



Carriers deliver again —for the 26th time



Letter carriers in 10,000 cities and towns across the United States shouldered the load again for the 26th straight year, delivering compassion to the communities they serve by participating on May 12 in the Letter Carriers' Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive, the nation's largest one-day food collection effort.

"It is gratifying to see so many NALC members and other volunteers taking on the extra burden to

make sure this humanitarian effort is such a success year after year," NALC President Fredric Rolando said. "I'm certain that the recipients of our efforts appreciate it."

Letter carriers had to do the extra work through blazing sunshine and heat in the southern United States, while a band of thunderstorms rolled across the North. But no matter the weather, nothing could put a dent in the enthusiasm among participating letter carriers and their family members, friends and countless volunteer food drive helpers.

This issue of *The Postal Record* was heading to press just as many branch collection results forms were on their way to NALC Headquarters, even as other branches were simply swamped by the overwhelming generosity of postal customers. Coordinators in those places were busily calculating just how much non-perishable food had been donated.

As totals were being tabulated, local and regional food drive coordinators across the country were optimistic that the 2018 drive would continue the amazing results from recent years. Last year, the drive hauled in 75 million pounds of food. (From the national drive's beginning in 1992 through last year, the drive had collected 1.6 billion pounds of food.)

"It's too early to know what the results of this year's drive will be," Assistant to the President for Community



Opposite page: Photos from top: Snohomish County, WA Br. 791; New Jersey Merged Br. 38; Wiloughby, OH Br. 3688

Services Christina Vela Davidson said, “but no matter the result, the food banks and pantries that receive these contributions will make the most out of every single pound.”

None of this would have been possible without the assistance of the Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive’s national partners. “These partners provide tangible support that helps to encourage the generous participation of our postal customers,” Rolando said.

This year’s partners were the U.S. Postal Service, the United Food and Commercial Workers International, the National Rural Letter Carriers’ Association, Valpak, United Way Worldwide, the AFL-CIO and Valassis.

There were plenty of other helpers too, from American Postal Workers Union volunteers to local bag sponsors. Every little bit helped.

“It wasn’t hard to find evidence that there was some sort of national charity effort underway on Saturday, May 12,” Davidson said, “and in plenty of locales across the country, you could easily catch sight of Jeff Keane’s ‘Family Circus’ food drive art in post offices and countless other venues.”

As this magazine was being prepared, news media reports about the drive—before, during and after—were still being gathered.

The carriers in Rapid City, SD Branch 1225 were being hailed for going above and beyond the call of duty. Feeding South Dakota’s Western Operations Manager George Rokusek told KNBN-TV, the local NBC affiliate: “They give their time, and it’s quite a job to get all of that organized and delivered. We can’t thank the postal carriers enough for what they do. It’s really just a fantastic thing. The food gets to our pantries, our agencies, and the people in need in our community.”



In the week before the drive, thousands of residents in the Rapid City area received blue plastic bags in the mail.

Finding a local bag sponsor can make a tremendous difference. Fairmont, WV Branch 910 Food Drive Coordinator Tjuana Bassett has seen the donations for Marion County grow. “Six years ago when I first started, our donations came to about eight tons, and within the last few years, when we started getting bags and more sponsors, we have raised that to about 13 tons a year,” she told *Times West Virginia*.

The donations were coming in to the Hattiesburg, MS Branch 938 drive at just the right time, according to Jim Prout, executive director of Christian Services Inc. “It’s kind of a slower season. People are gearing down, school’s getting out and you’re thinking about vacation and the summer coming up,” he told WDAM-TV, the local NBC station. “And so, this is a real good opportunity to remember that hunger doesn’t take time



Pictured from top: Carmel, IN Br. 888; Boise, ID Br. 331; Hagerstown, MD Br. 443

Below: Upland, CA Br. 2168
Bottom: Bad Axe, MI Br. 1817



off. That time of need is there, whether they're in school or out of school, whether at work or not at work."

The drive has been scheduled for the second Saturday in May to help food banks and pantries feed the hungry during the summer, when the need is particularly acute because most school food programs are not available.

"If you've seen one hungry child, you've seen one too many," Steve Riggs told *The Ada News*. Riggs, a member of Oklahoma City Branch 458 and the state chairman of the drive, told the newspaper, "This food drive is important because it stocks the shelves of our pantries across central and western Oklahoma, like Abba's Table and

Ada Youth Shelter."

In a fun bit of color, Boise, ID Branch 331 members dyed their hair blue to help promote the drive. In separate stories that ran on Yahoo and on Fox News, Food Drive Coordinator Candace Lincoln explained that the hair-coloring initiative had begun when the postmaster dyed his hair for the drive last year. Lincoln knows that the shocking color is a small price to pay for the good return from the drive.

"When I see people leaving food outside their home, it brings a tear to my eye," she said. "The level of generosity people have in this community, it just replenishes your heart in a way."

South Florida Branch 1071 Treasurer Stephan Walker knows that hunger is no laughing matter. "With the last year being hard hit from hurricanes, fires, floods and other natural disasters, many Florida families are looking for some relief, and thanks to Stamp Out Hunger, relief is on its way," he told WPLG-TV, the local ABC affiliate, before the drive.

Pittsburgh Branch 84 carrier Tamara Hartman said that though the work is hard, it energizes her co-workers. "It's a hard, long day for us as carriers, but when we get back everybody is always like, 'look what I got,' " she told WTAE-TV, the local ABC station.

Fellow Branch 84 member Mike Fratto agreed. "It's an enjoyable day for me personally," he said, "because my day may be longer, but at least I'm helping some families in the neighborhood."

Branch collection results forms are due at 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 a future issue of this magazine. PR

