



Harry Chapin Food Bank OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

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Newsletter -- Fall 2008

Food Bank Pushes to Provide Perishables

More than 96 billion pounds of edible food are wasted and dumped in landfills every year, according to the United States Department of Agriculture.

Capturing a fraction of that food would yield enormous benefit for impoverished children, elderly, and working poor adults, especially as they need more than just adequate food for survival and sustenance. They also require food that is fresh and nutrient-rich — and that means perishable meats, dairy products, and produce.

The Harry Chapin Food Bank is working hard to expand operations with:

• **Food Rescue Pick-up Project.** The Food Bank will pick up perishable foods from stores, saving the food from landfills and reducing environmental waste. It anticipates rescuing 10,000 pounds of food a week, and 520,000 pounds annually at a retail value of \$780,000. That represents 416,000 meals over the course of a year and additional distribution to agencies serving those in need. The Food Bank is already involved in a pilot project to rescue food from 10 local grocery stores.

• **Stuff the Bin Project.** The Food Bank has set a goal of increasing produce distribution by 500 percent, for an additional 250,000 pounds per year. It has purchased 84 transportable bins, each holding 600 pounds of fresh produce, fruits, and vegeta-

bles. Packers will be encouraged to provide products that cannot sell through normal channels, but which are still very edible.

The bins will enable the Food Bank to annually transport 300,000 pounds of food and additional produce and feed 240,000 at-risk hungry children, adults, and elderly.

• **More Refrigerated Trucks.** A newly purchased 16-foot refrigerated truck holds six pallets of perishable foods. It will enable the Food Bank to pick up 8,000 pounds or more each week and then directly deliver

perishables to local agencies. The Food Bank now has five refrigerated trucks.

• **Mobile Pantry.** The Food Bank is exploring distribution through a Mobile Pantry model in order to better meet the needs of rural, remote and economically challenged communities that lack existing agency capacity. Immokalee is one such area, where 34.6 percent of families and 39.8 percent of the population subsist below the poverty line, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Start a Faith Food Drive

September is Hunger Awareness Month across the United States, which makes the weekend of September 6-7 a busy one for faith-based organizations in the five-county area of Southwest Florida. That's because the Harry Chapin Food Bank is asking churches, synagogues, schools, and groups to organize a Faith Food Drive.

Before 2007, the Food Bank used to be able to count on the annual Letter Carriers' Food Drive to deliver enough food to last until the Publix food drives begin in late October. Not anymore. The need is so great that very little food remains for local emergency food providers in September and October.

Your can make a difference! Join the community in bringing hunger relief to our neighbors in need. Find out more from Marta Hodson at 334-7007 about how you can organize a Faith Food Drive.

News-Press Honored



The Harry Chapin Food Bank honored the Fort Myers News-Press for its ongoing support. Cindy Burgess, Communications Manager, joins Food Bank Executive Director Al Brislain.



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SAVE THE DATES!

Faith Food Drive, September 6-7, 2008

Construction Event at the Imaginarium,

November 1-9, 2008 — Architects build amazing structures out of cans of food, which are then donated to the Food Bank

WINK News Feeds Families Hunger Walk, January 17, 2009



The Harry Chapin Food Bank of Southwest Florida

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BANK NOTES...From Executive Director Al Brislain

Help Now...and Work for Change

People often ask us whether they should donate time, money, or food, or work to change the system. **The answer is...Yes!** For many years, people in the anti-hunger field have talked about the need to do more public policy advocacy. To illustrate their point, many tell the following story:

There was once a village by a river. One day, a villager saw a baby floating down the river. The villager jumped in and saved the baby. The next day, another baby came floating down the river. The villager saved that baby too. Each day, more babies came floating down the river. Pretty soon, the village formed a group to save the babies. After weeks of saving babies, one villager got the idea to go up the river and find out why the babies were floating down the river in the first place.

The moral, according to those who tell the story, is that one needs to identify the root causes of a problem to eliminate it.

But wouldn't it be better if some of the villagers went up the river to identify the root cause of the problem and some stayed behind to ensure that while the babies continued to come down the river, there would be someone to save them? Each group plays a vital role, and neither group should consider the work of the other to be trivial or counterproductive.

We in the anti-hunger field sometimes

get caught in this trap – trying to decide which role is most productive. **The answer is...both are essential.**

Last week, the Fort Myers News-Press reported an astounding 78 percent increase in food stamp usage this year. Yet most of the working poor are not eligible for food stamps (they make just a few dollars too much to qualify), and food stamps do not last through the month for many families.

