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APHIS in Action: APHIS Employees Proud to Support Feds Feed Families

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Our people are our greatest resource in APHIS. They respond to the needs of our communities when called in various ways, generally serving in a role to protect America's plants, animals, and natural resources. APHIS employees are ready to

respond to our communities, and we are proud to do so.

Recently, two APHIS employees, Dr. Marie Bucko and Michael Stepien, served on the national Feds Feed Families (FFF) team. The 2024 campaign leadership established a goal of collecting 11 million pounds of food, which they successfully surpassed in September, breaking previous records established by the campaign.

APHIS Veterinary Services Chief of Staff, Dr. Marie Bucko, led the Federal government's food donation effort across the country for the 2024 summer campaign, which took place June 24-September 30. Marie provided direction and strategy to FFF "Champions" throughout the government and led the campaign to "Nourish our Neighbors Nationwide," this year's campaign theme.



The national leadership team Marie assembled included Tabitha Bartley (USDA AMS), Christy Bernhart (OPM), Nika Larian (USAID), Eva Lopez (OPM), Michael Stepien (APHIS) and Katie Wolf (USDA ARS). This team led the Federal government campaign, collecting a record 12 million pounds of food, demonstrating the generosity of employees in the Federal government.

As the National Special Events Coordinator, Mr. Stepien provided guidance throughout the federal government on hosting events, such as local Stuff the Truck

events. He worked to revise the FFF Cutest Pet contest, driving traffic to FFF social media and significantly improving efficiency of the contest. He played a critical role in planning the Feds WISH Walk/FFF Closing Event, bringing together leadership throughout the Federal government to celebrate the success of the campaign.

USDA Deputy Secretary Xochitl Torres Small was a special guest speaker at the closing ceremony, generously sharing her time to recognize the importance of the FFF campaign. As the lead Department in the Federal government for FFF, the USDA recognizes the significant increase in demand for food during the summer months and has partnered throughout the government to collect more than 107 million pounds of food donations to support communities nationwide since the initial launch of the FFF campaign.



During the 2024 campaign, the National Leadership Team (NLT) created biweekly themes that highlighted various demographics and socioeconomic statuses that face hunger, to ensure their voices could be heard and how USDA employees can help them (e.g. children, rural communities, veterans, etc.). The NLT worked closely with senior government leadership and “Champions” across Federal Departments and Agencies to ensure the nationwide campaign was supported by as many Federal employees as possible. Dr. Bucko and her team were proactive in identifying new opportunities, challenging Departments outside of the USDA to exceed our historic

numbers.

Of the 12 million pounds of food donated this year, USDA employees donated 1,957,842 pounds. APHIS employees participated by donating 369,750 pounds of food, along with having two APHIS employees on the FFF NLT. The collective action APHIS employees took this year demonstrates their willingness to proudly respond to the needs of our communities, doing our part to Nourish our Neighbors Nationwide.

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