Food bank preps for storm season

Now that the 2018 hurricane season is underway, many in our community wonder anxiously what might be in the wind. We want you to know that the Harry Chapin Food Bank is confident and ready, no matter what challenges the next few months may bring.

“After Hurricane Irma hit last September, we worked hard to support our community, in collaboration with all the other people in our community who were helping their neighbors,” said Richard LeBer, food bank president and CEO. “That work made a huge difference in people’s lives and in their ability to recover from the devastation. This year, we have our plans and preparations in place. If needed, we’re prepared to help once again.”

As efforts shifted from providing immediate emergency food to long-term recovery, the food bank launched a “Recover, Rebuild, Restore” campaign to raise $500,000 to help families put their lives back together. The campaign met and exceeded its goal in six weeks.

The food bank has 35 years of experience helping Southwest Florida during emergency situations. Our role is to assist first responders, such as the American Red Cross and FEMA, to provide and distribute food. When help is requested, we are there, working nonstop to support our neighbors. We will remain until the job is done.

Be a food bank superstar
Your group, school or business can become part of our superstar wall by meeting just three criteria: raise a minimum $500, schedule a volunteer day, and hold a food drive. Your group’s T-shirt will be displayed on our new superstar wall, honoring your food bank support!

1. Funds
Every bit does a lot. For every $1 donated to us, we can provide $8 worth of food value.

2. Friends
Schedule a volunteer day. Whether you’re an individual, group, or company, there are opportunities for everyone.

3. Food
Anyone can conduct a food drive! Register your drive with us, collect the food, and drop it off.

Contact Meg Madzar, Harry Chapin Food Bank events and food drive coordinator, at mmadzar@harrychapinfoodbank.org.

Notes from Harry
Summer Newsletter 2018 | Vol. XVIII, No. 3
Our mission is to lead our community in the fight to end hunger.

"We're feeding more people, developing new sources of nutritious food and deepening our impact."

Richard LeBer
Harry Chapin Food Bank
President & CEO

State of the food bank

Food bank helps partners invest in themselves

After Hurricane Irma tore through Southwest Florida last September, the Harry Chapin Food Bank stepped up to serve the community that has so generously helped us feed our neighbors in need for years. We fed thousands of people through our emergency mobile pantries and by supplying our network of 150-plus partner agencies with the food they needed to reopen their doors.

As we mark our 35th anniversary this year, we continue to lead hunger-relief efforts by supporting our partners in one other critical way. For the first time, we’ve eliminated all fees to our agencies. We expect this will help them expand the amount of food they provide so they can invest money in their programs.

From modest beginnings, we’ve become the largest hunger-relief network in Southwest Florida. We’re feeding more people, developing new sources of nutritious food and deepening our impact, whether it’s through our new Naples center, more involvement in Lehigh Acres or the Anti-Hunger Task Force we’re leading in Charlotte County.

These efforts are improving the health of our community, strengthening our economy and making Southwest Florida a better place to live.

We are energized and on the move. And we are grateful for the generous support of our community, which makes our mission possible.

A nonprofit pinnacle

We’re proud to announce that the Harry Chapin Food Bank has received a four-star rating for the ninth consecutive year from Charity Navigator, the nation’s leading nonprofit watchdog organization. This top rating is awarded for financial efficiency, responsibility and transparency. For the detailed rating, go to charitynavigator.org.

AIB International gives seal of approval

The Harry Chapin Food Bank earned its national food safety certification once again, passing its audit by the American Institute of Baking, International (AIB) with flying colors! The AIB grades food banks for food safety practices, cleanliness, operational methods, maintenance and pest control. Auditors from AIB look in every nook and cranny before giving their seal of approval.

Family Volunteer Day in Fort Myers, Naples

You are invited to our next Family Volunteer Day, from 9 to 11:30 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 25, at our Fort Myers Distribution Center, 3760 Fowler St. and Collier County Center, 3940 Prospect Ave.

The event is open to families with children age 10 and older. They will tour the food bank and learn how it works to feed about 28,000 people per week. Participants will also pack food and decorate and decorate paper bags that contain food for our Care & Share: Senior Feeding Campaign.

To register, visit harrychapinfoodbank.org and click on the volunteer tab. All participants must wear closed-toe shoes. For questions, email Tanya Phillips, Lee County volunteer coordinator, at tphillips@harrychapinfoodbank.org or Todd Lewis, Collier County volunteer coordinator, at tlewis@harrychapinfoodbank.org.

Monthly giving is a great way to support the food bank!
Our mission is to lead our community in the fight to end hunger.

Event brings hunger to the forefront

The Harry Chapin Food Bank hosted a unique dinner event on April 19 to highlight hunger in Collier County and to start a community conversation on the steps we can take to end food insecurity. The first-time event, called “A Place at the Table,” was a success. The dinner showed those attending what it’s like to not have enough food to eat and the kinds of choices some families, seniors, single parents, veterans and other food bank clients must make to put food on the table.

Guests were given envelopes that contained compelling stories from a variety of people who are food insecure, which means that they may not know where their next meal is coming from. The stories were based on actual client experiences.

