

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

United Way
of Fort Smith Area



320 South 18th

P.O. Box 2300

Fort Smith, AR 72902-2300

contact Linda Kaufenberg, Marketing Director

phone 479.782.1311

fax 479.782.3505

web unitedwayfortsmith.org

LETTER CARRIERS' NATIONAL FOOD DRIVE SET FOR MAY 10

(May 5, 2008, FORT SMITH, AR) — The National Association of Letter Carriers in conjunction with the U.S. Postal Service, the United Way of Fort Smith Area and the Community Services Clearinghouse is sponsoring the 16th Annual Letter Carriers Food Drive, Saturday, May 10.

Making a donation is easy. All residents in Alma, Barling, Fort Smith Greenwood, Hartford, Huntington, Mountainburg and Van Buren need to do is to place a box or can of non-perishable food next to their mailbox before their letter carrier delivers mail on Saturday, May 10. The carrier will take the food back to a postal station, where it will be sorted, given to an area food bank or pantry and then distributed to local residents at no charge.

This year, schools throughout the cities of Fort Smith and Barling are joining in the effort to restock area food pantries. During the weeks of May 1 – May 12, students will collect non-perishable food items. Kick-off was held at a Pike Elementary School student assembly. Pike students collected more than 1000 pounds of non-perishable food last year.

Food banks participating this year are Community Services Clearinghouse; Sack Lunch Program; The Boys Shelter; Mission Point Baptist; Evangel Temple; One Place, Inc.; Salvation Army; Quinn Chapel AME; River Valley Regional Foodbank; Helping Hands of Grand Avenue Baptist; Body, Mind and Soul.; Cedarville First Baptist, Compassionate Ministries, Living Waters PCG; Greenwood Assembly of God; Church of the Nazarene; Alma Community Outreach; Hearts of Hope and Alma First Baptist.

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The drive is conducted at this time of the year when the shelves of food banks and feeding sites are nearly empty as donations during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays have become exhausted. It is also a critical time of the year when children are not in school and many families are stretched to meet their basic nutritional needs. The 2007 food drive collected more than 30,000 pounds of donated food. Since 1998, more than 322,000 pounds of food has been collected and distributed.

Although the drive does mean added effort for letter carriers on the day of the drive, carriers who have participated in the past say the satisfaction gained from knowing their volunteer assistance is helping feed those in need in their own community makes it worthwhile.

George Burlingston, President of Branch 399 of the NALC, says, “Letter carriers see the silent suffering that hunger brings to millions of families in the neighborhoods we serve. Summer is a particularly critical time for children whose school lunch programs are suspended until fall and their families must find alternate sources of nutrition.”

“Many are from working families where the paycheck can not stretch far enough to provide for medicine, clothing, shelter and food,” Burlingston said.

FOOD FACTS

- An estimated 30 million people face hunger every day in America, including more than 12 million children.
- Research reveals, in comparison to food-secure children, children from food insecure homes are 90 percent more likely to be in fair or poor health and have 30 percent higher rates of hospitalization.