



Community cooperative • Feeding People. Nourishing Lives.

FOOD for THOUGHT

By the numbers



500,000
pounds of food

9,200
households

22,000
individuals

7,500 children | 1,700 veterans

4,000
seniors

* 2017 Annualized



Serving those WHO SERVED

The Mobile Food Pantry rolls into Lee County neighborhoods that need it the most.

This year, the pantry program expanded its reach to Lee County Health Care Center in Cape Coral, which serves veterans. It is the largest pantry in the program serving as many as 225 households every month.

"The need is there," said L. Harrison Reeder, acting associative chief of staff for Southern Clinic, Lee County Health Care Center. "The VA can't do everything for every veteran and community partnerships are critical. Community Cooperative is organized and comes prepared to do their job and provide food to folks who need it."

Another community partnership

includes the Bonita Bay Veterans Council. Nick Romano, an Army veteran and Purple Heart recipient, helped launch the council almost three years ago in an effort to help veterans.

In the past year, they have sponsored eight mobile food pantries at the Lee County Health Care Center and show up every month to volunteer.

"Community Cooperative does such a magnificent job," Nick said. "Together we are helping cover things that fall through the cracks and helping get our veterans the food they need."

"The veteran community is as broad and varied as society itself from the well-off to homeless," Harrison said.

"Our veterans really range from needing small things to literally needing to have

as much food as they can get because they are on a tight budget," Harrison said. "There is a perception that veterans get an income from the VA and that's not true. Some have a very low income and some are homeless."

Community Cooperative offers nonperishable goods as well as fresh meats, dairy and tons of fresh produce. The location of the mobile food pantry is also convenient for many of the veterans who have appointments at the health center.

"We can fulfill our mission more profoundly when we go to those in need instead of folks always coming to us," said Tracey Galloway, Community Cooperative CEO. "Our partnership with the VA helps us support our veterans and give them critical services close to where they live." 

2018 important dates

- Mina Edison Hymn Sing: February 6 • Soup Kitchen Benefit: March 8
- Volunteer Appreciation Event: March 27 • Becoming Cosmopolitan Fire & Ice: October 4

[www. CommunityCooperative.com/events](http://www.CommunityCooperative.com/events)



Planned GIVING

You can make combating hunger and homelessness a part of your lasting legacy by including Community Cooperative in your estate plans. Planned gifts can accommodate your lifestyle now while securing a stronger future for Community Cooperative.

There are many ways to include Community Cooperative in your estate plans, including through your will, revocable trust, retirement plan, or life insurance policy. We recommend you speak to your financial and tax advisors to find the best option for you and your circumstances. Your financial advisor can help you meet your philanthropic goals while finding the best tax advantage for your estate and your heirs.

To include Community Cooperative in your will, you will need Community Cooperative's Tax ID number and address, which can be found in the sample language below. Please consult with your estate attorney to add this information to your will.

To give a portion or the residuary of your estate:

I hereby give, devise and bequeath [all or a specified percentage] of the rest, residue, and remainder of my estate to Community Cooperative, Inc. Tax ID Number: 59-2602772, a nonprofit corporation organized and existing under the laws of the state of Florida, and with current business address of 3429 Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd., Fort Myers, FL 33916, to be used for its general purposes.



If you have already included Community Cooperative in your estate plans, please let us know! Please contact Stefanie Ink-Edwards at Stefanie@CommunityCooperative.com or 239.461.2802 for more information on how you can support Community Cooperative's mission.

When a community comes together for a cause

Community is a powerful word. It is even more powerful when you see it in action. I saw that first-hand after Hurricane Irma.

I have never seen a community come together like ours did after the storm. I rode out the storm during Hurricane Charley in 2004 and saw people rally afterwards. But something was different about Irma. This event impacted everyone in Southwest Florida. We went beyond surviving a natural disaster to becoming a cohesive community that helped each other pick up the pieces.

After the hurricane, people came to Community Cooperative from all backgrounds to help. Volunteers from all levels of physical ability, economic status,



TRACEY GALLOWAY
Chief Executive Officer

race, religion, and beyond showed up to assist people who had as many challenges from the storm as they did. Some donated time and money.

Others brought food and clothing. Some just wanted to offer handshakes and hugs to those who needed support. It was an experience so organic that there was no pre-planned goal or mission - just the understanding that when you bring a community together, great things can happen.

