

Award-winning branch ups CFC participation

The competitive drive of two St. Petersburg, FL, letter carriers paid off when their post office raised more than any U.S. Postal Service station in the country last year for the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC), which allows all federal employees to designate a charity or charities of their choice to receive automatically deducted donations from each paycheck.

“We’re going to blow the numbers off the chart,” CFC organizer **Zulma Betancourt** said at the start of the campaign.

“We’re going to be No. 1,” fellow organizer **Devonne Grant** added.

Together, the West Coast Florida Branch 1477 members teamed up to get the employees of St. Petersburg’s Main Office to sign up to donate a total of \$18,250 to charities of their choice through the CFC last year.

NALC President Fredric Rolando visited the station in August to recognize the employees there for their strong support of the CFC.

“These amazing results demonstrate that, by working together, we can achieve remarkable things,” Rolando said. “That’s what the CFC is all about.”

Betancourt, who has experience running campaigns like this one, teamed up with Grant, who was running a CFC drive for the first time. Betancourt suggested bringing to the station guest speakers representing charities to make the appeals more personal.

“The donors need to know what it is, understand it and feel it,” she said. “What better way than to bring guest speakers?”

Local representatives from the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) and the Postal Employees’ Relief Fund (PERF) told the station’s employees

about the missions of their respective charities and the people they serve.

MDA is NALC’s only official charity. It is the world’s leading non-profit health organization sponsoring research into the causes of, and effective treatments for, neuro-muscular diseases. MDA research grants support about 150 research projects worldwide, as well as camps and activities for children who have one of these diseases. For more information, go to mda.org.

PERF provides financial support to postal employees whose homes are damaged or destroyed by natural disasters, such as hurricanes, wildfires and floods. The charity is run by the four postal employee unions and two management organizations, whose members support PERF through voluntary donations. PERF grants money to homeowners and renters alike to help with deductibles and out-of-pocket expenses that insurance claims don’t cover, and to assist with replacement of lost property and temporary housing. Information and applications for PERF assistance can be found at postalrelief.com.

Going to a local MDA summer camp for children with neuromuscular diseases inspired Betancourt and Grant to tell their fellow employees about the impact donations to CFC can have. “Seeing these kids smiling and excited, and talking about their goals and dreams like children without disabilities, helped us bring that feeling back to the employees and speak from the heart,” Betancourt said.

Grant was especially struck by a



Zulma Betancourt and Devonne Grant (c) show off the award the branch received for its CFC participation.

boy who was enjoying music despite his disability. “Even though he was in a wheelchair, he was dancing to the music,” she said.

The MDA camp visit also inspired Betancourt and Grant to set an ambitious goal—to double the \$10,000 in donations the station’s employees gave through CFC the previous year to MDA, PERF and other charities of their choice. They nearly reached that goal. More important, the station reached 100 percent participation in CFC.

Grant thanked the letter carriers and other postal employees in her station for the success. “We did the walking and the paperwork,” she said, “but without them, we wouldn’t be No. 1.”

Open season for the Combined Federal Campaign is now underway. All federal employees have until Jan. 12 to designate the organizations they want to support from a list of more than 2,000 eligible charities, and an amount they choose will be deducted from their paychecks each pay period in 2018 and automatically sent to each charity.

“I urge every letter carrier to follow the example of St. Petersburg’s carriers and contribute to the causes of their choice through the CFC,” Rolando said. **PR**