Those families would be in even greater difficulty were it not for the fine volunteers and donors that support and bolster the emergency food system in Southwest Florida. Each day, they "jump into the river" to help their neighbors, while others go upriver to work on the root causes of the problem. Without the hard work of advocacy groups to gain bipartisan support for the Food Stamp Program among our legislators, our neighbors would be in even greater difficulty during this economic downturn. Advocates, legislators, volunteers, donors – all play essential roles in feeding our neighbors in need.

Our goal is to feed people today and to support programs that reduce the demand tomorrow. Given the tough times many are facing these days, it is critical that we put aside philosophical differences and work for the common goal of assuring that none go hungry in the richest nation on earth.

Lee Art Education Association presented a plaque to Harry Chapin Food Bank Associate Director **Joyce Jacobs**, in appreciation of her outstanding support and dedication through the years and commemorating 16 years of the Lee County Empty Bowls Project. Congratulations!

Food Bank Secures \$64,000 in Grants

The Harry Chapin Food Bank gratefully acknowledges the following grant awards:

Bollt Family Foundation: \$4,000.

Bat Yam, Temple of the Islands:
\$750.

Vincent A. Stabile Foundation:
\$45,000 towards the purchase of new refrigerated truck.

Sanibel Congregational Church of Christ: \$7,000.

Arnold and Mabel Beckman Foundation: \$1,500.

Mary E Donor Foundation: \$2,000.

In addition, the Food Bank received all-locations from the **United Way** in Collier, Charlotte, Lee, Hendry, and Glades Counties. Thanks so much for the generous support of United Way and the thousands of generous Southwest Floridians that support United Way's efforts!

Our Mission...

To overcome hunger in our communities through education and by working in a cooperative effort with affiliated agencies in the procurement and distribution of food, equitably and without discrimination.

Food Summit a Rousing Success!

The meeting room at Hodges University teemed with a loud buzz of anticipation fifteen minutes before the First Southwest Florida Food Summit and Agency Conference began at 9:00 a.m. on April 25.

Nearly 100 participants arrived early and came ready to learn from professionals in emergency food planning and delivery. And that's just what they did. Over

the course of a day long, fruitful day, the people at the heart of community outreach exchanged ideas, developed new courses of action, and found new partners in the mission to help feed those in need in the five-county area of Southwest Florida.

And the need has grown considerably the past few years. Participants nodded as Tod MacKenzie, Administrative Crisis

Coordinator for The Salvation Army in Lee County, described a 576 percent increase over three years in its food orders to the Food Bank, as well as double-digit increases year-over-year in the number of unduplicated people served. Its pantry, open five days a week, cannot keep up with demand, "which is highest when the least amount of food is available," he added.

Bill O'Connell, who coordinates the food pantry at Guadalupe Social Services in Immokalee, told the audience how he has to order food when the Food Bank has it. That way, at least part of the 5,000-plus bags of food it distributes each year can be provided during the summer — a particularly difficult time for hungry families.

To better understand how they can influence public policy, attendees worked in groups on ideas that they then shared with all. These include: working together to create an agency awareness day or rally for the homeless; partnering on grant applications; publicizing in local media to raise perception on the growing need; involving local industry in agency support and sponsorship; and communicating the hunger challenge with legislators. By the end of the morning, a steering committee to impact public policy was in formation.

As Brislain so aptly quoted Harry Chapin at the start of the day, "To know is to care, to care is to act, and to act is to make a difference." By day's end, the summit attendees left energized with new knowledge, new ideas, and new partners.



More than 80 participants exchanged ideas and learned about food safety, disaster response, fundraising, and government programs at the first Southwest Florida Food Summit and Agency Conference. Thirteen organizations took part in planning the summit.

Make Your Change Make a Change

One day, Anne, a warm, lovely senior, left her apartment in a lifecare facility bound for her local bank. There, the friendly bank manager mentioned in conversation that she would be happy to put Anne's spare change into paper wrappers. That would be very helpful, Anne thought. Since her macular degeneration made her legally blind, she hadn't carried change for four and a half years. All the change she received in transactions she routinely stowed in bowls, buckets or bags at home.

