

# Herald-Tribune

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## LOCAL

# Walk to End Summer Hunger kicks off All Faith Food Bank's annual campaign

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All Faiths Food Bank will present the Walk to End Summer Hunger – the kickoff event for the 12th annual Campaign Against Summer Hunger – on March 30 at Nathan Benderson Park.

More than 40,000 local children rely on free and reduced-cost meals at school in Sarasota and DeSoto counties. When school is out, hunger begins.

The Campaign supports efforts to provide food for area children throughout the summer months.

“With our state opting out of the Summer EBT program, we’ve effectively lost millions in funding to help Florida families in need buy food,” said Lisa Krouse, chair for the Campaign Against Summer Hunger. “It is incumbent upon us to make up the difference and make sure our community’s children have access to the foods they need to grow and be strong and healthy.”

On top of challenging economic issues such as inflation, rising grocery costs and the continued impacts of last year’s hurricanes, Florida has for the second year in a row opted out of the Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer for Children program, which would have provided nearly \$260 million in funding to help feed more than 2.1 million children from low-income families this summer.

Through the food bank’s partners and summer programs, AFFB works to make sure children receive the nutritional assistance they need. Support from investors

provides matching funds to inspire widespread giving. From April 1 to May 15, the Campaign accepts community contributions designated toward ending hunger for local children.

The Charles & Margery Barancik Foundation and Gulf Coast Community Foundation help fund the significant challenge match. Hundreds of community partners – including schools, libraries, early learning centers, summer camps, community centers and other organizations throughout Sarasota and DeSoto counties – also play significant roles in the Campaign Against Summer Hunger.

In 2024, the Campaign raised \$2.1 million. With the support of 113 investors and nearly 2,200 community donors, more than 35,000 local children received nutritious meals. Since its inception in 2014, donors have contributed more than \$18 million.

The walk site at Nathan Benderson Park opens at 7:30 a.m. on March 30, followed by a brief program at 8 a.m. and the walk at 8:30 a.m. Participants can choose between a one-mile “fun walk” or a 5K walk. The cost (\$30/adults, \$15/children) includes a T-shirt and light breakfast. Register by March 21 at [affb.org/walk](https://affb.org/walk).

For more information, email [events@allfaithsfoodbank.org](mailto:events@allfaithsfoodbank.org) or call 941-549-8132. For more about All Faiths Food Bank, visit [allfaithsfoodbank.org](https://allfaithsfoodbank.org) or call 941-379-6333.

*Submitted by Sharon Kunkel*