

# Nourishing MATTERS



Harry Chapin Food Bank  
OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

SUMMER 2026

(239) 334-7007 | HARRYCHAPINFOODBANK.ORG



## Rescue in Motion, A Community of Hope

*The Network Behind Every Meal*



“Good morning ... let me help you.”

At a distribution in Cape Coral, Eddie says it again and again — not like a script, but like a welcome. He’s not just handing out food. He’s making sure people feel seen.

Eddie volunteers regularly and he knows what it feels like to need help. He remembers being homeless, having nothing, and promising himself that one day he’d help somebody else. Now he does.

“People — when they smile,” he says, “it makes me happy.” That’s what this work looks like up close: kindness, respect, and help that doesn’t come with judgment. And behind that moment is a network moving fast.

Retail and food partners set aside nourishing items they can’t sell, so they can be rescued instead of wasted. Drivers start early and stay on the road all day. In our distribution centers, teams coordinate food safety, refrigeration, and logistics so food can move quickly and responsibly.

Then volunteers step in, turning large donations into family-sized help. Because access isn’t just about having food nearby, it’s about making sure food is packed in ways people can carry home, store safely, and cook with confidence.

This is how our mission comes to life: Harry Chapin Food Bank leads our community in the fight to end hunger, working through 170 food pantries and meal programs to help feed over 300,000 people each month across Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry, and Lee counties. Because hunger doesn’t wait — and neither do we.

When we show up together, good food doesn’t go to waste. It goes to families. And hope doesn’t stay an idea — it becomes dinner.

### Together, you reach:

- ♥ A neighbor welcomed by Eddie with a kind word and steady hands.
- ♥ Food pantries and meal programs ready to serve tomorrow — because volunteers prepared it today.



This is more than food rescue.  
This is more than logistics.

**This is a movement built on dignity.**

**From all of us at Harry Chapin Food Bank: thank you for being the hands, the heart, and the hope that keep our mission moving.**

## Neighbors Served with Dignity

— by Maxine Golding, Volunteer

The need is so great that some of the pantry's neighbors begin lining up and signing in as early as 6:30 a.m. The sound of the ringing cowbell quickly quiets the crowd, as it indicates that in just a few minutes one of the twice-weekly McGregor Baptist Church pantry distributions will begin.

As many as 55 volunteers gather in the warehouse for any last-minute alerts and a prayer. They greet the neighbors who are here to receive some of the thousands of pounds of food and produce supplied by Harry Chapin Food Bank, five Publix stores, and one Aldi store.

One of the early arrivals is Utah native Genene. For this Brooklyn-raised 61-year-old, this pantry is "family — they know me." And they should — she began coming to the pantry in 1989, before it relocated to its present location on Fowler Street. That's the year she was left alone to care for and support her two children. Now, with 10 people in her family living together and Genene being the only one able to work; one daughter is under treatment for cancer, while her stepdaughter has multiple sclerosis, "Things are hard," she said, "and enrollment in the SNAP program and disability payments only go so far. It doesn't matter how healthy or rich you are," she said. "We help those in need."

The pantry distributes fresh produce and meats "that you don't get anywhere else," Genene noted. "Still, we make do with whatever they can give," she said with thanks. Fresh fruits, vegetables, eggs, milk, and cheese — when they are obtainable — are much appreciated by grateful recipients. The number of food bags is carefully prepared to account for family size: marked "A" for a single person; "B" for 2-3 recipients; "C" for 5 to 8 people; and "C+" for over eight.

By 10 a.m., Genene and about 25 neighbors in line are shown to chairs in the waiting area. As each family is called to work with a counselor, more of those standing outside fill the newly empty chairs. And that's how it continues until the last of the food is dispensed — until next time.



## Donor Spotlight: Publix Super Markets Charities

When it comes to fighting hunger, Publix is more than a place to shop — it's a committed partner in our mission to ensure no one has to go hungry in the communities we serve.

For years, Publix has helped keep nutritious food on tables across Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry, and Lee counties through consistent food donations, including fresh fruits and vegetables, and through Publix associates who volunteer alongside our team — packing produce, assembling meal kits, and supporting distributions that bring food directly into neighborhoods.

