

# THE FOOD DRIVE RETURNS

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION  
OF LETTER CARRIERS  
**Stamp  
Out  
Hunger**  
FOOD DRIVE

**O**n Saturday, May 14, the Letter Carriers' Stamp Out Hunger® Food Drive returned after two years off for safety reasons due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Patrons, letter carriers and especially food banks were all ready for the return.

“Letter carriers see how the communities that they serve are struggling, and it’s with great pride that we return to our in-person food drive,” NALC President Fredric Rolando said.

Early signs were promising, with the return of the traditional drive on May 14 generating extensive news coverage on that weekend and in the days leading up to the drive by local television and radio stations, as well as in local newspapers.

“‘Stamp Out Hunger’ Food Drive Resumes After 2-Year Hiatus For Pandemic,” was the headline viewers in Denver, CO, saw on CBS4 four days before the event.

In Florida’s Tampa area the day after the drive, Fox 13 showed letter carriers collecting food and ran interviews with carriers touting the traditional generosity of Floridians and especially of local residents in their donations to help feed the hungry.

The Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive, the country’s largest one-day food drive, provides residents with an easy way to donate food to those in need. Customers simply leave their donation of non-perishable food items next to their mailbox. Letter carriers collect these donations as they deliver mail along their postal routes, and distribute them to local food banks, pantries, shelters and churches.

The NALC food drive is held annually on the second Saturday in May in 10,000 cities and towns in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and Guam. Hunger affects 1 in 8 Americans, including millions of children, senior citizens and veterans.



Montgomery, AL Branch 106;  
Camden, NJ Merged Branch 540;  
Tampa, FL Branch 599; and  
Burkburnett, TX Branch 1227





Top l: Arizona Merged Branch 1902  
 Top r: Greater East Bay, CA Branch 1111  
 Above: Van Nuys, CA Branch 2462  
 Below: Tucson, AZ Branch 704  
 Bottom: New Jersey Merged Branch 38

In the 30 years since it began, the food drive has collected about 1.82 billion pounds of food for the hungry.

In 2020 and 2021, it was replaced by NALC's Donor Drive, which enabled those wishing to help to make online donations to local food pantries. But the need for direct food donations is as great as ever, given the pandemic-caused economic dislocations of the past two years. With high prices for gasoline, food and other necessities, many families are struggling to make ends meet.

The date of the food drive makes it an especially timely event, since food donations to pantries, homeless shelters and churches typically peak during the winter holidays and are depleted by Memorial Day weekend. Complicating matters: Free or reduced-cost meals for the children of families in need tend to be available only while school is in session, which means that many families face greater hardship once summer begins.

This issue of *The Postal Record* was heading to press just as many branches were filling out their collection result forms to return to NALC Headquarters, even as other branches were simply swamped by the generosity of postal customers. Coordinators in those places were busily calculating just how much food had been donated.

"It's too early to know what the results of this year's drive will be," Assistant to the President for Community Services Christina Vela Davidson said, "but no matter the result, simply being able to return to delivering food to the food banks and pantries that receive these contributions has made this year's drive a monumental success."

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. Current national partners are the U.S. Postal Service, the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association, Vericast, United Way Worldwide, the AFL-CIO, Valpak, the Kellogg Co. and CVS Health.

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 see the effort underway on Saturday, May 14," 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. But initial reports showed the eagerness of letter carriers and food banks for the return of the in-person drive.

In Sioux City, IA, Food Bank of Siouxland Executive Director Jake Wanderscheid estimated that this year's drive had brought the food bank 10,000 pounds of food. "The letter carriers and the post office do a great job," he said.

"We're really counting on the food that comes in from this drive," Branford (CT) Food Pantry Vice President Jaye Andrews told ZIPo6.com. "Our shelves are getting emptier than we've seen them in quite a while."







Andrews said that the number of needy families had grown since 2021, and that it included more than just the unemployed. “There are jobs out there,” she said. “The problem is, a lot of these jobs don’t provide benefits or they’re part time. And I think everybody knows that prices have gone up. People are coming in because gas is more expensive, food is more expensive; everything is more expensive. And if you’re trying to feed a family, that’s a problem.”

“We have been very successful in the past,” Las Vegas Branch 2502’s **Paul Peterman** told Fox affiliate KVVU-TV. “Unfortunately, with COVID, it’s added to the depletion of the food pantries and the food banks. So we’re hoping to re-energize and restock our local charities.”

Kerri Smayda, associate executive director of Manna Food Pantries in Pensacola, FL, said that the two-year hiatus had taken a hit on her food pantry, estimating that it had lost out on 160,000 pounds of food.

“There are people in our community who are still struggling. They are struggling because of the effects of the pandemic. They continue to struggle because of the effects of the hurricane,” Smayda said of 2020’s Hurricane Sally. “Folks are faced with rising food costs; they’re faced with the challenges of food availability; and all at the same time, some of those benefits that folks who needed assistance over the course of the last two years, those benefits are starting to diminish, are starting to go away like disaster SNAP benefits and things like that. And so, all of those things combined means that there are still a lot of individuals and families in our community who are still struggling.”

Naperville, IL, is experiencing the hunger crunch as well. In late April, “Loaves & Fishes served over 5,200 people. This is 60 percent higher than we served in the beginning of 2022,” President and CEO of Loaves & Fishes Mike Havala told *Positively Naperville*.

Marshfield (MA) Food Pantry volunteer Arlene Dubrowski told *The Patriot Ledger* that the Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive is so effective because “it’s the easiest way you can support the families in need.”

“It’s an overwhelming joy, for me, personally,” Tucson, AZ Branch 704 food drive coordinator **Dan Turrentine** said of his role. “The first year I did it was in 2004, and I was amazed at how the Tucson community supported their fellow constituents.”

He’s hoping that donations match those from years past, when the donations would fill up an entire postal vehicle. “They do get fairly well full,” he told Arizona Public Media. “Some carriers end up having to be relieved of their load a couple of times during the day.”

“We love doing this,” Ishpeming, MI Branch 386 food drive coordinator **Tina McCorkle** told WLUC-TV, a dual NBC and Fox affiliate. “We just love being there for our community, and we’re hoping to get more food than we did three years ago when we did it last.”

Branch collection results forms were due at NALC Headquarters by June 1. 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**



Top l: Pawtucket, RI Branch 55  
 Top center: Southeast Massachusetts Branch 18  
 Top r: Central California Branch 231  
 Above: Las Vegas, NV Branch 2502

Dayton, OH Branch 182

