

[nourish news]

February 2026 Community Update from *Waste Not Want Not*

[From the Executive Director]

WOW! What a difference a month makes! We broke ground on renovations at the castle just about a month ago and **Wiggins Construction** and their subcontractors have been moving rather quickly. We are on target for completion by April 30, 2026, God willing! Here's a few photos of the progress.

We are so grateful to Pastor Rob Bass of Celebration Church and his team leads (named Rob and Bob) for making us feel welcome and accommodating our massive operation. We are also very grateful to each of our volunteers from rescuers to castle workers and everyone in between. Your flexibility, patience, and unwavering commitment have ensured that our work continues seamlessly.

We are equally thankful to our food distribution partners, many of whom have adjusted pick-up times and schedules to accommodate our temporary relocation. Your partnership makes our mission possible.

This past month has been especially busy, and many of you have seen me around the operation more than usual. Being present during this season has reminded me daily of the extraordinary **goodness** that fuels this organization.



It's the goodness of volunteers who rise before the sun to complete food rescues. Volunteers like **Mike Locke**, who works through the night and still stops at Publix on Tuesdays and Wednesdays on his way home to ensure food is saved. Or **Cindy or Reggie**, who travel long distances to make their early morning rescues. The goodness of **John Wrightington**, who has faithfully managed our meat distribution process for months. The goodness of our team leads and Castle workers who show up consistently, no matter what may be happening in their personal lives.

That **goodness** is what keeps Waste Not Want Not moving forward.

Dunkin' Donuts says America runs on Dunkin'. I say Waste Not Want Not runs on good! The good in people, the good in community, and the good that chooses to show up every single day.

Thank you for being that good.

Thank you for being our fuel.

In gratitude,



Kathleen N. Spears, PhD, MHA
President & Executive Director

[Community Nourishment]

Feeding our community takes many forms. From food pantries and backpack programs to meal sites and large-scale food distributions, Waste Not Want Not partners with dozens of organizations to ensure our neighbors have access to nourishing food.

We are especially committed to ensuring our unhoused neighbors are not forgotten. Through partnerships with organizations such as **Saved 2 Serve, Clay County Rescue Mission, The Well Church, and Grace Ministries Without Walls**, rescued food from local restaurants and caterers is transformed into wholesome, prepared meals. These dedicated teams then carry those meals directly into the community...to homeless encampments, under bridges, and into public parks... meeting people **exactly** where they are.



This is what community nourishment looks like in action, food rescued with purpose, prepared with care, and delivered with dignity.





[Partner Highlight]

Nourishing our neighbors sometimes goes beyond stocking a pantry shelf. Sometimes, it means serving a hot, hearty meal shared at a table. Shared with love.

One of our dedicated hunger alleviation partners, **The Kitchen of Clay County**, embodies this beautifully. Founded by Brian and Jenn Knight, for nearly a decade, their compassionate volunteers have prepared and served delicious meals to neighbors in need — without judgment, without question, and always with love and always with dignity.

Because hunger is not just about food. It is about belonging. It is about being seen. And thanks to partners like The Kitchen of Clay County, our neighbors in need have a place to belong, a place to be seen. Thanks to the Kitchen, our community is nourished in every sense of the word. Here's more about them!





What is your mission?

At the Kitchen of Clay County, our goal is to nourish both body and soul.

How do you serve the hungry and impoverished in our community?

Our four soup kitchens operate every Saturday in Green Cove Springs, Orange Park, Middleburg, and Keystone Heights where we provide meals both in a sit down, restaurant-style, as well as to-go meals.

How does Waste Not help you execute your mission?

WNWN is a critical partner in helping us to help others. They provide supplemental food that we are able to offer our patrons each week. Our guests are able to enjoy food at the soup kitchen provided by WNWN, and additionally take some things home to help sustain them throughout the week.

What do you love most about your organization?

The thing that I love to see most at The Kitchen of Clay County are the relationships that have grown in our kitchens. It is special to be at The Kitchen because there are so many beautiful connections that have been built between guests who come each week and get to visit with their friends and volunteers who get to know their guests and look forward to seeing them and catching up.

The Kitchen of Clay County is a non-profit soup kitchen that provides meals every Saturday throughout Clay County. There is no proof of need required. Our Green Cove Springs, Orange Park, and Middleburg locations serve from 11:00 - 1:00 while our Keystone Heights location serves meals from 12:00 - 2:00. For more information, please visit us at www.thekitchenofclaycounty.com.

Birthdays & Volunteer-Versaries



Happy birthday to our volunteers with February birthdays:

Jan Broomfield, Doug Leiby, Sheree Martin, David Brouillette, Martin Brown, Judy Jackson, Michael "Mike" Locke, Colleen Phelps, Chris Rickard, Bill Spragg, John Ziolk, Diane Bilyk, and Tyra Grandberry. ☐

We make every effort to ensure our birthday and anniversary list is accurate and up to date. If we missed your birthday, please let us know so we can update our records. If you prefer not to be included in the monthly birthday "Well-Wish List," please let Avery know by emailing avery@wastenotflorida.org

Happy Volunteer-versary to those who began their journey with us during a February month!

We're so grateful for your continued dedication, hard work, and the heart you bring to our mission. Thank you for being such an important part of our community.

