

# FOOD on the MOVE\*

By Jeff Campbell

**M**any Americans are learning for the first time this year what it's like to seek assistance from social programs. As more working people turn up at food banks, items leave the shelves faster and aren't replaced as quickly.

In a video message at the beginning of the summer, President Obama called on all Americans to help in our nation's recovery by volunteering in their community. The United We Serve ([www.serve.gov](http://www.serve.gov)) campaign began as a Summer of Service, with plans to continue service programs when the summer ends.

While unemployment rates climb across the country, one position that's relatively safe in the Washington, DC area is that of the Federal worker. Inspired by the First Lady's trip to the Capital Area Food Bank to bag lunches for kids, several Federal Agencies got together to come up with a way to fill the shelves of the Food Bank and the stomachs of Washington, DC Metro area families. The idea, "Feds Feed Families," began as a friendly competition among Federal office workers bringing non-perishable items

with them to work. On the last Friday of each month in the summer, they'd tally up the pounds en route to office prizes like pizza parties or special acknowledgment, but most importantly, helping to feed area families.

To move these boxes of food from government offices to the food bank warehouse, organizers got some help from local truck-driving troops, and also gave NDTA a call. Transportation is a vital element when assisting needy families. "That is what it's all about—the key is getting the food to them," said Capital Area Food Bank Resource Director Mike Gillespie. "Hungry people don't live next to the food; we've got to move it around to them."

Program organizers set a goal of one million pounds of food by summer's end, which would be record-breaking because the Capital Area Food Bank averages that amount yearly from all of the Metro area food drives combined. "If they hit just two tenths of that, it would be amazing," said Gillespie on the first day of the drive. Twenty percent of

a million  
p o u n d s  
would eclipse the

largest food drive donation the food bank has received—125,000 lbs—which resulted from the Papal Food Drive. That donation was collected in just a week, and was presented as a gift to the Pope in honor of the last Papal visit to Washington, DC.

The Feds Feed Families drive went all summer, and a major contributor to the program's transportation needs has held Federal interests at heart since its business began. NDTA PLUS Member FedEx stepped up with summer-long support, providing drivers and transportation throughout the DC metro region.

"FedEx was founded on the ability to move airplane parts for the government in a



Photo courtesy Jeff Campbell

\* If you'd like to see Feds Feed Families in action, check out "Food on the Move"—a video documentary produced by FedEx. Go to: [mediacenter.fedex.designcdt.com/node/367](http://mediacenter.fedex.designcdt.com/node/367).

## AN EXTRA HELPING

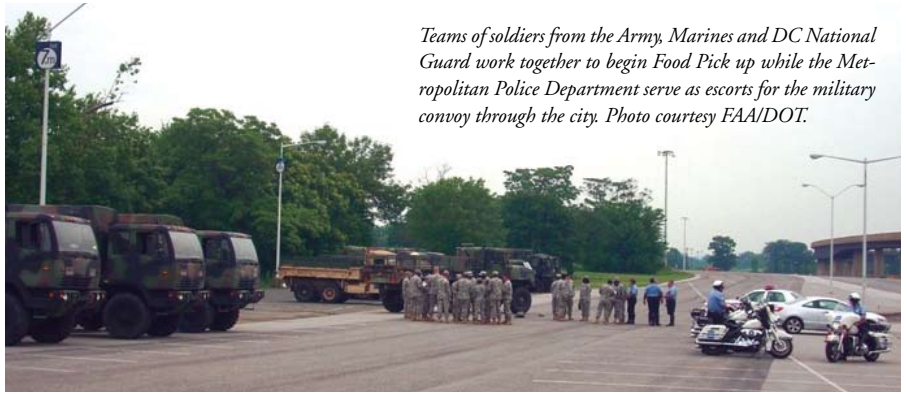
Leading up to the actual pickup and delivery of donated goods to the Capital Area Food Bank were many hours of planning sessions involving the Office of Personnel Management, the Department of Transportation (including the Federal Aviation Administration), NDTA headquarters staff (Denny Edwards, Karen Schmitt and Jeff Campbell) and FedEx Washington DC reps Kirstin Knott, Managing Director and POC for Military Sales, and Bright Alawuru, FedEx rep, who offered logistical expertise and coordinated FedEx vehicles and drivers.

First, a metric was established based on the number of federal agencies that agreed to participate (via online survey), their employee population, the estimated amount of food that each person would provide and the capacity of the boxes used to package the donations. From there, actual transport and dispatch schedules were determined.

FedEx—with its fine-tuned dispatch process—was assigned to pick up partial pallet loads and half-filled food boxes, although the company participation actually began a week earlier when FedEx volunteers were called upon to bring empty supply boxes to several federal agencies.

Military vehicles and drivers also pitched in: 5 trucks from 359th TB Army Reserve Unit; 5 trucks from Army National Guard – Washington, DC; and 3 trucks from US Marine Corps Chemical/Biological Incident Response Force (CBIRF). Observers commented that our military members set a stellar example. They serve and protect us all on the front lines in Afghanistan and Iraq and also in our home town communities by delivering food to hungry children and families.

