

## GRACE PACKS: Giving heart and soul to feed hungry schoolkids



Grace Packs Inc. founders Lisa Ferrick, left, and Laura Klosterman, and a group of dedicated volunteers. Some 870 food bags are given to needy county schoolchildren each Friday. PHOTO: STEPHAN MARCINO WISLA

BY ROSINA MARCIZO-UCARNA | STAFF WRITER

Every volunteer at Grace Packs Inc. has a specific name depending on their job description.

"Pantry Peeps" are the ones who organize and pack food bags. "Delivery Friends" pick up the bags and take the food to one of about 35 participating schools in St. Lucie County. "School Gracies" receive the food at the school.

No matter what they're called, the volunteers all have a few things in common – they have supreme organizational skills, esude love and have a heart for the hungry, especially children.

The 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization provides breakfast, lunch, dinner and snack items to students who are food insecure each Friday from September through the end of May to be sure that the children will have the necessary nourishment over the weekend.

Food is organized and packed Monday and picked up on Tuesday for delivery to over 50 county schools. The bags are given to the students on Friday.

Great care is taken with the meal application process, not only to be sure that students are eligible, but also to be aware of allergies, going so far as to make sure physicians orders are at school, and by having a specific volunteers make and check the bags of the children with allergies.

"It's kind of a lot of work on the front end," said co-founder Laura Klosterman, who added that it's worth the effort because it makes the process run smoothly thereafter.

Grace Packs Inc. was founded in 2011 by two Oak Hammock School employees: Klosterman, who worked as a teacher, and Lisa Ferrick, who works in the cafeteria. Both were able to recognize the telltale signs from students who suffered from hunger.

"We call it the face of hunger," Klosterman said. She described how students would go to the school clinic on Mondays, usually with a stomachache or headache from hunger. And Ferrick could see it in the faces of students on the food line and when they would take food from the line.

"The kids show the face of hunger, and our amazing volunteers show the face of grace," Klosterman said.

The first year Grace Packs gave out a total of 672 bags, beginning at Oak Hammock K-8. Morningside Elementary was the next to join. Today, 15 years on, 870 bags are given to students each week at participating schools.

Pat Agricola, coordinator of the "Pantry Peeps," organizes the volunteers and deliveries. In addition to her days at the pantry, she spends a good deal of time thinking about what needs to be done. "It's a lot of moving parts at this point," she said.

Since volunteer Linda Chastain began in 2020, Grace Packs has collected 27,000 jars of peanut butter. And Chastain would know: She has her own special name – "Peanut Butter Ninja" – because she asks everyone she knows for peanut butter. "People have responded in a wonderful way," Chastain said.

"It's just wonderful because I share what we do here and people are just so happy to give," said volunteer Sherry Bowlers, who told her bowling league about the organization and members began donating.

Grace Packs began operating out of Sunlight Community Church in Port St. Lucie in 2017 when the church offered to donate space for them to collect, pack and deliver food. The space is filled with three stations, with labeled bins stuffed with entrees, snacks, fruit and breakfast items. The food is bagged and placed in foldable metal shopping carts that are labeled with the name of the volunteer driver who will pick it up.

*Donations of food, funds and volunteers are always needed and welcome at Grace Packs Inc. Expired food items are not taken. Some often-sought food items can be found on the group's website, where there's also a link for donations. For more information, visit [grace-packs.org](http://grace-packs.org)* ■

# FULL OF GRACE



Pantry Preps volunteer their time to create weekend meals for local students in need.

962 students across 37 St. Lucie County Schools took home 20,882 Grace Packs. Klosterman, now retired from teaching, is busier than ever: she directs Grace Packs, sends out mailings, makes purchases, accepts speaking engagements and more. "Shout out to my husband John," she said. "I could not physically do this without him transporting pallets of food. He's such a blessing in my life, always working behind the scenes."

**THREE IN ONE**  
Grace Packs' mission requires immense coordination. School Grades act as liaisons, identifying students who could benefit from the program. They are the "first line of defense," recognizing students in need and giving parents applications. They also place email orders and aid distribution. "We have a resource officer at one school," Klosterman said. "We have clerks, counselors, custodians, teachers, bus drivers. It depends on who wants to lead the program." Confidentiality is a big consideration. Packs are delivered on Tuesdays and distributed Fridays. "We want it to be as unseen as possible," Klosterman said. "Little kids may be proud that they get to take food home, but middle schoolers and high schoolers don't want anybody to know — and I don't blame them."

Space is necessary for Grace Packs, also. In the beginning, everything was accomplished out of Klosterman's home, while some individual schools had food pantries. In 2017, Sunlight Community Church offered a centralized pantry space — with a loading dock. They installed industrial shelving, making expansion practical. Volunteers who pack bags and stock shelves are known >>>



Linda Chastain spearheads the Peanut Butter Brigade, asking businesses, clubs and schools to donate.



