



# Notes from Harry

Winter Newsletter 2019 | Vol. XIX, No. 1

**Harry Chapin Food Bank**  
OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

Serving Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry and Lee Counties



## Introducing the Hero of the Year *YOU!*



The Harry Chapin Food Bank was notified in December that **we are a finalist for the Hero of the Year Award**, given annually by The News-Press. We are honored to be nominated with two other worthy finalists. The winner will be announced Feb. 22.

But we also know that whether or not we receive this award, the real heroes are you, our donors. Your support, whether it's making a financial donation, volunteering, or holding food drives, is the force that powers any action the food bank takes and any accomplishment we achieve.

There is no distributing 24 million pounds a year to people in need in Southwest Florida, no serving hungry seniors and children, no emergency mobile pantries providing relief in crises like hurricanes or toxic red tide, no celebrating our 35th anniversary and the distribution of our 200 millionth pound of food, without you.

A hero is someone who cares about the welfare of his or her neighbors, has the courage to step up and do the right thing, and is seen as a role model for the actions of others. Thank you for being our heroes.

## Matching grant helps nourish senior food program

Harry Chapin Food Bank's effort to feed seniors in need is going strong, and we seek your help to keep it that way.

The Care & Share: Senior Feeding Campaign began 18 months ago to supplement the diets of low-income seniors in Lee, Charlotte and Collier counties. The program has grown to serve 2,350 seniors, with more than 600 on a waitlist.

They are on fixed incomes, often making the difficult choices of whether to pay rent and other bills or buy food or the medicine they need to stay healthy.

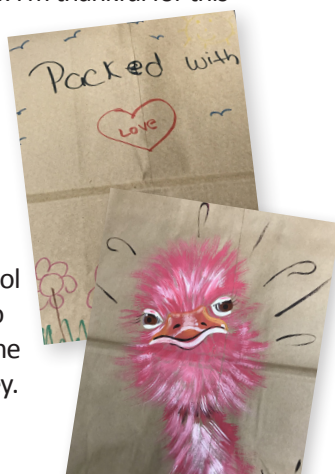
Seniors age 60 and over who qualify receive food "kits" containing canned fruits and vegetables, protein, grains, cereal and other food each month. When possible, the food bank will also provide bread, produce and frozen meat to clients.



The program helps clients like Grace (left) of Fort Myers, who retired after working 25 years for a medical supplies company. She said she also delivered Care &

Share kits to two elderly neighbors who were without transportation. "We are there for one another. I'm thankful for this program."

The food comes in bags that are often decorated by those who participate in our Family Volunteer Day, members of a local art club, or school children. Seniors who receive them enjoy the messages they convey.



The program costs \$1.1 million to operate. We are grateful that, for the second consecutive year, a grant from the **Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation** will match up to \$300,000 in donations to the **Harry Chapin food bank** when donors designate their gifts to our **Care & Share: Senior Feeding Campaign**. The food bank's goal is to fulfill the match by June 30.

**A donation of \$500 can feed a senior for a year.**

**Care & Share**  
Senior Feeding Campaign

*Harry Chapin Food Bank,  
Some days there is no  
meat in the freezer, or milk  
in the refrigerator. Thanks to  
you, there's always something  
to eat - soup, tuna, spaghetti  
and sauce, etc. ect. Thank  
you, Always.*

- note from a senior client

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**Richard LeBer**  
Harry Chapin Food Bank  
President & CEO

## Welcome to 2019!

For those of you who are seasonal residents of Southwest Florida, welcome back to our little slice of paradise!

At the Harry Chapin Food Bank, we are determined to help our community thrive by helping people, in the face of life's emergencies. We help hungry kids whose parents may have become ill or lost a job. We help seniors struggling with skyrocketing medical costs. We make our community stronger by helping them back to their feet.

That keeps us busy. Our trucks are at 30 mobile pantries every month. We operate nine pantries in schools. We are serving over 3,500 seniors every month through our two senior food kit programs. We are the major food source for just about

every independent organization in Southwest Florida feeding the hungry – over 150 of them at last count.

