

Stamp Out Hunger Donor Drive continues

On the second Saturday in May for nearly three decades, letter carriers have collected bag upon bag of groceries donated by postal customers who leave the food at their mailboxes. The annual effort comes at a crucial point on food pantry calendars—when holiday donations are largely depleted, while free or reduced-cost meals from school cafeterias are not available to needy children during the summer.

But for a second year now, after 27 traditional food drives, there won't be bags upon bags of food lining the mailboxes on letter carriers' routes. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has again forced NALC to postpone the food drive for safety reasons. Meanwhile, the pandemic's impact on the economy has increased the problem of hunger—putting additional pressure on food banks, as many working people have lost their income and struggle to buy food even as donations decline.

NALC's virtual food drive, the Stamp Out Hunger Donor Drive, was established in June 2020 and raises funds for food banks nationwide to help fill the nutritional needs of the 1 in 8 Americans who face food insecurity, including millions of children, older people and military veterans.

"As letter carriers in every neighborhood in the country six and seven days a week, we see the need and we cannot wait while food banks struggle, demand grows and people remain hungry," NALC President Fredric Rolando said. "With the right effort, letter carriers could extend this online food drive to help meet the needs of local food banks for many months to come."

NALC is continuing to provide its members, as well as the general

public, with an easy way to participate. By visiting nalc.org/food, donors can find a food bank in their area to support with an online donation. The site links directly to donation pages on each food bank's website. The same list also provides branches with a convenient means of informing donors in their area about how to locate and donate online to their local food banks.

As with the traditional Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive, donations will stay in the communities of the donors. Anyone, whether in a big city or suburb, small town or rural area, can donate funds for a local food pantry to purchase food and replenish its stocks so that local families can put food on their tables.

As always, our national partners in the food drive—the U.S. Postal Service, United Way Worldwide, the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, Kellogg Co., the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association, CVS Health, Valpak, the AFL-CIO and Valassis—will be vital to its success.

The flexibility of monetary donations could be one of a few silver linings of the shift, for now, to an online donor drive, Rolando said. "By buying in bulk, food banks may end up with more food than donors give at their doors each May," he said, because of the use the food bank can make of its purchasing resources. "In addition, the period of the donor drive is open-ended at this point."

As with every annual food drive, NALC Headquarters is providing publicity resources for food coordinators, including the PSA video, media plan,



flyer and local link, all available at nalc.org/food.

Meanwhile, following a national press release and follow-up outreach to media outlets around the country, newspapers and broadcast outlets large and small have highlighted the donor drive, often quoting grateful food bank directors.

"Our goal is to fill the shelves of food pantries with as much, or more, as we would through our traditional May food drive," President Rolando said. "To succeed, we will need to get the word out to our communities and encourage people to give."

With the national online donor effort in place, and the tools for branches to use available at nalc.org/food, every branch can help its local food banks restock their shelves.

"In the nearly 30 years that NALC has held a national food drive, the need has never been greater," Rolando said. "It is essential that we make this year's virtual food drive a resounding success."

"And when it's safe to do so," he added, "letter carriers will be there to hold our traditional Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive." **PR**