I am fortunate enough to see this kind of community spirit every day. And it doesn't just happen in a crisis. This is a community that is changing the world one person at a time by sharing their time, talent, and treasure to a cause that matters to them. Community Cooperative is blessed to have such a compassionate community support its mission. It's that community spirit that motivates us to find new and better ways to serve.

And when the going gets tough, we know our community will be there when we need them. We cannot thank you enough.



Cape Coral Community Foundation ENPY Award for (Excellence in Nonprofit Performance Yearly)

Non-Profit of the Year

THE Golden GIRLS

Joan Birgy and Janet Firley have been volunteering at the mobile food pantries longer than they can remember.

"We're the Golden Girls," Janet said. "We're both in our late 70s and we have fun doing it together."

The volunteers, both from Cape Coral, try and keep the mood light to cheerful as they collect information at the check-in table at five mobile food pantries every month.

"The people know us and we know a lot of the people," Janet said. "We try to make it a happy experience."

"Many people are going through very difficult times," Joan said. And these volunteers see first-hand what a difference this kind of assistance makes.

"They need the food," Joan said. "It impacts all ages but it's especially hard to see the elderly and some of the families come through. We do everything we can to help them."

Since Community Cooperative made the decision to put its food pantry



Joan and Janet register shoppers at a recent mobile pantry in Cape Coral.

on wheels eight years ago, locations have expanded and food distribution has grown significantly. One in six individuals in Lee County are considered food insecure and mobile food pantries help get the food directly to those in need.

"Volunteers like Joan and Janet make all the difference," said Rachell Mays, Community Cooperative volunteer coordinator. "They care about everyone they serve. They lift spirits and make the clients feel comfortable."

Joan and Janet remember the clients who are ill or are too elderly to stand

in line and make sure someone assists them with their heavy bags of food. They are especially proud to serve the veterans who wait patiently in long lines.

"They served our country and now we're serving them," Joan said. "We always thank them for their service."

Both of the volunteers wish they could do even more to help. They encourage others to volunteer.

"I live in affordable housing and I don't have a lot of money," Janet said. "But I have time to volunteer and I love doing it."

Garden party

The gardeners at Community Cooperative are watching the fruits of their labor grow into something sweet.

The Able Garden, which officially opened this summer, has produced all kinds of delicious produce, said Meghan Madden, Division Director of Food Services. The sweet potato has been its most abundant crop and is especially efficient because they also serve the sweet potato greens at the Community Café and successfully as a Meals on Wheels side item.

“We have been harvesting almost 200 pounds of sweet potatoes each month and look forward to doubling that in the winter,” Meghan said.

The entire garden is about 60 feet long and 25 feet wide and made up of 15 oversized raised garden beds. It will continue to produce sweet potatoes as well as eggplant, okra, bell peppers, squash and cherry tomatoes. And there are more greens as well including mustards, collard, spinach and kale.

Every week, dozens of volunteers weed, prune and tend the garden. Others harvest all the vegetables for use in the kitchen and distribution in the Community Market. The way the garden has been designed makes it accessible to volunteers of all ages and abilities with wide pathways and bench seating along every raised bed. Gardeners can also use tools ergonomically designed for people in wheelchairs or those with limited mobility.



Community Cooperative volunteers harvesting fresh vegetables in the Able Garden.

The garden extends beyond its patch of green. Community Cooperative holds gardening classes to encourage urban gardening. They also share clippings of plants with people in the neighborhood so they are empowered to grow their own food.

The garden offers clients, volunteers and staff restorative and healing power that only

nature provides, Meghan said. And it offers a profoundly practical solution to providing nutritious meals to clients.

“It enables us to deliver the freshest possible produce to our Meals on Wheels, Community Cafe, and Community Market clients,” Meghan said. “It combats hunger on so many levels.”

Project: PEANUT BUTTER & JELLY

The kids called her the lunch lady. Lois Taylor, 77, has made thousands of peanut butter and jelly

sandwiches for children in Lee County. It all started nearly 30 years ago when she saw a need.

She heard about an area where the kids were hungry. She partnered with the soup kitchen, which is now Community Cooperative, and decided to make some peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and see if that would help. It did.

She got bread donations from Sally Hall at Merita’s Bakery off Second Street in downtown Fort Myers. Lois made sandwiches and began collecting other types of food during school holidays and summers for over 10 years.

“The kids would be lined up waiting for my little brown car,” she said.

She would feed about 70 children and give the rest to the elderly. She provided peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and snacks five days a week.

At 50, inspired by her work with the children, she decided to get her human services degree.