We hope you will join us and our other friends at the WINK Feeds Families Hunger Walk, our largest fundraiser. It's a great opportunity to support the food bank, catch up with friends and supporters and have a lot of fun. We are so grateful to our generous sponsors who make it possible. Come on out; you won't want to miss it!

Thanks as always for your support.

## Major milestone

The Harry Chapin Food Bank celebrated a huge milestone in November – the distribution of our **200 millionth pound of food** to feed our neighbors in need in Southwest Florida.



The food bank marked the occasion by holding two special mobile food pantries, one in Lee County and one in Collier County, on the first Tuesday after Thanksgiving, also known as “Giving Tuesday.”

The food bank began in 1983 as a tiny grassroots food cooperative. It took us 31 years to get to 100 million pounds of food distribution in 2014, and only four more years to reach 200 million.

The milestone is even more significant when you consider that it was reached in the Harry Chapin Food Bank's 35th anniversary year.

## Drumstick roll, please

Thanks to all of you, we surpassed our goal in our 2018 Thanksgiving turkey drive. We wound up with about **3,250 turkeys**. The goal was 3,000. Morgan & Morgan donated 58 turkeys and checks totaling \$10,395. More than 300 turkeys were donated at the last minute by

Publix Super Markets. Publix also took donations from their customers and provided 31,118 pounds of prepared meals for our partner agencies. We are grateful to our community for helping our clients have a Happy Thanksgiving.

Photo: L-R, Jim Hutchinson, accounting staff; Richard LeBer, food bank president and CEO; Joe Linnehan, attorney; Jason Gelinas, attorney; Lauren Hutchinson, accounting manager; Emily Ruiz and Yesenia Rodriguez, accounting staff.



## Collier center celebrates first anniversary

The Harry Chapin Food Bank knew there was lots of potential for growth and community engagement in Collier County.

Now we're starting to realize that potential, and there's no telling how far we can go.

The food bank's Collier County Center, at 3940 Prospect Ave., is just over a year old. The center has succeeded in offering more room for food donations, volunteer opportunities and meeting space for community organizations and nonprofits.

The Collier County Center, opened in October 2017, is a complement to the Harry Chapin Food Bank's Fort Myers Distribution Center at 3760 Fowler St. At 13,500 square feet, it quadruples the space where the food bank previously operated in Collier County.

"The food bank had already been a significant part of the Collier County nonprofit network for 20 years, but the Collier County Center has helped raise and reinforce our profile," said Richard LeBer, food bank president and CEO.

The center has helped build closer connections and is continuing to help

the food bank expand its services throughout Collier County, LeBer said.

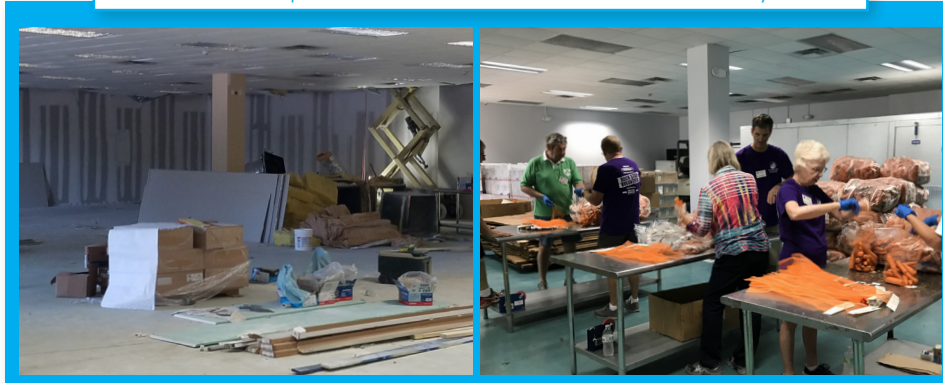
John Lynn, a Naples volunteer who has logged 817 hours in about 1 ½ years of volunteering, believes that the new center has raised awareness. "A lot more people know we're here," he said.

For some, it's hard to understand that hunger exists in the Naples area, known as one of the wealthiest cities in the United States. But in Collier County, 36,640 people are food insecure, which means they may not know where their next meal is coming from. This includes 12,420 children.

