[nourish news]

September 2026 Community Update from Waste Not Want Not

[From the Executive Director]

Great Things Ahead for Waste Not

Florida Blue Foundation

Big things are happening at Waste Not Want Not and we are thrilled to share some very big news. Waste Not Want Not has been awarded a four-year **$400,000 Florida Blue Foundation Food Security Grant!** This extraordinary investment will help us take an important next step in our mission: **strengthening food rescue into communities where access to both food and resources can be especially challenging.**

This means, we can **bring food rescue closer to home** for some of our partner agencies. For years, our Castle in Clay County has served as the heart of our food rescue operation. But as our reach has grown, so has our understanding of the challenges faced by our rural and more geographically isolated communities. This grant will allow us to explore and establish **small "castles" in communities including Nassau, St. Johns, and other rural counties.** The idea is simple - rescue food locally, share it locally...strengthen the community locally.

Instead of food traveling long distances from our Clay County hub to partner agencies in outlying counties, these community-based hubs will allow us to rescue surplus food from local grocery stores, restaurants, farms, manufacturers, and other food donors and keep more of that food close to home. That means **more food reaching more people while reducing the transportation burden on our partner agencies.** For some of our partners, traveling to pick up food can mean thousands of dollars in fuel costs each year. By bringing food rescue closer to them, we help them redirect those resources where they belong - toward serving people.

Expansion isn't about simply going farther. It's about **going where the need is greatest and where access is hardest.**

Rural communities can face unique barriers to food access, including distance, transportation limitations, fewer food resources, and fewer organizations equipped to respond to need. Establishing local food rescue hubs gives Waste Not the opportunity to build a more responsive, community-centered model for reaching hungry individuals and families. And we're committed to doing it thoughtfully.

As such, a portion of this Florida Blue Foundation grant supports our **four-year strategic plan** and strengthens another important part of our work - the expansion of our **Food Insecurity Task Force efforts**. We want to make decisions based on more than what we think might work. We want to understand **where people are, what barriers they face, what resources already exist, where gaps remain, and how we can make the greatest impact with the resources entrusted to us.** That means listening. Studying the data. Measuring outcomes. Learning. Adjusting.

Data, Accountability and the Road Ahead

This grant also challenges us to raise the bar. As part of the grant, Waste Not will be expected to remain competitive, rigorously collect and analyze data, and report on key measures of our work and impact. That's a good thing. The stronger our data, the better we can understand our impact and the better we can tell the story of what food rescue makes possible.

It will also help us demonstrate to future funders that Waste Not is an organization that doesn't simply dream about growth; **we plan for it, measure it, manage it, and deliver results.** This investment gives us four years to build, learn, measure, and grow and to simultaneously develop the additional funding streams and long-term sustainability strategies that will allow this work to

Our Impact

Pounds of Food Rescued Last Month
149,547

Pounds of Food Rescued This Year
1,308,707

Volunteer Hours This Year
14,905

Meals Put Into the Community Last Month
179,456

lbs of CO_2 Kept Out of the Atmosphere This Year

continue **after the grant period ends in 2030.**

4,605,280

You Are Part of This Story

We are incredibly excited about what lies ahead for Waste Not Want Not. But here's the most important part - **we didn't get here alone.** Every donor who believes food should never be wasted while people go hungry is part of this story. Every volunteer who sorts, loads, drives, organizes, carries, delivers, and shows up EVERY DAY is part of this story. Every partner agency that turns rescued food into meals, groceries, hope, and dignity...is part of this story. Every person facing the challenge of food scarcity is part of this story!

To our staff and volunteers – **YOUR** time and effort has helped us build the credibility, infrastructure, relationships, and momentum that make an investment like this possible. And now, together, we have an opportunity to take what we've learned and bring food rescue even closer to the people who need it most. We arrived at this incredible point in our organizational life cycle because of YOU.

Stay tuned for more updates!

Great things ahead for Waste Not Want Not! Onward and upward!

With incredible gratitude & excitement,



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

P.S. – My colleague in the fight to end hunger, Susan King, is retiring as CEO from Feeding Northeast Florida at the end of this year. There's been some rumors and wondering swarming about. Let me put those to bed. I have no plans to pursue the CEO role at Feeding Northeast Florida. I am committed and devoted to seeing Waste Not through this incredible transformational growth. We have only just begun, and I plan to see it through! Please continue to believe in and support our powerful mission. As always, we will continue to be excellent stewards.

[Community Nourishment]

Chick-fil-A Takes a Closer Look at Food Rescue!

It's always exciting when one of our food donors wants to see what happens to their donations once they leave their doors. Recently, **Chick-fil-A** and **Quadrant Strategies** spent the day with us to experience food rescue from start to finish.

They're working together to better understand what food recovery really looks like for the people doing the work every day. So, they came along for the ride!



The day started with a food rescue pickup at **Publix,** followed by a stop at **Flowers Baking Co.** to meet the **Waste Not Want Not** truck. From there, they joined a **Chick-fil-A** pickup on Wells Road and followed the food back to The Castle.

Once at The Castle, they watched and worked alongside our volunteers as the food was sorted, prepared, and moved out to our food distribution partners. They got a firsthand look at how our staff, volunteers, drivers, and partners all work together to keep the food moving into the community.

They also saw that food rescue isn't always as simple as picking up food and giving it away. There are a lot of moving parts, from the amount and type of food we receive to having the space, equipment, people, and time needed to get it where it needs to go.