Participants were given a dollar amount and menus, then sent through a cafeteria-style line to select food and see what their money could buy to feed themselves and their families. It quickly became clear that what they had to spend would not be enough.

Then participants were served a “normal” dinner, and at the tables, food bank staff and board members led conversations about what they had just experienced. The goal – to raise awareness about hunger issues in Southwest Florida in general and Collier County specifically – was met.

During the event, two Harry Chapin Food Bank clients shared their personal stories of struggle. One of them is below.

“I’m married with four children. I believe life is what you make of it, and I enjoy helping when I can and however I can. But sometimes, life just happens. Recently, I’ve had to miss a lot of work as a general assistant at Pinecrest Elementary in Immokalee due to my younger children’s medical evaluations.

If you don’t work, you don’t get a paycheck. I was left with the difficult decision of paying a necessary bill or buying groceries. We don’t qualify for government assistance, so providing a nutritious meal is more difficult. Sometimes, buying any kind of food feels out of reach.”

Remember us in your estate planning.
At a small white building on the grounds of a Port Charlotte church, a new experiment is underway, 24 hours a day, to help feed the hungry.

Fresh green beans, colorful mini peppers, bananas and non-perishable foods sit on tables in the front yard, ready for distribution to waiting clients.

The EbenEzer Church Food Pantry previously operated for two days a week, serving about 450 people. Now the pantry is open around the clock, providing access to food when clients need it.

The pantry, at 18305 Wintergarden Ave., is operated by the EbenEzer Pentecostal Church. Senior Pastor Prevoit Numa said he gets calls at all hours from people seeking food. “They come from everywhere. They say they need help. I’m here to help.”

The 24/7 pantry idea comes from the Anti-Hunger Task Force of Charlotte County, a new collaboration formed by the Harry Chapin Food Bank, including some of the food bank’s partner agencies, other nonprofit organizations, government and law enforcement agencies, and clients.

The task force formed earlier this year to ramp up the fight against food insecurity in the county, said Carolyn Jones, partner relations and compliance manager for the Harry Chapin Food Bank.

About 24,050 people are food insecure in Charlotte County, which means they may not know where their next meal is coming from, according to a study called “Map the Meal Gap 2017” by Feeding America. Of that number, about 5,180 are children.

The EbenEzer pantry is the first of the Harry Chapin Food Bank’s partner agencies to open 24/7, Jones said. Many of the clients are working families who can’t get to food pantries during traditional business hours, she said. “We want to make sure they have access because we realize these are people falling through the cracks.”

The success of the new pantry depends on getting enough volunteers to keep it open 24 hours. Volunteers are still needed, Numa said.

To Help/Volunteer
Contact Senior Pastor Prevoit Numa at prevoit.numa@yahoo.com or (754) 422-4652.

Conference brings partner agencies together

Our annual agency conference on May 8, themed “Fighting Hunger, Feeding Hope,” gave our partner agencies a chance to network and exchange ideas. Robert Johns of Lee Community Healthcare spoke on “Good Food is Good Medicine,” which is a partnership program with the food bank.

Congratulations to First Assembly Cornerstone for being awarded the Joyce Jacobs Agency Excellence Award. Also, Tony Moxley from Morningstar Baptist Church was awarded the Volunteer Excellence Award.

Find out how you can partner with Harry Chapin Food Bank at harrychapinfoodbank.org.
A big thank you to Flyin’ Brian and The Freakshow from 105.5 The Beat for a great night of stand-up comedy at the Laugh-In Comedy Cafe in Fort Myers, featuring five comedians. The $1,675 proceeds from the show benefited the food bank.

The annual PB&J food drive, held by SWFL’s WAY-FM brought in almost 5,800 pounds of peanut butter and jelly during the first week of June. Richard LeBer lies on a bin of PB&J.

Clients receive food at a recent mobile pantry at Iglesia Cristiana Misionera in Lehigh Acres.

Happy Birthday to our longtime volunteer Maurice Bonecutter, who turned 92 on June 7. He has volunteered for seven years.

Harry Chapin Food Bank staff shows support for Red Nose Day.

Volunteers Doug and Judy Hollar attend the 2018 Volunteer Dinner.

Austin Thorstad sorts food during the National Association of Letter Carriers “Stamp Out Hunger” Food Drive.

Joe Asencio from Florida Gulf Coast University volunteers at Family Volunteer Day on May 5.

We unveiled our newly wrapped mobile pantry truck, purchased with a $150,000 grant from Publix Super Markets Charities. Thank you, Publix!
Group helps feed hungry souls at Super Bowl time

The Good Shepherd United Methodist Women in North Fort Myers turns an early February weekend into a time of caring for our neighbors in need. During Super Bowl weekend, some members of the group stand at the doors of the church, holding large soup pots, as people exit after each service. They collect donations in the soup pots for the food bank as part of their “Souper Bowl of Caring.”

This group of about 20 women is one of many food bank donors who show their support year after year in ways that make a big impact. These donors include various community organizations that provide priceless support to the food bank.

