

Celebrate kindness and help now to deliver hope



Community and Membership Outreach Coordinator Pam Donato

Leaders in NALC branches across the country are hard at work finalizing plans for the 2017 Letter Carriers' Stamp Out Hunger® Food Drive on Saturday, May 13. Much of the work in motion right now is the unseen and often underappreciated local work required to make an event of this magnitude a success. To build a larger team of letter carriers to help with the many areas that need attention, I'd like to break down a few ideas about how you can take part—now, in March—in this amazing event and make our 25th anniversary food drive on May 13 the best ever.

- **Be a liaison to a local community group you're a member of.** This could be a faith group at your church, synagogue, temple or mosque, or the local VFW, American Legion or veterans group. How about a craft group, bowling or softball league or book group? There's also the community middle school or high school. They're all fantastic places to find organization, compassion, energy and muscle. You are the link needed.
- **Take on a small task of writing a letter to the local newspaper, call a local radio show or speak at a school board or city council meeting.** We provide on our tool kit (at nalc.org/food) template articles and talking points about our food drive and the issue of hunger as a whole. You are the voice of awareness to the public about our food drive, and this is an easy and important task.
- **Help hang posters and put up lawn signs in your community.** Volunteer to put up food drive lawn signs around your neighborhood; they are nice reminders for passersby. Spend an hour hanging food drive posters in businesses and heavy walking-traffic areas in your community.
- **Help find and secure a bag sponsor for the food drive.** Usual sponsors for bags are grocery or other retail stores, but it could also be a thoughtful, community-supporting bank, car dealer or real estate agency. It may sound complicated, but it's fairly simple. It all starts with connecting your local NALC leadership to the business. Your tip and that introduction could help double the food your food pantries receive.

As I stated earlier in this article, this year also marks our 25th anniversary of the Letter Carriers' Food Drive. So, besides all the usual work involved in planning the food drive, we have an extra "to do" on our list this year—celebrate! You can help in any sort of celebration to honor our food drive, a unifying act of human kindness in every

community across America. Plan a family picnic or outdoor celebration, inviting all letter carriers, volunteers and food agency personnel. Create a "wall of honor" with all the pictures taken during the food drive activities, including on the big day. Display your celebration and honor mural all year long at your station or branch as a beautiful reminder of the positive power of compassion and solidarity. Write letters of thanks to the public for your local newspapers and magazines, extending your appreciation beyond 2017's drive by also celebrating our quarter-century milestone of helping those we serve every day. Try a coloring contest for kids, or certificates for volunteers, partners and every post office station in your branch. (All are in our tool kit at nalc.org/food.) There's no act too small in gratitude, recognition and congratulations.

It feels as of late that Americans are splintered in our thoughts, actions and even ideals. But kindness and unity comprise the fabric of America. In President Abraham Lincoln's first inaugural address, he shared (and I paraphrase, in part), "when the mystic chords of memory are again touched by the better angels of our nature." The Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive allows us all to act on these "better angels of our nature," and that leads us to good. And there is room for everyone—won't you join us? Talk with your branch president *now* about how you can help.

There are two 25th anniversary commemorative items you'll want to have:

- A compilation of Bil and Jeff Keane's work as artists of the Family Circus cartoon for our Letter Carrier Food Drive in a 16 inch by 20 inch frameable poster captures all panels created for our food drive and is a beautiful illustration of our 25 years (see bottom left).
- A limited-edition photo stamp of a Bil Keane classic cartoon for our food drive, which is on a full-sheet picture panel of stamps and is an apropos piece of food drive history in art form (see bottom right).

You can order these and other Stamp Out Hunger materials from K & R Branding Solutions at the following website: stampouthungerstore.com.

