

Another food drive is in the bag



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Here we are again for the 26th year. Tens of thousands of NALC members across the United States took part in our annual Letter Carriers' Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive, collecting bags of food left by the generous customers on their routes and distributing those collections to food banks in communities all across the country.

During these 26 years, letter carriers represented by NALC have sacrificed their time—not to mention their backs, shoulders, arms, legs and feet—on the second Saturday in May

to carry out one of the most meaningful humanitarian events in the United States: delivering food to families in need.

In more than 10,000 cities and towns in all 50 states and other U.S. jurisdictions, letter carriers could be found collecting sacks of non-perishable food items left by customers' mailboxes. Volunteers from the other postal crafts, as well as postal managers, other labor unions, community groups and local food banks, pitched in to help retrieve the heavy bags from loaded-down postal vehicles, transporting this much-needed nourishment to local charitable organizations dedicated to serving the hungry.

NALC President Fredric Rolando congratulated all those who helped on Food Drive Day in ways large and small. "Year after year, it's tremendously impressive to see so many NALC members go that extra mile to help ensure that America's largest one-day food collection effort is such a success," Rolando said. "And there is little doubt that the customers we see struggling with hunger every single day appreciate our efforts as well."

Rolando also thanked the union's national partners in this year's Food Drive: the U.S. Postal Service, the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW), the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association (NRLCA), Valpak, AFL-CIO, United Way Worldwide and Valassis. He especially praised "Family Circus" cartoonist Jeff Keane, who again provided special Food Drive artwork this year.

Can by can, box by box, container by container, the donations that had been left next to the mailboxes of postal customers along carriers' mail routes piled up, first at postal stations, then in community food banks, pantries and shelters where the donations will provide nutrition to hungry families—men, women and children—throughout the coming summer months.

It seemed that no medium was left unused to spread the word about this year's drive. For example, thanks to a generous donation from the UFCW, 120 million "save the date" postcards were printed and every food drive coordinator who asked for postcards got them. The cards then were mailed out as reminders to postal customers in the

weeks leading up to the drive.

Also, public service announcements for radio and television, in English and Spanish, were employed by many broadcast and cable outlets across the country to help drum up support for the drive. Additionally, more than a few local outdoor advertising companies donated space on prominent billboards next to busy highways and well-traveled intersections. But bags delivered to each address have the most significant and dramatic effect on total food collection.

One of the reasons springtime was chosen for Food Drive Day was that by then, winter holiday donations have dwindled. And summer looms without school meal programs. For many NALC members, the annual Food Drive Day provides an opportunity for them to something special for all their customers.

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Branch collection results can be reported in the food drive inquiry by the branch president, or the forms can be sent to NALC Headquarters by June 9. A final national total for the drive is scheduled to be announced shortly after that. A detailed report on the drive, including branch-by-branch results, will appear in the July issue of this magazine.

2ND SATURDAY IN MAY