A church youth group in Columbia, S.C., began the “Souper Bowl of Caring” in 1990. “They prayed that we’d be mindful of those without a bowl of soup to eat on that day,” said Beth Ferris, the group’s social action officer and coordinator of the event. Eventually, the movement expanded nationwide to include schools, businesses and groups like the Good Shepherd United Methodist Women.

Each group holds an event in the weeks or days leading up to the Super Bowl and then gives 100 percent of those donations to a local charity.

“Everyone has so many snacks and things on Super Bowl Sunday. We were thinking about food for the hungry and wondering: Couldn’t we do something on that day for people who are hungry?” Ferris said.

“Snacks and things” is an understatement. The National Retail Federation’s annual survey showed spending on the 2018 Super Bowl was expected to exceed $15 billion in food, beverages, team apparel and accessories.

In the meantime, the total raised by the 2018 Souper Bowl of Caring was $18.1 million through the efforts of 3,719 groups. At Good Shepherd United Methodist Church, they raised $1,420 for the Harry Chapin Food Bank.

They know their efforts make a difference. “We’re small, but we’re mighty,” said Lois Jean Wood, a member and past president of the women’s group. “I think we generate the enthusiasm, and the congregation generates the cash.”

The group has raised almost $14,000 in Souper Bowl Sunday proceeds for the food bank in 11 years, Ferris said.

In 2014, donors at the nearby Sunseekers RV Park Church began contributing to the cause. “One of Good Shepherd’s members conducts the service at the park, and they wanted to help the Harry Chapin Food Bank also,” Ferris said.

Step up to the plate in September

We invite you to join the fight against hunger during Hunger Action Month in September. This is Feeding America’s nationwide hunger awareness campaign to take action against hunger.

Orange is the color for Hunger Action Month. Our hunger action calendar will have a range of ways that you can help every day. Just check us out on Facebook or our website, harrychapinfoodbank.org.

Donate easily and securely at harrychapinfoodbank.org.
We honored our dedicated, hardworking volunteers at our 2018 Volunteer Dinner on March 28 at the Holiday Inn Airport-Town Center. Last fiscal year, a total of 6,100 volunteers provided nearly 40,400 hours of in-kind service, equating to about a million dollars! Thank you all for your enthusiasm, commitment and caring.

Claudia Sullivan
“T like getting out with people and contributing. It’s fun to have an activity that I know is providing quality products to people that are in need.”

Karen Cochran
“I volunteer at the food bank because it’s a nice organization, it’s a fun group of people, and it’s wonderful to help the less fortunate in our community.”

Halee McGraw and her daughter Bailee donated to the Let’s Feed Collier food drive.

“Let’s Feed Collier” a big success

“Let’s Feed Collier,” a one-day food drive held April 7 by the Harry Chapin Food Bank in partnership with Publix Super Markets, brought in 26,201 pounds of food to help feed Collier County residents in need.

Residents were invited to visit any of 19 Publix stores in Collier County and purchase one or more of the nonperishable food items most needed by the food bank. Volunteers and food bank staff were at the stores to take the donations and thank donors.

The Harry Chapin Food Bank serves 30 partner agencies in Collier County. We are grateful for the support of Publix and our generous community. In Collier County, about 38,000 people struggle with hunger. About 13,500 are children.

I volunteer because ...

Claudia Sullivan

Karen Cochran

Get nosey and fight hunger

The 26th annual National Letter Carriers “Stamp Out Hunger” Food Drive on May 12 brought in 292,000 pounds of food, which will be distributed by the Harry Chapin Food Bank and several other agencies.

This is the largest one-day food drive in the country. It’s also the largest one-day food drive for the food bank. Locally, the Harry Chapin Food Bank and the United Way of Lee, Hendry, Glades and Okeechobee Counties partnered with the letter carriers to make the food drive happen.

The Harry Chapin Food Bank staff participated in Red Nose Day on May 24, an international event to fight child poverty and hunger. The Feeding America network of food banks, including the Harry Chapin Food Bank, benefits from Red Nose Day. Last year, we received a $10,000 grant for our mobile pantry program. Here, Tucker Uhler and his dad, Ryan Uhler, #GoNoseToNose in support of the event.

Find out how you can volunteer with the Harry Chapin Food Bank at harrychapinfoodbank.org.
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 Kelli King at (239) 334-7007 ext. 202 or kelliking@harrychapinfoodbank.org.

Fort Myers Distribution Center
3760 Fowler Street
Fort Myers, Florida 33901

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

Find us on social media

Harry’s happenings

- Aug. 25 - Family Volunteer Day
  Fort Myers Distribution Center, 9 to 11:30 a.m.
  Collier County Center, 9 to 11:30 a.m.
- Sept. 4 - Food For Thought tour
  Collier County Center, 8 to 9 a.m.
- Sept. 11 - Food For Thought tour
  Fort Myers Distribution Center, 8 to 9 a.m.
- Sept. 2018 - Hunger Action Month

How donations are used

$1 equals $8 worth of food value

- 3 percent of donations go to administration and funding
- 97 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.