On her Friday visit to the bank, Anne towed all her change in a cart. Even with poor eyesight, she could see the bank manager's face turn white. "My, you do have a lot of change," she exclaimed. Anne felt badly leaving it there, but the bank manager insisted. "Come back on Monday, and we'll see how much it is."

That night, Anne pondered the situation. Why not just give all the change to one of her favorite charities? Over the weekend, she stuck a note for the manager on the door of the branch. "It's too much for you to do," Anne wrote.

Still, the bank manager and her husband spent the weekend working through the change. On Monday, Anne was shocked to hear the grand total: \$454.10!

The bank manager rounded it off to \$455, made out a cashier's check, and agreed to deliver the check to the Food Bank.

It was indeed fitting that Anne told the Harry Chapin Food Bank to "keep the change," since the line came from one of Harry's own songs, Taxi.

Food Bank Welcomes New Board Members

Join the Food Bank in welcoming five new members to the Board of Directors:

Aida Barnhart is fond of saying, "To build a better world, start in your community." The native Floridian is Hendry County SHIP Director and very active with the Hendry Glades Homeless Coalition.

A community volunteer committed to the issues of hunger, homelessness, and volunteerism, Jo Anna Bradshaw was recently named one of *Florida Weekly's* "Power Women in SW Florida."

Stephen Popper is Vice President of Bois Aise de Montreal and founder of the Southwest Florida Kids Against Hunger program, which has packed more than a million meals for needy families in our area.

Flora Sanchez enjoys making a difference by volunteering and fundraising during time off from her role as Vice President

and Marketing Consultant for Premier Backup Solutions. She and her husband, Danny, moved to Fort Myers in 2003.

Financial advisor Darin Schultz recently moved with his family to Punta Gorda to open a satellite office for his business, Schultz Financial Services. He is active with Charlotte County Young Professionals.

Help Sponsor WINK's Hunger Walk

Be a part of the 1st annual WINK News Feeds Families Hunger Walk on January 17, 2009. Sponsorships are available at all levels, from Presenting Sponsor at \$10,000-plus to Supporter at \$500, each with a host of benefits. Learn more at www.harrychapinfoodbank.org.

Guests Help Sanibel-Captiva Vacation Rental Managers Gather Leftover Food to Donate...

On Friday, August 1, the Harry Chapin Food Bank made a run to Sanibel, but it wasn't to play at the beach. Instead, it picked up 324 more pounds of food for the Food Bank, thanks to the Sanibel-Captiva Vacation Rental Managers Association. That makes nearly 6,700 pounds of food donated since the program's inception two years ago.

That's when VIP Vacation Rentals began collecting non-perishable food left by guests, said Keith McMenemy, managing partner, who also happens to live next door to Food Bank Associate Director Joyce Jacobs. When he and Randy Bacik, President of Royal Shell Vacations, formed the association, now with nine rental companies as members, they knew they could really expand food donations.

Guests' check-in packet describes the program and how to drop off non-perishable goods at the end of their stay. Bailey's General Store provides reinforced paper bags with handles at no cost. Each vacation rental manager delivers the donated

food to a central location, and from there it's off to the Food Bank warehouse for sorting and distribution.

"Guests love the idea," said McMenemy, "because many get overzealous when shopping and purchase too much, and can't take the food back with them."

...While Volunteer Ryan Makes Every Hour Count

Little did Taicia Ryan know what she would be getting into when the Letter Carriers' Food Drive spurred her to volunteer with the Harry Chapin Food Bank. In no time, the Food Bank tapped Ryan's skills by putting her to work with Development Director Fred Richards.

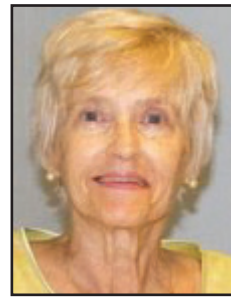
The New York native, who moved to Ft. Myers in 2001, worried that she would be bored by retirement a year and a half ago. The Food Bank has resolved that issue for the former high school English teacher and technical editor, who also has worked for Outward Bound,



Planned Parenthood, and Southwest Florida Neurosurgical Associates.

For six hours a week, Ryan does data entry for donations to the Food Bank. Her detailed work in maintaining accurate records and donor preferences is essential to the Food Bank, noted Richards. It is especially critical during season, when almost 300 donations per day pour in.

"The Food Bank is such a wonderful place to work," she said. "I never realized the extent of this organization. And it breaks my heart that people donate who are also suffering."



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