She’s slowed down a lot, she said. She still contributes to Community Cooperative but she’s not making peanut butter and jelly sandwiches anymore. She’s glad she spent her life helping others.

“There is still a need,” she says. “But I’m retired. It’s time for someone else to answer the call.”



How do you like them apples?

It’s always fun to learn about food – especially when you can turn them into muffins.

Four years ago, Community Cooperative launched the Food Literacy in Pre-School (FLIP) program in an effort to provide young children with the education about fresh fruits and vegetables and how to make healthy food choices. Nearly one in four children in the United States are considered obese before they start kindergarten.

“The purpose of this program is to affect change in our younger generations and teach them that healthy foods can be tasty and affordable,” said Tracey Galloway, CEO of Community Cooperative. “We want to break the cycle of childhood obesity due to food insecurity and poor food choices.”

Community Cooperative staff and



FLIP students preparing to sample different varieties of apples.

volunteers work with Childcare of SWFL preschool programs at Joseph Messina Children’s Center and P.A. Geraci Child Development Center in Fort Myers to educate students about nutrition and healthy

eating options. Many of them are seeing and tasting certain fruits and vegetables for the first time.

Each fruit or vegetable becomes its own lesson. For example, the students sing educational songs about apples, read books about where apples come from and how they are grown and create an apple craft. The children are also provided healthy snacks that correspond to the lesson plan along with a sample of the food, a recipe and a fun game to play with their family to take home.

“Most of these children are willing and excited to try new foods,” said Meghan Madden, Division Director for Food Services at Community Cooperative. “We want them to know which ones will benefit them for lifelong healthy eating choices.”



After the storm

Crossing the finish LINE

Hurricane Irma may have stopped the annual race but it didn't stop the flow of support to Community Cooperative.

For the first time in its history, Galloway Captiva Tri was cancelled in September because of island evacuations. Almost 1,000 participants missed their opportunity to cross the finish line at South Seas Island Resort on Captiva Island.

The good news: Race organizers, Ken and Kate Gooderham and Angie Ferguson were able to make the same \$35,000 contribution to Community Cooperative as they did last year.

"School was closed for two weeks," Ken Gooderham said. "For many children, school provides them with breakfast and lunch. The money is in their hands and doing some good."

The 8th annual Galloway Captiva Tri is scheduled for next year: Sept. 15-16, 2018.

Hurricane Irma may have muscled its way through Lee County, but it wasn't going to destroy its spirit.

The day after the storm rolled through Southwest Florida, a few staff members opened the doors to Community Cooperative, stepped into the Community Café and started cooking. They weren't going to let a natural disaster slow them down.

"We were beginning to prepare meals and throughout the day more and more staff, volunteers and friendly faces kept walking through the door," said Stefanie Ink-Edwards, Director of Development and Marketing at Community Cooperative.

"It was amazing," Stefanie said. "We served 309 meals that day."

Emails from people asking how to help began arriving as soon as the hurricane passed. And Community Cooperative needed all the help it could get. Food donations needed to be unloaded. Mobile food pantries had to carry more meals to communities because there were so many people without electricity who needed food and water.

"You can never underestimate the



Florida State Senator Lizbeth Benacquisto came to Community Cooperative to volunteer after Hurricane Irma.

power of your community in a crisis," said Tracey Galloway, CEO of Community Cooperative. "Despite many of their own challenges and property damage related to the storm, volunteers came to help when we needed them the most."

Rachell Mays, volunteer coordinator for

Community Cooperative, couldn't believe the amount of people who reached out to her.

"Everyone who helped volunteer after Hurricane Irma made a difference," Rachell said. "We were so grateful. They made a tough situation so much better."

Nearly 400 volunteers supported post Hurricane Irma recovery efforts at Community Cooperative.

A surge of GENEROSITY

One of the biggest events of the year, Becoming Cosmopolitan: Fire & Ice, was canceled due to Hurricane Irma.

Every single 2017 sponsor of the event generously donated their collective \$50,000 as a dollar-for-dollar match to create a \$100,000 fund to assist neighbors in need who have been adversely affected

by Hurricane Irma.

This fund has allowed Community Cooperative to help local families and elderly shut-ins rebuild their lives and ensure that they had resources to repair and rebuild their homes. It also allowed funding of basic human needs like food and clothing for those who lost everything or needed to catch up from a loss of income

due to Hurricane Irma.

