



Harry Chapin Food Bank
OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

Notes from Harry

Spring Newsletter 2022

SERVING CHARLOTTE, COLLIER, GLADES, HENDRY AND LEE COUNTIES

WHAT'S INSIDE...

Where Do We Get Our Food?

Nourishing Our Community

Calling All Changemakers



Where Do We Get Our Food?

The answer to this question has grown rather complicated. Prior to the pandemic, most of the food your food bank distributed was donated by either food retailers, food producers and/or the general public. We used to purchase an average of \$37,500 worth of food each month. These strategies were stable and enabled us to feed 28,000 people each week.

With the onset of the pandemic, our strategies became insufficient as the need for food in our five-county footprint skyrocketed. We needed to find new sources of food, expand our existing sources and manage hiccups within the food supply chain. **Sadly, those hiccups grew into significant disruptions, turning an already difficult task into a daunting challenge.** The amount of food that we rescue from our various and generous retail partners continues to fluctuate uncontrollably.

We are completely sympathetic to our retail partners as we have been in their stores and can see their own challenges. Even still, they are committed to supporting us. Beginning in the pandemic's early days and through today, nearly two years later, Publix Super Markets has donated a truckload of produce each week that they purchase from local Florida farmers. **Despite this incredible philanthropy, we continue to spend nearly one million dollars each month on food.**

As we build our food inventory, great consideration is given to the nutritional composition of each meal we provide. We procure a balanced variety of foods that are wholesome and nourishing so that the quarter of a million people we serve each month feel confident in the quality of food they receive through our programs.

Many of the families we serve struggle to make ends meet in today's economy — despite oftentimes working two jobs. Not only are they facing a losing battle with inflation, but they are also juggling double-digit rent increases, surging healthcare expenses, rising gasoline costs and higher prices at grocery stores. Repeatedly, we hear that food budgets are not able to stretch like they used to.

Your food bank is also facing a battle with inflation, with food expenses increasing up to 25%. The cost to transport and distribute food has doubled. **We can't stretch our own food budget like we used to, and all the while, we still witness a relentless sea of cars waiting in line for food, many for the first time.**

In spite of these challenges, and with your support, we will continue to search tirelessly to provide food for those who are hungry. ■



Nourishing Our Community

Through Our Partner Agency Program

Every Friday, Wood Bien-Aime spends the afternoon working in the food pantry at Grace Place for Children and Families. This JROTC cadet is enrolled in a leadership program at Grace Place and has his eyes set on attending medical school. He aspires to serve in the US Army as a medical doctor.

Wood's path to achieving his goal is full of obstacles, but the largest is not always knowing where his next meal will come from. Wood's stepfather works as a line cook, and his mother works for a hotel chain. As one of five kids, he works part-time to help contribute to the family budget. **The food that Wood receives from Harry Chapin Food Bank's partner, Grace Place, is a critical component to his family's strategy for survival.**

Grace Place has been enrolled in our Partner Agency Program since 2008. Our Partner Agency Program is a multifaceted food distribution program designed to serve our five-county footprint and relies on a vetted network of partner agencies. As trusted extensions of our mission, we provide our partners with roughly 70% of their food inventory. In the case of Grace Place, we provide nearly 95% of what they distribute to families like Wood's.

With the advent of COVID-19, the amount of food our partner agencies need to support the communities we serve has skyrocketed.

Our distribution to Grace Place grew from 735,000 pounds of food to 1,523,660 pounds of food during the pandemic's first year, a 107% increase. That need remains high to this day,

and our partner agencies continue to bridge the gap between the food bank and families who are hungry.

Our Partner Agency Program comprises of nearly two-thirds of our total food distribution. It has the broadest reach, and by making food readily available throughout our community, it reduces the barriers that most families face as they struggle with food insecurity.

Wood recently shared that he is grateful for the nutritious foods we distribute. As a future medical professional, he knows firsthand how important it is to nourish your body and how expensive it is to eat fresh fruits and vegetables. He applauds the food bank for ensuring that those who are struggling to make ends meet don't also struggle with malnourishment.

It's stories like this that inspire your food bank to continue our fight to end hunger. **With your help, we are ensuring that nobody has to go hungry in our community.** ■





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Leave a Legacy

A most generous gift

Your thoughtful Will should be the cornerstone of your estate plan. A Will gives form and substance to your thoughtful concern for the future of your family and other beneficiaries. It also represents a person's final wishes and intentions. After providing for your loved ones, please consider one final testament of faith through a bequest in your Will or living trust that will provide an enduring foundation for Harry Chapin Food Bank's mission — to lead our community in the fight to end hunger. We would be happy to provide instructions to your legal advisor.

Call Barbara Evans, Chief Development Officer at 239.334.6881 or baevans@harrychapinfoodbank.org.

Calling All Changemakers

Our changemakers are an extension of our team and are a key ingredient in our sound financial management. One special quality of our volunteer program is that our volunteer opportunities do not require a consistent commitment. Volunteer opportunities vary from a one-time, three-hour shift in our warehouses or distributions to executive level volunteerism involving 20 hours a month. We would not be able to serve over a quarter of a million people each month without our changemakers. If you are well, able and willing to volunteer, please consider making a difference with us.

Call Lori Harrington, Volunteer Manager at 239.334.7007 x141 or lharrington@harrychapinfoodbank.org