Lynn sees it in his volunteer work, especially at the food bank's mobile pantries. "A lot of the people are really working poor. It's not that they're not trying. They come up to mobile pantries, a lot of them on the way back from work."

The Harry Chapin Food Bank has 35 partner agencies in Collier County and also operates our mobile pantry program, called Fulfill. A total of 5.1 million pounds of food was distributed in Collier County in the last fiscal year.

Before and after photos of the warehouse at the Collier County Center



## Grants move food bank's mission forward

Receiving grants is vital to the Harry Chapin Food Bank's mission to lead our community in the fight to end hunger.

Here are some of the grants we've received in the last several months, along with the programs, improvements or activities they will help fund:

- **\$50,000** from Arthrex for the Care & Share: Senior Feeding Campaign
- **\$15,000** from Mosaic for Charlotte

County food distribution

- **\$7,000** from St. John's Episcopal Church in Naples for the Care & Share program
- **\$5,000** from the Cape Coral Community Foundation for the Care & Share program
- **\$107,578** from Jane's Trust for refrigerator expansion
- **\$12,000** from Windstar Gives

Back for mobile pantries held in East Naples

- We also received a new truck in December. The refrigerated truck, funded with a **\$150,000** grant from Publix, is the 19th truck in our fleet.

We are grateful for the support of our generous donors.

# Feeding young bodies so young minds can learn

When hungry children go to school, they are at a double disadvantage, physically and mentally. Not having enough nutritious food to feed your body makes it more difficult to feed your mind.

Kids who don't get enough to eat struggle to focus, are more likely to experience impaired development in language and motor skills, and have more social and behavioral problems, according to Feeding America, the nation's largest food bank network, of which Harry Chapin Food Bank is a member.

The Harry Chapin Food Bank is focusing on increasing the number of in-school pantries it provides in Southwest Florida, where two-thirds of school children are eligible for or receive free or reduced

lunches because of their families' low income.

The food bank now has nine in-school pantries, and three schools that receive food boxes that are distributed to the families of the students. The food bank started with about three in-school pantries six years ago.

"Establishing more in-school pantries, along with distribution of the pre-packaged food boxes, gives the food bank another way to provide healthy, nutritious food to children, teens and their families who are experiencing food insecurity," said Louise Bain, food bank programs outreach manager. "Students can access an in-school pantry without the stigma that is oftentimes associated with being in need, and families are able to receive the food they need in a familiar, welcoming place."

One of the food bank's in-school pantries is at Parkside Elementary School in Naples. "At Parkside we are so appreciative of our in-school food pantry partnership with Harry Chapin Food Bank, and the North Naples Church donors and volunteers who support this important program," said Tom Gemmer, school counselor.

Photo: Students receive food at Parkview Elementary.

Parkside has many families who depend on the twice-monthly food distributions, he said. "By sending home a variety of produce, meats and non-perishable foods, the students and their families are assured of having enough to eat so that when they are at school, they can be focused on their academics and not on their need for food."

### In-school pantry / food box distribution

#### Lee County:

- Tortuga Preserve Elementary
- Coronado High School
- North Nicholas High School
- Mariner Middle School
- James Stephens International Academy
- Food box distribution at Hancock Creek Elementary and Island Coast High School

#### Charlotte County:

- Baker Center School
- Food box distribution at the Boys & Girls Club in Port Charlotte

#### Collier County:

- Parkside Elementary
- Mike Davis Elementary
- Immokalee High School



## More mobile pantries, millions of pounds

The food bank has increased the number of mobile food pantries to an average of 30 per month this year. In fiscal year 2017-18, we held 737 mobile pantries and produce deliveries at 80 locations.

Our clients received 3.2 million pounds of food, or about 2.7 million meals. The mobile pantry program, called Fulfill, continues to be one of the most

efficient ways for the food bank to distribute fresh, nutritious food directly to clients, many of whom do not have access to grocery stores due to location or lack of transportation.

