

## **Feeding Families, Fueling Hope: The Family Services Center Food Pantry**

By Carrie Walsh

Every day at the Family Services Center in Port Charlotte, generosity meets need. Our food pantry is more than a source of groceries; it is a place where families across Charlotte County find hope, support, and reassurance that their community cares deeply about their well-being. Located at 21500 Gibraltar Drive, the pantry is an essential part of Charlotte County Human Services' mission to strengthen families and ensure that no one in our community goes hungry.

Last year, the FSC Food Pantry provided access to nutritious food and other essentials to 1,837 people. In addition, twice a month, the Harry Chapin Mobile Food Pantry comes to the building, distributing fresh produce and other food items to residents in need, helping approximately 12,419 people (4,144 households) last year.

This year, in partnership with Emergency Management, Charlotte County employees demonstrated remarkable generosity through a countywide food drive where staff collected more than 3,336 pounds of food. All of it went directly to county residents to stock their hurricane preparation efforts. Their commitment exemplifies the spirit of service that drives the community, not only through work but through compassion and dedication to helping others.

In addition to food support, Human Services is providing preparedness disaster kits for eligible families with incomes under 200 percent of the federal poverty level. To date, 250 kits have been distributed to help families stay ready in case of an emergency, and more kits will be available later in November. These kits give families the opportunity to prepare with food, water, supplies, and other essential nonperishable items.

Beyond food and preparedness, Human Services and our partners at the FSC connect residents to a wide range of supports such as housing and utility assistance, behavioral health, legal aid, family support, financial stability, veteran services, aging and adult programs, and crisis stabilization resources. Together these services help families access the assistance they need in one welcoming location. By working in partnership, we strengthen stability, promote wellness, and build resilience throughout Charlotte County.

The FSC Food Pantry continues to thrive because of the kindness of residents and local businesses. Everyone is welcome to get involved by donating nonperishable food, organizing a drive, or volunteering time. Every contribution makes a meaningful difference and helps ensure that families in Charlotte County have the support they need.

The Family Services Center is more than a building, it is a hub of hope and compassion where we come together to ensure that every plate, and every heart, is a little fuller.

To learn more, donate food, or get involved, visit [www.charlottecountyfl.gov/FSC](http://www.charlottecountyfl.gov/FSC), call 941-833-6500, or stop by the Family Services Center at 21500 Gibraltar Drive, Port Charlotte, FL 33952.

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