



Harry Chapin Food Bank OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

Vol. IX, No. 3

Newsletter — Summer 2009

**“Snowbird Season” may have ended,
but hunger continues year-round! Please call
334-7007 now to donate money, food or
your time to the Harry Chapin Food Bank!**

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Hunger Task Force Chair Joanna Bradshaw (at podium) and members, including Deborah Haring (left) and Christina Rodriguez, reported on steps they are taking to mobilize the community to action, particularly this summer.

Hunger Summit: Efforts Focus on Cooperation and Collaboration

“It’s not enough.”

That’s how Al Brislain opened the 2nd Southwest Florida Hunger Summit, and the audience of nearly a hundred representatives of local agencies that provide hunger relief understood exactly what the Executive Director of the Harry Chapin Food Bank meant.

On the firing line every day in the fight against hunger, they see that that our local area is experiencing unprecedented need. Even a significant increase of 35 percent in food distribution this year will not outpace the growing demand.

The full day of education and networking on May 22 at Hodges University did

offer help, as participants exchanged ideas, developed new solutions, and forged collaborations. And the Hunger Task Force, convened as a result of the first Hunger Summit one year ago, reported a host of achievements — writing and executing a strategic plan, mobilizing government agencies, increasing solicitation of fresh foods to improve nutrition, and creating new collective food drives.

Actions and advocacy can make a difference, emphasized Ellen Teller, Director of Government Affairs for the Food Research

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Letter Carriers’ Food Drive Nets Most Ever For Lee County: 415,000 Pounds

The residents of Lee County came through in a big way in May!

You donated more than 415,000 pounds of food during this year’s Letter Carriers’ Food Drive, surpassing last year’s collection by more than 12 percent. It is especially needed now, with the Harry Chapin Food Bank serving 82 percent more clients than two years ago.

Thanks go to: City Letter Carriers, Rural Letter Carriers, United States

Postal Service, Campbell’s Soup (sent out postcards), Publix Supermarkets (provided bags for mail boxes), Valpak (advertised the drive in coupon books), United Way of Lee County, and 300-plus volunteers.



Letter carriers joined hundreds of volunteers in delivering and sorting 415,000 pounds of food.

Launch a Faith Food Drive!

September is Hunger Awareness Month, and it doesn’t come a moment too soon.

The Letter Carriers’ Food Drive’s record poundage will not be enough to meet the burgeoning need in Southwest Florida. So, the Harry Chapin Food Bank is encouraging faith-based groups to organize food drives and help replenish supplies in September and October for local emergency food providers.

Find out more by contacting Marta Hodson at 334-7007, x32.



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**The Harry Chapin Food Bank
of Southwest Florida**

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BANK NOTES...

From Executive Director Al Brislain



**News-Press Raises Awareness
Of Hunger Too Often Hidden**

As this newsletter is going to print, the *Fort Myers News-Press* is wrapping up its series of articles on the "Summer of Hunger" and the accompanying fund-raising effort it has been conducting. I have heard from many, many people who have read the articles and were touched by the stories of the multitude of families struggling to keep food on their tables.

A good number of the *News-Press* readership did not know the extent of hunger in our community, nor were they aware of the heroic efforts of those that are on the front lines fighting the battle every day. Those of us that work at the Harry Chapin Food Bank have the advantage, and the honor, of working with these folks every day. Whether it be the wonderful volunteers at St. Vincent de Paul in Fort Myers and Punta Gorda, or the hard-working staff at Guadalupe Center in Immokalee, St. Matthew's House in Naples, or CCMI in Fort Myers, they are all deeply committed to feeding our neighbors in need.

In documenting the need and the heroic efforts to meet that need, the *News-Press* raised community awareness of a problem

that is all too often hidden behind the doors of the church pantries and soup kitchens.