"Our expectation was to meet our \$100,000 goal to quickly get help to those in SWFL who needed it most," said Tracey Galloway, CEO of Community Cooperative. "And we could never have done this without the tremendous generosity and support of our community partners."



Kate Gooderham presenting a check to Tracey Galloway, CEO of Community Cooperative.



Thank you to our matching fund sponsors:



Meals on Wheels: Feeding people, saving lives

Meals on Wheels offers so much more than a hot plate of food.

Earnest "Ernie" Warren, 92, has been a Meals on Wheels client for about a year and a half. The Navy veteran no longer cooks and gets scratch made meals delivered almost every day to his Fort Myers home. He enjoys the food and the volunteers who deliver it. He is one of the more than 300 individuals that the Community Cooperative Meals on Wheels program serves every day.

"It's a wonderful thing to have someone hand deliver food to your door," he said. "I like to clown around and get to know them. They are very compassionate."

Ernie spent a career as an electrician in Washington, D.C.

and owned a small business with his father. After he retired, he headed to Florida with his second wife to enjoy a warmer climate. She passed away 20 years ago and he has been alone ever since.

Despite some health issues including cancer and diabetes, he stays active. He joins neighbors at the neighborhood community house for coffee.

His daughter, Ellie Paugh, lives about four hours away and visits as often as she can. Meals on Wheels provides her peace of mind when she is gone.

"This has been such a blessing," she said. "If he doesn't answer the door, they call the office and they make sure he is OK. It's a comfort knowing someone would know if he needed help. We couldn't ask for anything more." 🌱



Ernie preparing to enjoy his scratch made Meals on Wheels meal.

Volunteer OPPORTUNITIES

Our volunteers dedicate their time to helping those less fortunate in our community. Here are some ways you can give back at Community Cooperative.

» **Community Cafes- Fort Myers & Fort Myers Beach:**

• Prepare meals • Package meals • Serve meals • Clean up

» **Community Markets:** • Stock shelves • Distribute groceries

» **Mobile Food Pantries:** • Set up & distribute groceries at mobile sites through Lee County

» **Meals on Wheels:** • Prepare meals • Deliver meals to elderly shut-ins Monday- Saturday. **Direct Phone for Meals on Wheels volunteers: 239-337-1055**

» **Able Garden:** • Harvest produce, plant, prune, weed and other care

» **Outreach & Special Events:** • FLIP (Food Literacy in Preschool) • Café Education- help teach monthly classes • General administrative assistance • Special events: Soup Kitchen Benefit, Becoming Cosmopolitan & more! • Outreach scheduled throughout the year

» Monday- Saturday volunteer opportunities available for individuals & groups at Community Cooperative For more information on how to volunteer visit online at www.CommunityCooperative.com/give-help or contact Rachell Mays 239-332-7687 ext. 100 or Rachell@CommunityCooperative.com

Driven to help others

It all started in the car.

Garry Houston was listening to his car radio two years ago when he heard a request for Meals on Wheels volunteers.

He contacted Community Cooperative and now he comes as often as three times a week to pick up meals and deliver food to those who need it the most in Lee County.

Garry, a veteran who has retired from a variety of social services positions, started driving one route and now he can be counted on to pick up additional routes when needed.

"I just fell in love with the people on my route," he said. He bonded with a veteran who served in

Okinawa, Japan. The client was there during WWII and Garry served on the island 30 years later in the Marine Corps.

"I don't just run in and drop off the meal," he said. "Sometimes we're the only people who visit them. What's half an hour of my time? I can listen, talk and have a chuckle."

"He's got the biggest heart of gold you've ever seen," said Jen Larsen, Meals on Wheels Program Manager. "He's a great volunteer. We could use 500 more volunteer drivers like Mr. Garry. He's such a sweetheart."

It's not as easy as it looks. Garry wears a back brace because of chronic back pain and suffers from other health issues. But that doesn't stop

him from delivering meals.

"I try to get out of my own way and not take life so seriously," he said. "I really am a firm believer that we're put on this earth to do good and help one another."

One of over 200 Meals on Wheels volunteers, he is so dedicated that he will refrigerate a meal if a client is not home, and try and deliver a few hours later to ensure every client gets their meal.

It's not a big deal, Garry said. "I feel good doing it," he said. "I know in the whole great scheme of things it's a small thing. But I feel blessed. I'm able to get around and am glad to do it." 🌱



Garry organizes his meals before a daily delivery route.