18 Years

Jay Higgins

10 Years

Karen & Darrell Murphy

Bill Midgett

8 Years

Robert "Bob" Johnson

7 Years

Charles & Trudy McGarvey

Amy & Robert Pipas

6 Years

Linda Boyd

Linda & Mike Bosford

4 Years

Jamie Walker

3 Years

Anne & Brent Kugler

Raylin Powden

Ken Vieira

Patty Archambault

1 Year

Lynn Afflick

Cindy Ragland

*If you've been volunteering with us for many years and happen to know the year you first got involved, **we'd love to hear from you.** Please send anniversary date to Linda@wastenotflorida.org so we can keep our records accurate. Thank you for being part of our community!*

[Volunteer Cheer]

Don't forget to submit your "Volunteer Cheer" item to Avery at Avery@wastenotflorida.org. We would love to celebrate life's special moments with you! Whether you're welcoming a new grandchild, starting a new hobby, taking an exciting trip, or creating something beautiful. We'd also be thrilled to feature your artwork or share your favorite recipe with our community!

Until then, we'd like to shine the spotlight on the incredible dedication of volunteer **Carol Sebesta.**

Hunger doesn't quit, and neither do we! Even during our castle renovations, our mission has not paused, we continue distributing food seven days a week from 8:30 a.m. to noon. However, Celebration Church operates its food pantry on Mondays during that same timeframe. As a result, we shifted our Monday distribution to the afternoon and our Monday food distribution partners changed their pick-up time.



Carol and Wayne Sebasta

Unfortunately, one of our valued partners, W.E. Cherry Elementary School, was unable to change their pick-up time or day. W.E. Cherry is a Title I school meaning they have a high concentration of students from low-income households. Without an alternative solution, the families they serve would have gone without food. Determined to ensure that didn't happen, we reached out to volunteers Carol and Wayne Sebasta to ask if they would be willing to personally deliver food to the school each week. Without hesitation, they said yes.

On Monday mornings, Carol and Wayne complete early rescues from Publix and two additional donors. After dropping off food at our site, they load their vehicle and **deliver** directly to W.E. Cherry Elementary so families continue receiving the nourishment they depend on.

In a beautiful full-circle moment, Carol shared that she completed her teaching internship at W.E. Cherry Elementary School years ago. Now, she's once again serving the very same community! This time by helping ensure children and families have food on their tables. That's the heart of Waste Not Want Not. That's goodness!

Carol and Wayne — we cheer you on!

Advocacy in Action

We are yielding space in our newsletter to share some of the **advocacy efforts** of our team, who are working with lawmakers to inform them of the issues around hunger and poverty in Northeast Florida.

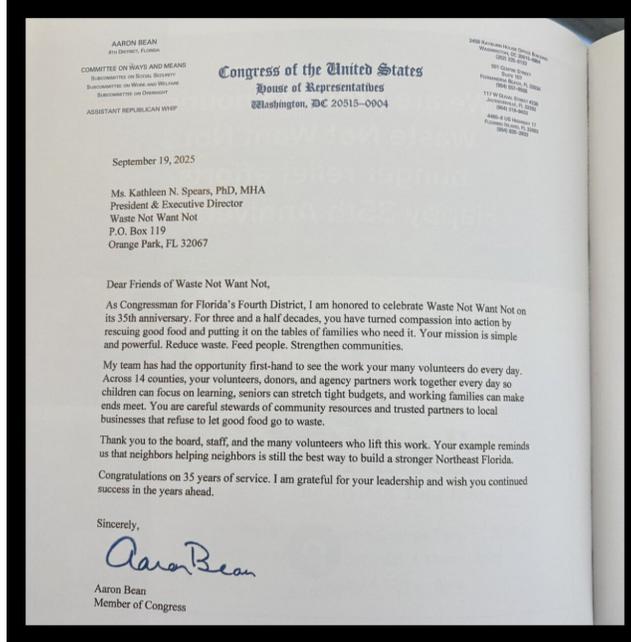
Christie Hingst, our Director of Mission Delivery & Volunteer Services, took the initiative to stop by Capitol Hill on her personal vacation to Washington, D.C. on February 4th to meet with **Congressman Aaron Bean** and share the vision and mission of Waste Not Want Not. Congressman Bean was wonderfully receptive and supportive. He was also very supportive of our Gala this past September and wrote a wonderful letter in the program in support of all the work Waste Not does to fight hunger in Northeast Florida.

In Christie's own words: *"It was an honor meeting with Congressman Aaron Bean in DC. The snow made everything extra magical for this Florida girl! It was really great to be able to share our mission with somebody who had very little prior knowledge of us. **Now we are on the radar.** Getting the word out to our legislators is key advocacy work for Waste Not."*

Additionally, thanks to generous funding support from the **Nonprofit Center of Northeast Florida** and the **Community Foundation**, our Executive Director had the opportunity to travel to Tallahassee to meet with state legislators and **inform them of the realities of food insecurity** across our **14-county** service area.

We are proud to have such passionate advocates on our team who are committed to **elevating the conversation** around hunger and food insecurity — even on vacation!





Did you know our **yard sale** is now held monthly? Join us **every first Saturday** of the month outside of

Challenge Enterprises, 526 Kingsley Ave in Orange Park, at 8 AM, and get some great steals and deals

while helping **fight hunger + poverty!** We hope to see you on the sidewalk on **March 7th!**

[Explore more on our website!](#)



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