

Brothers and sisters, you did it again



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Here we are again. For the 27th year, thousands of NALC members took part in our annual Letter Carriers' Food Drive and generous customers left bags of food by their mailboxes for us to pick up and distribute to food banks in our communities across all 50 states and Washington, DC, as well as Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

During these 27 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, letter carriers could be found collecting sacks of non-perishable food items left by customers' mailboxes. Volunteers from other labor unions and postal crafts—alongside postal managers, community groups and local food banks—pitched in to help retrieve the heavy bags from loaded-down postal vehicles and transport this much-needed nourishment to local charitable organizations dedicated to serving the hungry.

If you participated in last month's food drive, I hope you've had a chance to relax and rest, and to reflect on all the hard work you have done. You have earned this time—and you've earned the feeling of accomplishment that comes from being a part of the largest one-day food drive in the world.

While we are still counting up the donations, one thing already has been confirmed—brothers and sisters, you have done a fantastic job again this year. Please know that your hard work on Saturday, May 11, has made a big difference for the millions of people who now will have access to good meals. Helping to fill a basic human need for someone is always the right thing to do, and I hope your generosity comes back to you tenfold.

NALC President Fredric Rolando congratulated all those who helped on Food Drive Day in ways large and small. He 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, the AFL-CIO, United Way Worldwide, Walgreens, CVS Health and the Kellogg Co. He especially praised "Family Circus" cartoonist Jeff Keane, who again provided special artwork this year.

Before we close the book on our 2019 food drive, make sure you check off these final three tasks:

1. Count all donations.

- This includes all donations, from the ones going to little food shelves and church food pantries to those going 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.
- If you've already submitted your final results form and you realize that additional food or money needs to be added to it, just submit a new form—with the updated total—through your national business agent or your state's food drive coordinator.

2. 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.)
- A thank-you letter also is a nice personal touch.
- Letter carriers and postal employees always appreciate rolls or donuts. See if your branch and your postmaster are willing to split the cost of this simple celebration.
- Follow up with any reporters who covered the food drive; provide them with collection totals for your branch or community.
- Call radio stations, write letters to the editor for your local newspaper, and post your pounds collected and thank-yous on any food drive posters displayed around town.
- Throughout the week after the drive, every letter carrier should say "thank you" to every customer he or she meets on their route. Even if they didn't leave a donation, your thank-you might inspire them to do so next year. (It's on Saturday, May 9, 2020, for those 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 in our community thank-yous; ask them along for this important task.

3. 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 2019.

- 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 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," "Pros," "Cons" and "Still need."

Come August, we'll start work for 2020—which is the 28th anniversary of the Letter Carriers' Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive. That's more than a quarter century—and you're still looking fabulous!