Focusing on the Good

About Community Cooperative

Since 1984, Community Cooperative has worked to end hunger and homelessness in Lee County with headquarters in Fort Myers and Fort Myers Beach, and mobile services throughout greater Lee County. Clients range from elderly shut-ins to homeless families and individuals, the working poor and children. In addition to serving upwards of 200,000 meals each year through Community Cafes and Meals on Wheels, it provides homeless and comprehensive life coaching services, oversees eight emergency mobile food pantries and supplies more than 500,000 pounds of food to hungry school children and their families through the Growing Healthy Kids School Mobile Food Pantry Programs. The agency partners with United Way, local food banks, Lee County School District and regional community foundations as well as with community and service groups, churches, businesses and other support organizations.

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@Community Cooperative

The Good Vibes class, which began this summer, helps its students find their happy place.

The class led by A'Lea Ward and Christine Sebastian, Case Coaches at Community Cooperative, offers an opportunity to bring a diverse group of people together for a common cause: uplifting their spirits.

"If we can all appreciate and respect each other, everyone will benefit and in turn be happier," Christine said.

All of the students are clients with Community Cooperative and attend the class to learn something new, make social connections and have interesting and motivating conversations. All of them want to share in a good laugh and take their minds off their current struggles. The class mission to focus on joy generates a lot of laughter from the community room every Wednesday morning.

"I come because I like to hear different people's opinions, and I also have a good time," said Janella Hunt, Good Vibes attendee.

A'lea and Christine focus on creating a class where people can talk candidly about their lives. They help them focus on some of the positive things that are happening. In one recent class, the coaches asked the class to list the things that make them happy. Once the list was finished, the coaches encouraged



A'lea & Christine spreading the power of positivity at a recent Good Vibes class.

them to do more things that made them happy.

"Seems simple," Christine said. "Despite your situation in life you can still be happy. But often times we forget to just do the things we know make us happy."

One of the most popular parts of the Good Vibes class is the dance party. Every class ends with a chance to dance.

"The dancing becomes a celebration," A'lea said. "Each class always ends on a happy note." 🌈

The right STUFF



Renee and volunteer Amy Wulf filling bags of homemade stuffing for Thanksgiving.

It's all about breaking bread – a lot of it.

Renee Worthington, Community Café manager, thought about all the breads, rolls and baguette donations that pour into the Soup Kitchen daily. She had an idea to transform it into something delicious for the holidays: Thanksgiving stuffing.

"It reduces food waste and provides food without preservatives found in boxed stuffing mixes," she said. "There was no reason to have boxed stuffing for our Thanksgiving outreach when it was all at our fingertips."

Renee and a team of volunteers began their efforts in July with a goal of filling 1100 bags of stuffing and spice mixes to distribute at the mobile food pantries and Community Market. They spent hundreds of hours cutting bread into cubes, toasting them and placing them in 16 ounce packages. They labeled and dated each package. All of the seasonings

including rosemary, thyme and sage were donated.

They provided the stuffing, seasoning, broth and a recipe card for clients to add celery, onion, carrots and butter.

"We call her the stuffing lady," said Tracey Galloway, CEO of Community Cooperative. "It's a tremendous project that took a lot of time and love."

Renee and her team provided Thanksgiving Day meals to Meals on Wheels, Community Café clients and low-income seniors every year. Those meals included turkey, homemade stuffing, fresh green beans, fresh yams, and a homemade gravy. Everything was made from scratch.

"We shared the homemade stuffing with our mobile pantry clients for the first time," she said.

She enjoyed creating each and every bag.

"I love what I do," she said. "I'm thankful I can do it and give families in need something homemade with love." 🌈