Some were quoted in the articles as saying the emergency food system is "broken." I do not agree. In the past two years, the demand has almost doubled. That has resulted in the system being overtaxed at times. Despite the incredible increases in demand, the emergency food programs have continued to provide food whenever possible. I think most emergency food providers would say they are a bit battered, but certainly not broken.

We are on the verge of a very difficult summer. Demand has never been higher, and thousands of our neighbors will be looking to the emergency food system to get them through. Due in part to the *News-Press* articles and the support they generated, I am confident the community will meet the challenge.

A Special Thank You: The Harry Chapin Food Bank family sends best wishes to John Emmert — board member, treasurer and valued volunteer — who is relocating to Indianapolis to join the ABC affiliate there. His work here will be remembered!

New Grants to Food Bank Top \$55,600

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

Episcopal Church Women of Saint Michael and

All Angels Episcopal Church: \$2,000

The League Club, Inc.: \$10,000

Publix Super Market Charities: \$10,000

Wal-Mart Foundation: \$2,000

Country Creek Community Charities: \$1,500

Grainger Foundation: \$5,000

Charlotte County United Way: \$13,100

Sanibel Congregational Church: \$7,000

St. John's Episcopal Church, Naples: \$5,000

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.

There's Volunteer Power in Numbers

No one knows better than Kirsten Iffland and her colleagues at The Children's Network of Southwest Florida how hunger can decimate families.

They are responsible for protecting more than 1,600 children in their care, as they work hard to preserve families through the five counties of Lee, Charlotte, Collier, Hendry and Glades. Perhaps that's why volunteering for the Harry Chapin Food Bank is especially meaningful to them.

The inspiration for their involvement came from agency CEO Nadereh Salim's participation in the Leadership Lee County experience. When she learned how acting at the organizational level could deliver greater impact, she brought the volunteer opportunity to her staff. Their response was immediate and enthusiastic, and the group selected the Food Bank because of

Food Bank Readies Disaster Preparation For Hurricane Season

With the advent of hurricane season in Southwest Florida, no organization — especially a food bank — can take disaster preparation for granted. Food remains the basic necessity for those in immediate need.

Harry Chapin Food Bank is ready, and its response will match the scope of the disaster. Its action plans outline the steps it will take to coordinate with other disaster relief providers, how it will maintain its own operations, and what food poundage and supplies are needed depending on different scenarios.

The food bank works with the Emergency Operations Centers in our five counties, the Red Cross, Salvation Army, United Way, and numerous groups that come into the area to assist with disaster relief. Feeding America will respond in a large disaster, sending water, food, diapers and other necessary items for distribution. The food bank will also help sort and distribute loads of items that are trucked in from other areas. Consequently, it takes many volunteers to move the massive amounts of food and supplies throughout the recovery period, which can be long. It took Charlotte County nearly two years to recover from Hurricane Charley. The Harry Chapin Food Bank is there for the long haul.

its wide reach into many agencies.

To date, 29 of 43 staffers at the Children's Network have contributed 87 volunteer hours to the Food Bank. Sorting cans in the warehouse has become a fun, team-building activity. "People who normally wouldn't interact on a business or personal basis get to know each other better," said Iffland. "It's definitely a win-win all around." And the organization still makes time for its own signature fundraising event every October, the Walk

to Prevent Child Abuse.

The group's recent visit to the Community Cooperative Ministries' Soup Kitchen, however, is a sobering reminder of the significant rise in need. "All the volunteers were astonished as to how many children were there with their mothers for lunch," said Iffland.

Is your company or organization looking for a way to help your community in Southwest Florida? Call Marta Hodson at 334-7007, x32, to find out how!



Some of the staff members from the Children's Network of Southwest Florida who have contributed more than 87 hours volunteering for the Harry Chapin Food Bank.

By Supporting Food Bank, Northern Trust Keeps Commitment to Community

Northern Trust Fort Myers has no intention of resting on its laurels.

