’s Main Street as much as your hometown heroes and champion teams do, because heroes are what you are. And in that parade, your branch and regional coordinators should be in the lead convertible as MVPs. Their work and commitment allow this food drive to succeed year after year, meaning many in need will be provided a good meal—which is really no better trophy for food drive warriors, who have my sincere gratitude and who inspire me.

**Now, here’s our checklist of final tasks for this year:**

**Help count all donations:**

- This includes all donations, to little food shelves and church food pantries as well as to large food banks,
- Include the residual food collected in the days following the drive,
- Don’t forget to figure in, and report, any money that was donated,
- Add in any corporate or business donations, including matching contributions, and
- If you’ve already submitted your final results form and you realize that additional food and/or money needs to be added, just submit a new form—with the updated total—through your national business agent or your state’s food drive coordinator.

**Thank your local partners, your fellow letter carriers and other postal employees, your customers and your community.**

- For local partners and supporting businesses, a certificate of appreciation makes a great wall-hanging in their lobby. (Find the certificate template under “Certificates” via the tool kit link at [nalc.org/food](http://nalc.org/food).)
- A thank-you letter also is a nice personal touch.
- Letter carriers and postal employees always appreciate snacks or donuts. See if your branch and your postmaster are willing to split the cost of a simple celebration.
- Follow up with any news reporters who covered the food drive; provide them with collection totals for your branch or community.
- Call radio stations, write letters to the editor of your local newspaper, and post your pounds collected and thank-yous on any Food Drive posters displayed around town.
- In the weeks following the drive, every letter carrier should say “thank you” to every customer they see on their route. Even if they didn’t leave a donation, your thank-you might inspire them to do so for next year’s Food Drive. (It’s on Saturday, May 12, in case you’re already looking forward.)
- People like to know that what they did on Food Drive Day mattered and was appreciated. Local food agencies can be wonderful partners for joining us in our community thank-yous; ask them along for this important task.

**Make a list now of what worked well, of what went wrong, and of things you need to help your Food Drive effort improve in 2018.**

- The best time to take stock of your event and to evaluate it is while its details are still fresh in your mind.
- From filling out the registration form through counting all of the donations, what worked well? Who provided help? What communications were effective? Were there problems with your postcards or bags? What did you need? Who were your good contacts? What can NALC Headquarters help you with?
- Make a list: “Good,” “Bad” and “Still Need.”

**Next month, we’ll start our work for 2018 and our next quarter-century of delivering hope, and help, to those in need. Simply incredible.**