

# NFFE News



## NFFE Locals Thrive in 2023 Organizing Donation Program

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The National Federation of Federal Employees is pleased to announce that the 2023 Organizing Donation Program (ODP) was the most successful iteration of the campaign since it was launched in 2017. Overall, NFFE grew by 14% in 2023 and more than three-quarters of that growth can be attributed to NFFE Locals that experienced membership gains from participating in NFFE’s 2023 Organizing Donation Program.

The most successful local in the 2023 program was NFFE Local 1650, which represents Forest Service employees in Region 5, specifically those stationed on the Angeles, San Bernadino, Cleveland, Los Padres, and Sequoia National Forests in Southern California. Local 1650 added a whopping 252 new members during last year’s ODP, netting the Local over \$20,000 to use towards union activities.

NFFE Local 1650 President Matt Brossard is proud of the momentum that his local has had over the past couple years through the Organizing Donation Program and is confident that it will continue as the local adds new members. Local 1650 has played a significant role in sending members to Washington, D.C. during NFFE Legislative Week, advocating for Wildland Firefighters and Forest Service employees in the halls of Congress.

“Our local’s focus and momentum with respect to organizing has not stopped,” said NFFE Local 1650 President Matt Brossard. “We are constantly spreading the word about our success, not only in organizing, but also about the traction we have gained in Washington, D.C. fighting to bring reform for Wildland Firefighters and all of our brothers and sisters in the Forest Service.”

“The Organizing Donation Program allows us to be the best advocates we can be for both ourselves and our colleagues,” continued Brossard. “We use the extra funding from the program to bolster our resources for legislative week and it becomes a cost neutral activity. We’ll use part of our funds to send Local 1650 members to D.C. where they have the opportunity to meet with hundreds of lawmakers and explain to them why our cause is so important – not only for us as a workforce, but for the wellbeing of the country.”

“Our local has had a lot of organizing success because people see the results and they understand we are going after the biggest issues that affect everyone,” continued Brossard. “It’s not just the bargaining unit employees, but the agency as a whole. Social media has allowed us to spread the message of what the union is working on and Forest Service workers around the country see the hard evidence of our efforts, and they want to join in and be a part of that effort.”

“I think this is just the beginning of our organizing success,” continued Brossard. “We set a goal last year at legislative week to double our membership. We did it and we are not slowing down. The momentum is going to carry us and keep progressing the union forward. With every new member we have joining us, we know that NFFE is growing stronger and we have more resources to make a monumental impact in the working lives of Forest Service employees.”

Several Forest Service locals also made huge strides from participating in the ODP, including Local 1781 which grew 65%, Local 1836 which grew 66%, and Local 376 which grew 75%. With hundreds of new Forest Service workers joining the union through this program, NFFE is able to continue and expand on the fight to bring necessary reform to Wildland Firefighter pay and benefits, and to give all Forest Service employees a voice on matters like housing, work schedules, and other important issues in the workplace.

Outside of the Forest Service, NFFE Locals representing employees at the Department of Veterans Affairs saw the most significant gains from the 2023 Organizing Donation Program. In fact, Locals from the VA accounted for 9 of the 13 fastest growing Locals in the 2023 Organizing Donation Program. These VA Locals experienced growth rates ranging from 8% to 69%.

Della Caples of Local 1904, which represents professionals at the New Orleans VA Medical Center, said that her local found great success by tailoring events to show the union is like an extended family and by offering opportunities for those unfamiliar with NFFE to ask questions of union leaders.

“I look at my local as a family,” said Caples. “In NOLA, you have to mirror organizing techniques around what you do in your area. My people love to eat, they love to dance, they love to just come together and talk about things in one big group. As far as organizing, we go out and tell our people that we’re going to do something for them, and we just try to make people feel special. We’re known for beignets in NOLA, so we had a beignet truck come in and we gave out coffee and beignets. Then for lunch, we have a local place that sells a special type of wings, so we had that for lunch the next day. We advertised and had our representatives from all over, we had both presidents here (NFFE National President Randy Erwin and VA Council President Jeff Shapiro), we invited all of our benefits people, just so that our coworkers could also get information they may not know.”

Della understands that a strong, unionized workplace improves employee satisfaction and boosts morale among her colleagues, which in turn allows them to deliver the best care for our nation’s veterans.

“We rally around ourselves like a family atmosphere, and we rally around the fact that we need to take care of our veterans,” continued Caples. “We’re taking care of our veterans, and that’s what we’re here for.”

NFFE Local 2189, representing workers at Red River Army Depot in Bowie County, Texas, produced the largest gains among the Department of Defense locals. Local President Chris Green said the ODP has helped the local communicate important information about NFFE benefits and has led to a change in the culture around what the union can do for employees at Red River.

“We’ve been in the program ever since it started,” said Green. “It’s always helped our organizing strategies, just coming up with a plan. It helps us reach out to do something different every year. We at Red River had a reputation as we’re just there if people get in trouble. In the last few years, we’ve gotten out of that reputation.”

“We’re just trying to better people’s lives,” continued Green. “That’s what we tell our bargaining unit – that the union is there to make sure they’re doing their job right, plus all these other benefits. A lot of people were misinformed, I believe, and that’s what we at Local 2189 believe has been our success the last couple years – getting more information out about NFFE.”

“We were out of the shop floors for about two years because of COVID and now just coming back and telling people what kind of union benefits you have with retirement and health benefits, like the vision and dental,” continued Green. “They’re like, ‘Man, these are great benefits. How can I get it?’ Well, you gotta

be a member. And guess what, you get to take all that with you when you leave. To me, I think that information is a very big deal, and that's what drove us to get better and better with our organizing. If a local isn't participating in the program, I think they're really missing out."

Based on the continued success of the Organizing Donation Program, NFFE will be announcing the 2024 very soon. We encourage all NFFE locals to take advantage of this year's program to help our locals grow and have more resources to improve the workplaces and lives of NFFE members and their families.

"I am so very proud of all the NFFE locals that participated in the 2023 Organizing Donation Program," said NFFE National President Randy Erwin. "Our folks were really getting after it all year and we are a stronger union today because of it."

"I am pleased to say that all the NFFE locals that successfully participated in the program and achieved net gains have been paid according to the terms of the program," continued Erwin. "Many of these locals received enough money from this program to significantly change their local finances for the better. They can now afford to do things as a local that were unviable previously. That is the beauty of the Organizing Donation Program – when locals grow, they get to share in the prosperity that it creates. I'm hoping we can build on the success of the 2023 Program and make the 2024 Organizing Donation Program even better."

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