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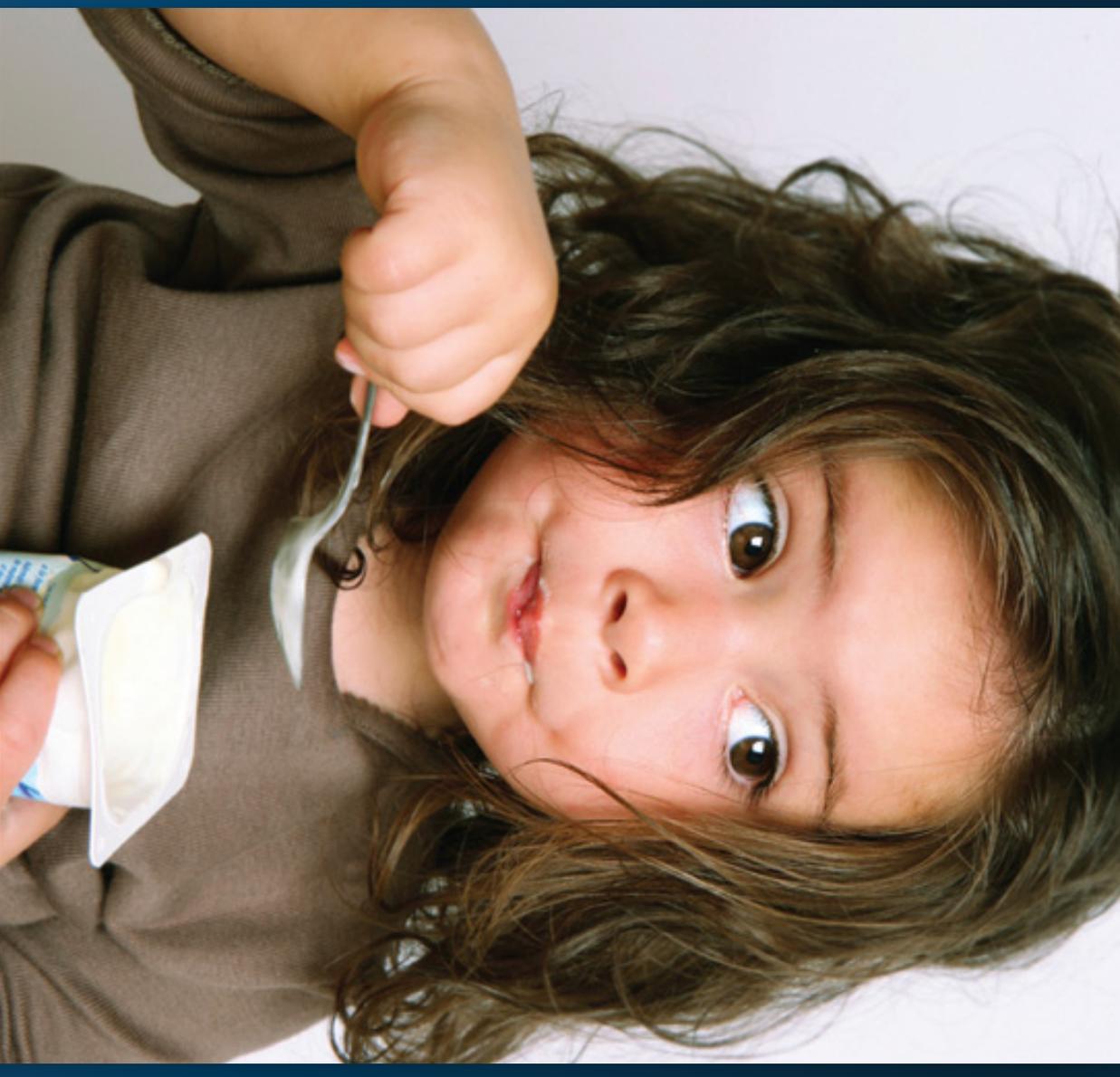


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1. Angela Schivinski, Alisa Bowman and Ash Diaz crossing the finish line at annual Soup'er Hero 5k 2. Chef Alan Dickey and Vickie Jones cooking in the Community Café kitchen 3. Volunteer, Jan, serving soup at the Empty Bowls event 4. Elaine Georgelos, Carolyn Nastos and Stefanie Ink-Edwards at the Holiday Ladies Luncheon 5. Gateway Trinity Lutheran Church Pastor Sean Bunger, Tracey Galloway & Russ Reynolds presents check to support Meals on Wheels 6. SWFL Gator Club volunteer on International Gator Day 7. Donna Caruso, Mary and Wayne Kirkwood and Dylan and Melissa Zsebe at the annual Soup Kitchen Benefit 8. Suncoast Credit Union employees volunteering at a North Fort Myers mobile food pantry 9. Thana Deva Campan and granddaughter Sonali volunteering in the Community Café kitchen 10. Jennifer Thomas and family serving meals after Hurricane Irma 11. John Walsh a Meals on Wheels volunteer heading to deliver meals.



P.O. BOX 2143 • FORT MYERS, FLORIDA • 33902



*Innovators in the fight to end
hunger and homelessness in our community.*



Community Cafés & Markets • Growing Healthy Kids Programs
Meals on Wheels • Social & Educational Resource Centers

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