Sunlight Community Church provides Grace Packs with both pantry space and a helpful loading dock.

as Pantry Peeps. Pat Agricola schedules them, plans menus, sends out monthly newsletters and works with new groups who want to help. "No group left behind," she says, she said. Volunteers from various clubs and groups may be involved for a one-time outreach or as regular helpers. Joanne Mamo is a retired banker and transplant from Miami. She learned about Grace Packs in 2011 through a women's Bible study and volunteers three times a month. "It's fulfilling."

Entire families get involved. A 98-year-old calls herself the "big lady." Groups such as the Knights of Columbus or Elks donate money, food and/or time. "We have fun with the assembly line," Klosterman said. DeliverY Friends pick up and drop off packs. Sisters Wendy Hamilton and Marsha Warfield deliver together, along with their dogs Kent and Rimo. Learning about Grace Packs at a fundraiser about five years ago, they've delivered thousands of packs since. "We make a day of it," Hamilton said. "We live in Fort Pierce, where our other sister lives, then we all have lunch."

**WEEKEND SUSTENANCE**  
Unless a student needs a special bag due to food allergies, each week's Grace Packs are identical, consisting of four entrees, two breakfast items, snacks and fruit. All items are checked for expiration dates, ensuring safety. "An entree might be a can of tuna or a jar of peanut butter, with a canned vegetable, maybe soup, beans, rice or ramen," Agricola said. "For fruit we usually use raisins, or protein bars with fruit and individual cereal boxes, granola bars or oatmeal for breakfast." "It's about engaging people," Klosterman said, mentioning a little girl who asked people to donate to Grace Packs in lieu of giving her birthday presents. "Her mom said, 'I didn't want to burst her bubble. I thought we'd get a couple of boxes.' Instead, an entire wall of food came in — it lasted for months."

Linda Chastain met Klosterman while volunteering at GraceWay Village in Fort Pierce. Learning that peanut butter was one of the more expensive items on Grace Packs' wish list, Chastain created the Peanut Butter Brigade. "I approach local schools, businesses and service organizations to either donate peanut butter outright or arrange donation drives. People are very kind; I have pages and pages of people and organizations who have donated."

"Linda leads the charge," Klosterman said. "We could only send peanut butter out once or twice a year. Now we're giving it out once a month." By Shamsheer Singh is well-known on the Treasure Coast for his generous support of Southeast Florida Honor Flight and other charities. Since 2022, his dermatology office has also become part of the Peanut Butter Brigade, collecting more than 1,500 jars. "[Grace Pack's] volunteers pour their hearts into every bag, reminding families that they are not alone and reminding the community what kindness in action really looks like," Singh said in the December newsletter. This year, the Peanut Butter Brigade has collected 28,000 jars of what Chastain calls "the perfect protein. But that pales in comparison to all that is done and donated."

**A WISH LIST**  
Grace Packs likes to work around the schedules of DeliverY Friends, but more drivers would be helpful. When large items are donated, they can sometimes be used for Extended Grace Family Boxes over Christmas and Easter breaks, but smaller sizes are preferable. "We always like to have Cheerios/raisins on hand," Agricola said. "And any canned fish or chicken." Grace Packs has received substantial donations and grants from groups such as Fort St. Lucie Business Women, Cigna >>>

DeliverY Friends Wendy Hamilton and Marsha Warfield sometimes take their dogs along as they drop food off to schools.



Dr. Shamsheer Singh and his staff have collected more than 1,500 jars of "the perfect protein."



Grace Packs makes it possible for food insecure children to eat on the weekends, when school-provided meals are no longer available.

Healthcare and Walmart, all of which goes for food. Other than printing brochures occasionally, there is no overhead. They also welcome grant writers, and anyone who has relationships with organizations and companies that provide invitation-only grants. "Big companies aren't the only way to touch a community of course. Tabitha Carpenter at John Carroll High School junior, donates time and creativity through Instagram. "From reposting volunteer photos to promoting upcoming events, it's a great way to highlight the impact of Grace Packs and inspire more students to volunteer or donate," she said. "These's the power of just somebody having an idea, using their own sphere of influence and making a huge difference," Klosterman said. Grace Packs, Inc. began with one such idea, one theoretical pebble thrown into a deep pond of need. Its ripple effect continues to expand 15 years later, impacting the community through its most vulnerable citizens: children with food insecurity. <



**GRACE PACKS, INC.**  
PO Box 881871, Fort St. Lucie, Florida 34988  
Pantry space: Sunlight Community Church,  
477 SW Cashmere Blvd, Fort St. Lucie, FL 34986  
[www.gracepacks.org](http://www.gracepacks.org)  
For additional ways to donate, please contact Treasurer,  
Debbie Welch, at [treasurer@gracepacks.org](mailto:treasurer@gracepacks.org).