Clients at each pantry receive 30 to 35 pounds of fresh produce, meat and bread, along with a variety of canned and dry goods such as peanut butter, beans, rice, juice, cereal and fruit.



Angel at an Immokalee mobile pantry

# Harry's photo album



The food bank had a fresh new wrap installed on the front of the Fort Myers Distribution Center.



A group of volunteers from Homewood Suites recently sorted and packed 5,216 pounds of milk.



Richard LeBer, right, food bank president and CEO, accepts the Harvey Kapnick Award from the Community Foundation of Collier County, in recognition of our work after Hurricane Irma.



Henry and Sandy Peterson delivered 731 pounds of turkey and 127 pounds of nonperishable food from the "Sanibel East End Turkey Drop and Roll."



Julia Humble, 8, and her mom, Agne Gajauskaite, volunteered at Let's Feed Lee.



Richard LeBer, food bank president and CEO, left, with Pamela and Tom Marciniak of Punta Gorda, who raised \$11,000 from their 11th annual "Party with a Purpose" dinner gathering.



Clients received food at a mobile pantry distribution at Franklin Park Elementary School in Fort Myers to mark the 200 millionth pound of food distributed to our community.



Joy Youngblood, age 8, stopped by with her Christmas gift to the food bank. This year, she raised \$163! Madeline Paniagua, food bank administrative assistant, helped count.



Volunteers packed onions while learning about the food bank at Naples Family Volunteer Day.



By Erik Hoffer  
Hoffer Family Foundation  
Harry Chapin Food Bank donor

## Where's home

In rescue and most other charitable organizations, donations make the wheels turn and provide the services to those in need.

In order to understand the nature of giving, a generous person must decide with whom to share his or her wealth. This is typically decided by some passion that person has, or a conscious desire to help some cause. Gifting takes thought and gives pleasure to both the donor and the charity. Regardless of the magnitude of the gift, it's where the money is

channeled that makes it relevant to the community or cause receiving it.

Take our Southwest Florida German Shepherd Rescue Inc., organizations such as the Ya Ya Girls and Harry Chapin Food Bank, for instance, which my foundation supports. These organizations serve those in Charlotte and Lee counties who are in need. The Ya Ya Girls provide food in backpacks for over 1,100 local Charlotte County children weekly who do not eat regularly over the weekends. The Harry Chapin Food Bank provides basic nutritional needs 12 months a year to neighborhoods whose residents are unable to afford quality, nutritious food. The rescue, of course, is dog-based, but to those of us who love our pets, these homeless German shepherds are equally in need of help.

I have spoken to many people who live here in Punta Gorda and in the surrounding areas. When asked, "Where's home?" you get two types of replies.



First, the snowbird response of "My home is in Michigan, but I am here only half the time" is typical.

The permanent resident typically says, "I love living here, but my home is still up North."

Either way I tend to get frustrated, because these two groups still cannot see the members of the community where they reside as "home,"

in the sense of channeling their generosity to local causes. I am not suggesting we forsake our great home states, but we also need to consider where we reside. It must be inclusive of the residents in our neighborhoods, our friends, our business colleagues, the local first responders, hospitals, schools, restaurant workers, where we pray and where we play.

When we consider what to support and how much to support it, I would suggest rethinking what is actually "home" and supporting local organizations with at least the same consideration given to a similar organization 1,500 miles away.

## February features major food drives

The Harry Chapin Food Bank is holding several county-wide food drives in February at Publix Super Markets.

*9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 2: Let's Feed Collier and Let's Feed Charlotte will be held at Publix stores in Collier and Charlotte counties.*

*9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 23: Let's Feed Lee will be held at Publix stores in Lee County.*

We're asking customers to stop by and donate one or more of the items most needed by our partner agencies. Our staff and volunteers will be at the stores to greet you and say thank you. In February 2018, our first Let's Feed Collier drive resulted in **more than 15,000 pounds of food**. In September 2018, our first Let's Feed Lee drive brought in **47,488 pounds of food**, and **\$11,733 in donations**.



Steve Soucy of our food bank staff accepts donations with two volunteers at the Brooks Village Publix for Let's Feed Collier.



