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For Immediate Release

September 30, 2025

PRESS RELEASE

Waste Not Want Not Celebrates 35 Years Fighting Hunger and Poverty

JACKSONVILLE - *Waste Not Want Not* - a leader in food rescue and alleviating hunger in Northeast Florida - announced today that their 35th Anniversary gala called "Corks & Forks - the Jade Edition" held on Saturday September 27, 2025 was a huge success! The event took place at Azaleana Manor in Orange Park, where the organization is headquartered and was attended by 86 guests.

Corks & Forks marked the organization's 35th year of fighting hunger through food rescue. It's founder - **Debra Smyers**, gave remarks as assisted the organization's President & Executive Director - **Kathleen Spears, PhD** in presenting the "Jade Awards" to four individuals and corporations including Publix Argyle in Jacksonville which was the *first* grocery store to say yes 35 years ago. The store continues to donate to Waste Not Want Not today. Collectively, 15 Publix stores donate over half a million pounds of surplus food to Waste Not Want Not each year. Other honorees included Chik-fil-A on Wells Road in Orange Park, Trader Joe's in Mandarin, and the Reinhold Foundation in Orange Park. All were recognized for their unique and extraordinary efforts and contributions in fighting hunger in our community.

The evening was emceed by **Barbie T** of the *Dex & Barbie T Show* on 95.1 WAPE and featured casual conversations with three local Jacksonville Jaguar legends - **Thomas "Tommy Mac" McManus**, **Donovin "Double D" Darius**, and **Aaron "Beas" Beasley** sharing their own stories of overcoming obstacles and finding hope in the most difficult of times. The evening was capped with a performance by McManus' band the "Dad Bodz".

When asked what made the event such a success, Spears remarked: "Waste Not Want Not is a grassroots organization. We don't have a big marketing or fundraising budget but we have faithful donors and believers in our mission. During the giving portion of the evening, 18 individuals stood with Waste Not contributing over \$12,500. Those dollars were then matched - much to my surprise - by Kimberly and Chris Jackson!" The Jacksons own Carpet Man Flooring which as the 2 largest flooring showrooms in Northeast Florida. One in Orange Park and one in Jacksonville. They have been serving their hometown for decades. "It was a complete surprise. Both Kimerly and Chris come from humble beginnings and shared that they were no strangers to food insecurity growing up. This goes to show that more people confront food insecurity and hunger at some point in their life than you might know." Spears said. She went on to say that with ticket sales, sponsorships, and auction activities they raised well over \$60,000 which will be used to fund their mission of fighting hunger through the rescue of surplus food. "This was the first time we ever did anything like this at this level and we are a very small little-known organization. Even still, many businesses, corporations and individuals stepped up to support us. To me that is more a demonstration of the success of the event than the dollar amount raised." Says Spears.

If you missed the gala but you'd like to support the organization, their next fundraising event will be held in November, details below:

What: Tee'd Up to End Hunger
When: Sunday November 9, 2025, 11:30 am - 3:00 pm
Where: Top Golf - 10531 Brightman Blvd, Jacksonville Florida 32246
Featuring: Simulated golfing, prizes, silent auction, lite bites and refreshments
Tickets: General Admission - \$100

About *Waste Not Want Not*

Waste Not Want Not is a 501 c3 charitable organization dedicated to fighting hunger in Northeast Florida by preventing food waste. We are not a food bank; we do not purchase food. Rather we are a food rescue; we connect the dots between surplus food and hungry people. We work with hundreds of passionate volunteers, committed food donors, and numerous community-based nonprofit organizations in 14 counties across Northeast Florida to rescue and share food with those in need. Every week, more than 15,000 people eat food provided by *Waste Not* - food that, but for the efforts of our volunteers, would be wasted.

For additional information, to volunteer, or to donate, visit: www.wastenotflorida.org.

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