This year, Publix Super Markets Charities deepened that commitment with two significant investments that strengthen our ability to reach people facing hunger with dignity:

- ♥ \$200,000 to purchase and wrap a 26-foot refrigerated delivery truck, helping us safely transport fresh and perishable food into communities across Southwest Florida — especially areas where distance and limited transportation make accessing groceries harder;
- ♥ \$100,000 to purchase food, allowing us to fill critical gaps, leverage low-cost options, and source items that meet the needs of the people we serve.



These gifts are more than dollars and equipment — they're reliability. They help ensure food arrives fresh, on time, and in the places it's needed most. With 170 food pantries and meal programs, we help feed over 300,000 people each month, and support like this keeps that network strong.

**We're grateful to Publix Super Markets Charities for standing with our community and for helping turn food rescue and smart purchasing into real relief for families across our region.**

## Introducing Our New CDO

Harry Chapin Food Bank recently named Jennifer Denike as Chief Development Officer, where she now leads fundraising strategy, donor engagement, and revenue growth efforts across the organization. A longtime member of the food bank team, Denike stepped into the role in April after serving in key major gifts positions, helping strengthen donor partnerships and expand philanthropic support. With more than 18 years of nonprofit experience, she is now guiding efforts to support the Hunger Action Center capital campaign in Fort Myers and future expansion in Naples, ensuring the food bank is well positioned to meet the growing need across Southwest Florida. In her new role, Denike will continue building strong relationships across the community to help expand access to nutritious food for neighbors today and into the future.





## Future of Hunger Relief

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, construction on the new Hunger Action Center continues to move steadily forward. All exterior walls are now up, decking and roofing are complete, and interior work is well underway, including flooring and other finishes that are bringing the building to life.

Each milestone represents more than construction progress. It reflects an investment in the future of hunger relief in Southwest Florida. This new space will allow us to work more efficiently, expand capacity, and better serve neighbors as the need continues to grow.

To learn more about how this project is transforming our mission, visit our Feeding the Future campaign page. Donors are also invited to sign up for a tour of our current Fort Myers facility to see firsthand why a larger, more modern space is so critical. As construction continues, a limited number of meaningful naming opportunities remain for those interested in creating a lasting legacy through this project.

[harrychapinfoodbank.org/feedingthefuture](http://harrychapinfoodbank.org/feedingthefuture)



Check out Fort Myers Living, the newest publication of Seabreeze Communications, featuring monthly news about Harry Chapin Food Bank: [fortmyersliving.com](http://fortmyersliving.com)



**Fort Myers Distribution Center**  
3760 Fowler St.  
Fort Myers, FL 33901-0930

**Collier County Center**  
3940 Prospect Ave., Ste. 101  
Naples, FL 34104-3745

## Summer Nutrition Corner

Simple ideas that stretch ingredients and support healthier meals.



- **Make rescued milk go further:** Keep it cold (back of the fridge), freeze extra if needed, and label dates.
- **Turn “odds and ends” into dinner:** Potatoes + any vegetable + any protein = soup, skillet, or sheet-pan meal.
- **Canned counts:** Rinse canned veggies/beans to reduce sodium while keeping the nutrition.

### Free Nutrition Education (English & Spanish)

We offer practical, no-judgment classes through partners and community sites — focused on affordable, realistic meals.

[harrychapinfoodbank.org/florida-nutrition-education/snap](http://harrychapinfoodbank.org/florida-nutrition-education/snap)

## Find Food and Share Food

If you or someone you know is facing hunger, help is here — with dignity.

### Find a nearby pantry or distribution:

[HarryChapinFoodBank.org](http://HarryChapinFoodBank.org)  
**Prefer to call?** (239) 334-7007

Serving Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry, and Lee counties.

### Hours of Operation:

Monday–Thursday | 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

15-HCSFL-0526-N

(239) 334-7007  
[HarryChapinFoodBank.org](http://HarryChapinFoodBank.org)



*This institution is an equal opportunity provider.*