Scot and Nicole Chausse and their two children, Quinten and Chloe, enjoyed their first Family Volunteer Day in November. The next Family Volunteer Day in Fort Myers and Naples will be 9 to 11:30 a.m., Saturday, March 23.

## Thanks a million

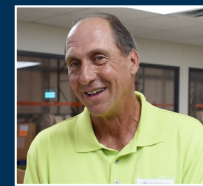
There are more than a million reasons why our volunteers are vital to the success of the food bank.

In the last fiscal year, **3,839 volunteers collectively provided more than 41,000 hours, which equates to more than \$1 million of in-kind service.**

If you'd like to know more about joining our army of volunteers, visit [harrychapinfoodbank.org/donate/volunteer](http://harrychapinfoodbank.org/donate/volunteer)

## Reasons why I volunteer

### Rick Laboda



"When I started volunteering at the food bank and found out how great the need was, it made me even more excited about the difference I could make. I love the different things that I can do."

### Frederick Gloege



"The people that I work with and the mission of Harry Chapin speak to my heart, and it's something I look forward to doing for as many years as I am physically able."

## Our volunteers provided:



More than  
**\$1 million** of  
in-kind service



**41,000** hours

Fiscal year 2017-18

## Answering the call to help after Hurricane Michael

We're proud of our staff members who did double hurricane relief duty this season. **In October, we deployed four staff members and two trucks for Hurricane Michael relief in the Panhandle.** The group included Operations Director Eric Hitzeman, who worked at food banks in both Tallahassee and Alabama, arranging food donations and deliveries through the Feeding America network. Warehouse driver Nelson Virella stayed in Tallahassee for one week, helping with mobile pantries

and partner agency deliveries.

In the meantime, staff member Jose Soto-Cruz, drove one of our mobile pantry trucks up to the Panhandle to deliver emergency relief, along with staff member Edson Pagan, who drove one of the food bank's box trucks.

**In September, we sent two of our own to North Carolina for two weeks to help with Hurricane Florence disaster relief distribution and warehouse management.** The team included Dennis Hall, our Fort Myers warehouse manager,

and Mike Davis, our retail logistics manager. Thanks to all!



An emergency mobile pantry distribution in the Panhandle

Find out how you can volunteer with the Harry Chapin Food Bank at [harrychapinfoodbank.org](http://harrychapinfoodbank.org).



**Harry Chapin Food Bank**  
OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

**The Harry Chapin Food Bank of  
Southwest Florida**  
3760 Fowler Street  
Fort Myers, Florida 33901

Sign up to receive email  
updates from Harry  
Chapin Food Bank  
**Text HARRY to 42828**  
to get started.

### *Leave a legacy*

Your support of the Harry Chapin Food Bank demonstrates your commitment to ending hunger in Southwest Florida. Please consider the Harry Chapin Food Bank when planning your will or estate. For more information, contact Miriam Pereira: (239) 334-7007 ext. 127  
[mpereira@harrychapinfoodbank.org](mailto:mpereira@harrychapinfoodbank.org).

**Fort Myers Distribution Center**  
3760 Fowler St.  
Fort Myers, FL 33901

**Collier County Center**  
3940 Prospect Ave. #101  
Naples, FL 34104

### *Find us on social media*



### *Harry's happenings*

- **Feb. 2 - Let's Feed Collier and Let's Feed Charlotte**  
9 to 3 p.m., Publix stores in Collier and Charlotte counties
- **Feb. 23 - Let's Feed Lee**  
9 to 3 p.m., Publix stores in Lee County
- **March 23 - Family Volunteer Day**  
9 to 11:30 a.m., Collier County Center  
9 to 11:30 a.m., Fort Myers Distribution Center

### *How donations are used*

**\$1 equals \$8 worth of food value**



- 4 percent of donations go to administration and funding
- 96 percent of donations go to programs and services

A copy of the Food Bank's official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Division of Consumer Services by calling toll-free within the state. Registration does not imply endorsement, approval or recommendation by the state. For more information, contact the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Affairs at 1-800-435-7352 or visit [freshfromflorida.com](http://freshfromflorida.com).