Recognized as last year's "Corporate Philanthropist of the Year" by the Southwest Florida Community Foundation, the bank remains committed to a high level of financial and volunteer support to the community it has served for more than 30 years. Over the past decade, the bank has touched more than 130 organizations with cash contributions of \$3.2 million. The Harry Chapin Food Bank is proud to be a primary beneficiary.

The efforts on the Food Bank's behalf start, but don't end, with Alexander "Sandy" Robinson. The president of Northern Trust Fort Myers serves on the Food Bank's board of directors. Meanwhile, teams of volunteers help to sort food at the

Food Bank's warehouse, especially in the off season, when our snowbirds migrate north. And the bank fields a team for the Hunger Walk, which Robinson chaired in its debut last year.

"Social responsibility always has been one of Northern Trust's core tenets," he said. "Giving back to our communities is how we act. By helping the Food Bank, we're helping multiple agencies across Southwest Florida."

It's especially important to leverage financial support and resources during these economic conditions, he explained, when the collection and distribution of food is even more crucial in reaching those most in need. Northern Trust will be there to step up its efforts with dollars and volunteers.

Help the Harry Chapin Food Bank save money on postage by giving us your e-mail address. Call (239) 334-7007 now or send your e-mail address to fredrichards@harrychapinfoodbank.org. THANK YOU!

South Fort Myers Food Pantry Fills a Void

With its first anniversary looming in July, the South Fort Myers Food Pantry Coalition can see how far it's come...but much is yet to be done.

Nine area churches banded together,

Hunger Summit...

(Continued from page 1)

& Action Center (FRAC), one of the foremost national anti-hunger lobbying groups.

"It's important for members of Congress to see what you're doing," she said. "You must elevate the issue of hunger with them, especially since they will have a lot of other priorities — like health care reform — this summer."

She urged agencies to send newsletters to their representatives; invite them for site visits; and collaborate broadly with other agencies in their community. "It really does take a village!" she exclaimed.

Some light did shine at the Hunger Summit when Hodges University presented the Harry Chapin Food Bank with a check for \$1,000.

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with the encouragement of the Harry Chapin Food Bank, to fill a void left after the only food pantry operating in the area closed in 2007. Since then, the food pantry has fed 8,000 adults and children in a single year, and the need keeps building.

"The shocking part is that there are new people every week who hear about the food pantry by word of mouth," said volunteer Tom Gralton. "A lot of people lost their homes and had to move in with other families." On a recent Monday, for example, as many as 103 families were served.

The nine churches that support the food pantry are: The Village Church at Shell Point; Sanibel Congregational United Church of Christ; Saint Michaels and All Angels Episcopal Church of Sanibel; Cypress Lake Presbyterian Church; Unitarian Universalist Church of Fort Myers; Cypress Lake United Methodist Church; Iona Hope Episcopal Church; Church of the Resurrection of Our Lord; and Saint Columbkille Catholic Church.

The food pantry operates from an 8 x 40-foot trailer that sits alongside the Fel-

lowship building at Cypress Lake Presbyterian Church. It is open every Monday from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. for people in need of food who live south of Colonial Boulevard and north of Gladiolus.

It takes many hands to make the food pantry work. First, non-perishable food is picked up during the week from the food bank, sorted, shelved and bagged in preparation for distribution. Then, early Monday morning, a team goes to the food bank for additional food that has been ordered, as well as available fresh bread, vegetables, fruit, meat, and frozen food.

Each family can pick up five plastic bags of food, from \$75 to \$200 worth, which last up to six days. The food pantry serves one member of each household once every two weeks, so that the coalition can serve as many households as possible.

Right now, all that the coalition can do is feed those who are hungry, but it hopes to expand its space and operations to provide clothing, furniture and other services.

If you have time to assist the South Fort Myers Food Pantry Coalition, contact Fran Rose at sfmfoodpantry@yahoo.com.

Summer 2009 Newsletter

The Harry Chapin Food Bank
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