The Administration hopes that this initiative will serve as a model to cities around the US that are facing similar food bank shortages.



*Teams of soldiers from the Army, Marines and DC National Guard work together to begin Food Pick up while the Metropolitan Police Department serve as escorts for the military convoy through the city. Photo courtesy FAA/DOT.*



*Volunteer Drivers who supported "Feds Feed Families" and Kirstin Knott. Photo courtesy FedEx.*

time-sensitive manner," said Dave Smith, senior manager of the Washington, DC FedEx Express Station. "I feel privileged to have this connection with the Government to help give back to needy families." The FedEx fit with Feds Feed Families worked well because daily delivery is what FedEx does. "We are a small package industry," Smith said. "These guys are the pros—when people ask us to move stuff, that's what we do."

I had a chance on the first day of pickups to hop on a truck and witness the generosity of the region's Federal employees from the driver's seat . . . well, passenger's seat. Safety's a top priority at FedEx, so after driver Tremayne Woods checked out his truck, he demonstrated how to properly enter the vehicle. Their delivery trucks are higher off the ground than your average pickup truck, so it's important to hold on and step up in the right order to avoid falling backward. This elevated position and wide windshield gives the driver a commanding view of the road ahead. It's tough enough finding a spot to park a car in DC, imagine maneuvering a big delivery truck through the busy city. For Woods, it's no problem. "I actually have an SUV,

so when I drive it on the weekend, I'm like, 'this is nothing,'" he said.

On the weekends, Woods is a youth coach on his son's team, and he always jumps at the chance to help out the community when he can. "Anytime an opportunity comes around, my hand goes up," Woods said. "We deliver your packages everyday, but we care, and it's not just a saying." FedEx has assisted food drives with equipment and volunteers for years, and the company continues to do so during this economic downturn, making Woods proud to work there. "We're all tightening up in this economy, and it amazes me that in tough times, FedEx still donates trucks and time to several great causes."

Security procedures at Federal offices made for an interesting pickup route, but the extra time it took to get through security checkpoints to the boxes of donations didn't slow Woods down a bit. "Personally, I love it—I have a zeal for delivering packages anyway because something I'm delivering could be very important," Woods said. "These packages are special because I know they're going to help people in the community."

At one of our first stops, we met several Department of Homeland Security employ-

ees who were excited to kick off a summer of service. “Donating food makes me feel great!” said Mission Support Branch Chief Trudy Harris-Williams. “All the difficulties families are having right now, we don’t know—that could be us one day. The Federal families here haven’t been impacted as much, so if we can help, then it feels great.”

The big white FedEx truck continued on to various agencies throughout the city, and while Woods has driven trucks for many years, there are still a few places he hasn’t picked up or dropped off a package yet. “It’s good when a stop comes up on my route that I haven’t been to before; then the next time a co-worker is going that way, I can tell him the best way to get there.” Teamwork, selfless service, loyalty—just a few of the Army Corps Values found among both soldier and civilian transporters.

After a couple hours riding with Woods, I hopped off (safely) and headed over to the Capital Area Food Bank, to see where all these donations were going. The food bank itself is in many ways a central collection point. Various groups hold food drives and give what they’ve gathered

>> **Total Federal Agencies Participating:** 57

>> **Total Population:** 210,822

>> **Food Drive Pledges** (in pounds): 1,023,610 – equivalent to 4/5 items per person

>> **Transport Metrics** (to derive pallet estimate and thus number of trucks required):  
Population X 5 lbs/person divided by 200 items/food box divided by 4 boxes/pallet

to the food bank. There, volunteers sort items into groups, and other charitable organizations come to pick up items needed most in their local community.

Ambitious Mike Gillespie was eager to help the area’s homeless when he started working at the food bank almost a decade ago. “What I learned is that only 12.5% of those served are homeless, while 23% of families served by the food bank actually own their home,” Gillespie said. “Also, 8% of our clients are elderly and nearly half of households served have at least one working adult but are struggling.”

“We’re seeing more working families,” said Capital Area Food Bank Senior Food Resource Director Mark Kiriakou. “A medical bill or some other expense has thrown them into a downspin. Now

they’re faced with a choice: buy food or pay the electric bill.

Federal agencies might not always agree on everything, but they quickly came together on the issue of hunger in the Capital region. Federal employees opened their pantries, and FedEx delivered, to help Feds Feed Families this summer. On the first collection day of “Feds Feed Families,” US Army soldiers and FedEx drivers picked up over 27,000 lbs of food from federal agencies around the Capital area. “Each pound of food equals one meal for one person,” Kiriakou said. In effect, Federal workers helped hungry people all around the nation’s capital start the summer with a nutritious meal. See complete results of the “Feds Feed Families” campaign at [www.fedsfeedfamilies.gov](http://www.fedsfeedfamilies.gov). *DTJ*

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