That's food rescue. **It takes a whole team working together to turn surplus food into nourishment for our community.**

We're thankful to Chick-fil-A and Quadrant Strategies for spending the day with us and taking the time to experience the process firsthand. We enjoyed having them along for the ride and sharing a little of what happens behind the scenes at **Waste Not Want Not!**





[Partner Highlight]

This month we're highlighting **The Food Pantry of Green Cove Springs,** and the work they're doing to fight hunger in Clay County.



After following what **Waste Not Want Not** has been building with the **Clay County Food Insecurity Taskforce (CFIT),** the pantry wanted to get involved. They looked at one of the gaps CFIT has been talking about: most food distributions happen in the morning or the middle of the afternoon, which are exactly the hours working families can't get there. So they extended their Wednesday hours. **The pantry is now open Wednesdays from 4 to 7 p.m.,** which means a parent can pick up food after work instead of choosing between a shift and a distribution.

We're thrilled to have them as part of this work, and grateful for a partner willing to rethink how they operate to meet people where they are.

What is your mission?

The Food Pantry of Green Cove Springs is a Christian ministry called to feed families and make a difference in the name of Jesus, rooted in the command to love our neighbors as ourselves. Guided by Matthew 25:35 for I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, we serve every person who walks through our doors with dignity, compassion, and grace, believing that we are serving Christ Himself in each one of them. We are guided by Wynema's Way — the spirit that reminds us it is not what we do, it is how we do it.

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

We operate a volunteer-run emergency food assistance program serving families throughout Clay County — Our team covers more than twenty volunteer roles, from Front Desk to Donor Outreach, ensuring every part of our operation reflects the excellence and compassion our guests deserve.

How does Waste Not Want Not help you execute your mission?

Waste Not Want Not is one of our most valued and cherished partners. The food they provide directly fills the bags that go home with families who need them most — helping us live out our calling to serve with consistency and love. Every pound recovered is a meal

on a table, a child who isn't hungry at bedtime, a family sustained through a hard week.

What do you love most about your organization?

The people — without question. The volunteers who show up every week and know our guests by name. The guests who trust us in their hardest moments. The community of faith that surrounds and supports us. And the spirit of Wynema Lovell, who taught us the most important truth of this ministry: it is not what we do — it is how we do it. That conviction, rooted in love and faith, is what makes us more than a pantry. It makes us a community, bound together by the belief that every neighbor matters.

Is there anything you need help with?

We are so grateful for every way our community shows up for this mission — and there are three areas where your support would mean the world right now:

Perishable and Non-Perishable Food Donations:

Proteins, Fresh Vegetales and Fruit, breakfast items, canned goods, and pantry staples are always needed.

Wish List

Ways to Help & Get Involved:

There are so many ways to be part of what God is doing through this ministry — beyond volunteering and donating. Whether you want to organize a food drive, engage your church or workplace, or simply learn more about how to make a difference in Clay County, we would love to connect with you.

Connect with us

Volunteers:

This ministry runs entirely on the hearts and hands of our volunteers. If you feel called to serve, we would love to welcome you to our team.

Join our Team

Birthdays & Volunteer-Versaries



Happy birthday to our September volunteers! You spend so much of the year making sure other people are taken care of, so we hope this month someone is taking care of you.

Join us in wishing a happy birthday to:

Heidi Barfield, Bob Boykins, Denise Brackett, Peggie French, Scott Fuchs, Jay Heather, Karol Higginbotham, Kevin Midgett, Chris Morris, Jerry Mulvihill, Sandy Mulvihill, Olivia Myers, Ania Nieves, Brittany Pennington, Robert Pipas, Lorie Plato, Ken Plato

If we missed your birthday or you'd prefer not to be included, please email Avery at avery@wastenotflorida.org.

Happy Volunteer-Versary to our September service anniversaries!💚

Thank you for showing up, month after month and year after year. **September is Hunger Action Month**, which makes it a fitting time to **celebrate the people who take action here all year long.** Your consistency is what keeps this mission running, and every hour you give helps make sure no one in our community goes without. We are so proud to celebrate your dedication as part of the **Waste Not Want Not** family!

A warm welcome to **Willie Stocker,** joining us for the first time, and to **Dorothy Williams,** glad to have you back! We're thrilled to have you both as part of the Waste Not Want Not family.

- **12 years:** Ken Plato
- **10 years:** Diane Bilyk, Colleen Phelps, Wayne & Carol Sebesta
- **9 years:** Greg & Olivia Myers
- **6 years:** Arvid Nelson
- **1 year:** Louis Cristo, Andrea Ross

[Volunteer Cheer]

Volunteer Cheer is where we celebrate the volunteers who give their time and heart to this mission. It's also a space to share more of who our volunteers are, whether that's a story, a poem, a photo, or something they're proud of! This month, we want to recognize the team at **VyStar Credit Union.**





Good is *everywhere*, and a piece of it recently landed with us. As part of **VyStar's** fifth annual **"Good is *everywhere*"** celebration, running September 9 through 26, a team of **VyStar** employees rolled up their sleeves and spent the day volunteering with **Waste Not Want Not.**

Their whole campaign is built around the idea that togetherness creates real impact, fostering a spirit of community, and we felt that firsthand having them here!

We are grateful to **VyStar** for making community a company-wide value and for pouring their time into our mission. **Thank you for reminding all of us that... good is *everywhere*!** Especially when good people show up to share it.



This section belongs to you! Share your skills, passion, or stories by emailing **Avery@WasteNotFlorida.org** to be featured next month.

Did you know we hold a yard sale every 1st Saturday of the month? Our next yard sale will be **Saturday, October 3, 2026, at 8 AM**, at **673 Kingsley Ave**.

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