

NCEF Hunger Initiative

Since 2011, NCEF has invested \$12,576,498 into the community.

The Issue

Food plays an important role in long-term growth and development of children, and our community. Children facing food insecurity—the fear of not knowing where their next meal will come from—lack the energy to focus in class, engage with their peers and grow into healthy adults. The impacts of hunger on a child's physical and mental health are significant, affecting their behavior, academic achievement and wellbeing. For children living in poverty, often the only reliable food source they receive is through school meal programs. The free and reduced lunch offerings in schools provide regular hot meals during the day, and children often depend on afterschool and summer programs to provide meals outside of school hours.

Good nutrition is important for the long-term health of a child. Ensuring children have consistent access to and awareness of nutritional foods helps to curb obesity rates and improve the physical and mental health of a child. Of course, much of a child's diet is provided by their family, so efforts to educate a child about nutritional options are more effective when the entire family is engaged and empowered to make better food choices.

Fast Facts*

- In the United States, 1 in 9 people – including 1 in 6 children – struggle with hunger. As of 2022 in Collier County, 44,430 residents, including **10,060 children**, lack consistent access to nutritious food.
- In Collier County, **65% of children** qualify for free or reduced-price meals.
- **Children facing hunger** are more likely to repeat a grade in elementary school, experience impairments in development and/or have more social and behavioral problems.
- **Eating a healthy breakfast** is associated with improved cognitive function (especially memory), reduced absenteeism and improved mood.
- **84% of households** served by Feeding America report buying the cheapest food—instead of healthy food—in order to provide enough to eat.

**Data from Feeding America and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).*

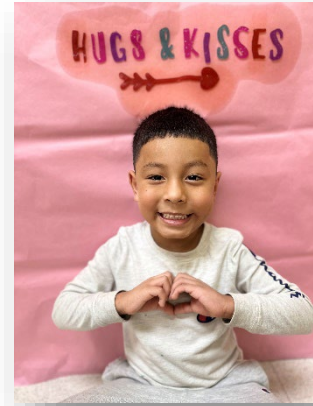
Collaborative Successes

- Since 2011, **over 41,000,000 meals** have been distributed to children and families in need, with pantries serving 1,000+ families weekly.

- Together, **partners have collaborated** to expand the number of people served in Collier County, contributing to inter-agency coordination and ensuring no duplication of services.
- Partners provide food to more than **39 organizations and nonprofit agencies**, including 31 that focus on children's needs.
- Meeting the needs of children beyond school hours, partners created an Out-of-School Feeding Program to provide meals after school and during the summer for over **500 children annually**, as well as providing boxed food with 15-20 pounds of food, serving an entire family.

Meet Carlos, Age 5

When Carlos first came to Pathways Early Education Center of Immokalee at 4, it was evident that his family struggled to meet various needs. One of which was food insecurity. Thankfully, Pathways is a nonprofit partner of Midwest Food Bank, a new partner of the Hunger Initiative. Through the provision of this food, children like Carlos can have their hunger needs met allowing their academic achievement to soar.



How your dollars make a difference:

\$50,000 provides an in-school pantry with enough nutritious food for an entire school year

\$25,000 supports ten mobile pantries in our community serving 1,000 children weekly

\$10,000 provides 30,000 lbs. of fresh produce to be distributed to families in need

\$5,000 ensures 1,200 students have a hot lunch during the summer months

\$2,500 provides 12,500 children nutritious food to take home during the weekend to ensure they do not go hungry

\$1,000 provides 4,000 meals for families in need



Strategic Initiative Partners

