



## THAT'S A WRAP

FOUR CIVIC PHILANTHROPISTS DISCUSS  
A SUCCESSFUL SEASON

### WHERE IS THE LOVE

Lunch box program  
delivers one million  
pounds of food

### FASHION ON THE BEACH

Humanitarian gives  
back with style shows

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Blanca Hernandez with her children Magali, 2 years old, and Yahaira, 5 years old visit Lunch Boxes of Love.

LUNCH BOXES OF LOVE  
REACHES MILESTONE  
FOR COLLIER CHILDREN

# ONE MILLION POUNDS

By Brigette Fahl

**NAPLES CHILDREN & EDUCATION FOUNDATION** — founders of Naples Winter Wine Festival — and Harry Chapin Food Bank of Southwest Florida distributed the one millionth pound of food for underprivileged and at-risk Collier County children and their families at Avalon Elementary School in East Naples.

The food distribution drew 350 families who loaded cardboard boxes with carrots, apples, cab-

bage, onions, potatoes and other produce along with canned goods, cereal and meat. Twenty-five volunteers assisted with registering the families and helping them select nutritious food items, which were stacked in huge cartons and loaded in a specially outfitted mobile food pantry branded with the Lunch Boxes of Love logo.

“For most of these kids, this will be the only food they get at home,” said Mary Pierce, a teacher at Avalon Elementary School who was on hand at the food distribution.

Statistics show that approximately 30 percent of Collier County households with children experience food insecurity — a general anxiety about where their next meals will come from. In addition, 49 percent of the people receiving food assistance from local food banks are children, and more than 61 percent of the children enrolled in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade in Collier County are defined as economically needy and receive free lunch. At Avalon Elementary School, 93 percent of children are in the high-need category.



“NCEF trustees are passionate about finding a solution to childhood hunger in Collier County,” said John Scot Mueller, NCEF trustee and vice chair of the grant committee. “The need is great, and thanks to our partnership with the Harry Chapin Food Bank, we are able to maximize the quality and quantity of food going to these families in need. Lunch Boxes of Love is actually the most value-based NCEF initiative, drawing more hard dollars into the community than any other foundation endeavor.”

According to Al Brislain, Harry Chapin Food Bank CEO, the kinds of food provided are all important. “With fresh produce among the most expensive items at the grocery store, Lunch Boxes of Love is not only able to provide nutritious foods these children might not otherwise have, it also teaches families to eat healthy,” he said.

The Lunch Boxes of Love hunger initiative began a year ago after the Naples Winter Wine Festival raised \$630,000 through a fund-a-need auction lot and began partnering with Harry Chapin Food Bank. During the past year, Lunch Boxes of Love and Harry Chapin Food Bank has made 68 deliveries of nutritious food at schools and child-focused agencies in areas with the most underserved and at-risk children in the county.

NCEF’s drive to end childhood hunger is part of its strategic focus on providing a social safety net for the area’s most at-risk children. Food distribution is one element of that strategy. NCEF’s mission is to create and expand charitable programs serving underprivileged and at-risk children in Collier County. The foundation currently supports more than 20 grantees and provides grants for long-term strategic initiatives focused on children’s early learning, medical/oral health, out-of-school programs, behavioral health and childhood hunger.

NCEF has 69 trustees that govern the foundation and host the Naples Winter Wine Festival. The 2013 festival will be held Jan. 25-27. Information: [www.napleswinefestival.com](http://www.napleswinefestival.com).

The Harry Chapin Food Bank solicits, collects and stores quality food for distribution to families in need through a network of non-profit agencies in Lee, Collier, Hendry, Charlotte and Glades counties, who provide food to more than 30,000 people monthly. More than one million pounds of food are distributed monthly. In the past calendar year, Harry Chapin Food Bank distributed more than 13.7 million pounds of food and other grocery items valued at more than \$22.5 million. **TJ**



Armani Castillo stands in front a food display.



**“For most of these kids, this will be the only food they get at home.”**

Jennifer Alvarez, 2 years old, waits for her family to pick out food selections. Contributed photos (3)

Information: [www.harrychapinfoodbank.org](http://www.harrychapinfoodbank.org).