# Grace Packs

A new school year is underway and Grace Packs volunteers are busily engaged in their program's mission. Grace Packs Inc. provides weekly weekend food to students who lack an ample food supply in over thirty St Lucie County schools. While at school, children have the opportunity to eat breakfast and lunch, but weekends can prove challenging for many local children whose families are struggling with food insecurity. With that in mind, Grace Packs Inc. seeks to provide breakfast, lunch, and dinner items each weekend for students in need. A 100% volunteer-run 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization, Grace Packs Inc. boasts many "community angels" to successfully bring much-needed food to our area's hungry children.

School staff in participating local schools serve as the first line of defense. It's all about the relationships; staff members know their children and families and are able to identify kids who are showing signs of hunger. Nominations are confidentially made by any staff member in a school for a child and his siblings to receive food for the weekend. After parent permission is gained, the school's Grace Packs team places orders each week with the program Orders and Delivery Coordinators to request Grace Packs for their nominated students.

Sunlight Community Church has generously donated pantry space to Grace Packs since 2017. Each Tuesday, church and community delivery volunteers pick up assembled Packs from the pantry and then transport the food to the schools. These "delivery friends" as they are affectionately called, use their own vehicles to transport the food. The children they are serving may never meet these special people, but their impact is felt each Friday when the children carry home their Grace Packs.

Other dedicated volunteers serve in the pantry, completing a host of jobs from checking in food, noting expiration dates, filling bins, and assembling hundreds of Packs weekly for hungry children.



Volunteers packaging grace packs.



The American Legion 318 Ladies Auxiliary continues to embrace our program through donations.

Pat Agricola serves as the "Leader of the Packs". As the Pantry Coordinator, she shares, "Since the pandemic, we found that we've had to become more resourceful in acquiring food to stock our pantry. In the past, we just placed large orders with the local supermarkets. However, with food shortages, we have not been able to do this on a regular basis; we've had to rely heavily on food donations from our community. Much of our food over the last two years has been provided by our local angels. They've really kept us going. With up to 540 Grace Packs distributed each week, I'm proud to say that we did not miss one week of being able to provide our children with food. This is a real testament to the caring people here. I have to say that there is no shortage of angels in St Lucie County."



Community friends from Vic's Picks Realty offered a wonderful food drive that helped us with our beginning of the year pantry needs.



**GRACE PACKS...**  
LOVE PROVIDES

This year, with changes in our economy and increases in food prices, the volunteers at Grace Packs anticipate an increase in students entering the program. With supply issues within supermarkets not completely resolved, Grace Packs Inc. welcomes food donations. Non-expired items such as oatmeal packs, breakfast bars, raisins, soups, mac and cheese, pastas, rice, beans, and peanut butter are wish list items. These child friendly foods are a blessing to hungry students. An initiative called The Peanut Butter Brigade has been a welcomed addition to the Grace Packs program, as 12 - 17 oz. jars of peanut butter provide protein for struggling children.



Community members or businesses' interested in making a food or financial donation, or anyone seeking volunteer opportunities may visit the website [gracepacks.org](http://gracepacks.org) or make an inquiry at [info@gracepacks.org](mailto:info@gracepacks.org).

# Grace Packs *Love Provides*



**A**s kids in St Lucie County return to school on August 10th after their short summer break, many may be excited about attending a new school, reuniting with friends they haven't seen for a while, getting out of the hot summer sun and back into an air-conditioned classroom, new school clothes and even the adventure of learning new things.

But there are also hundreds of kids excited about returning to school because they know that on Friday afternoons, they will be going home with a Grace Pack that contains enough breakfast, lunch, dinner and snack items to get them through the weekend. Each Grace Pack typically includes 2 breakfast items, 4 entrees, fruit, a drink, and snacks. With the current Projected Child Food Insecurity Rate for St Lucie County listed as 20.4%, many children need and will benefit from the extra support Grace Packs provide.



Grace Packs Incorporated is celebrating its tenth year of providing weekend nourishment to children who may be suffering from food insecurity. What began in the heart of two St Lucie Public School District employees at one school has developed into a well-organized, 100% volunteer run program serving over thirty schools and nearly six hundred children every week. During the 2020 / 2021 school year, a year that presented many logistical challenges as a result of Covid 19, Grace Packs Inc. was able

to deliver 11,252 bags of food to kids who might otherwise go without food for the weekend. School volunteers, "Gracies", then distributed the Packs each Friday to the children they had nominated for their program. As one school Gracie shared, "It is a bright light in my life to be able to ensure that we can provide our students with the nutrition that they need. I can only do this, thanks to Grace Packs. We have many students who would have nothing between lunch Friday and breakfast Monday. We cannot thank you enough for these resources; they truly change lives!"

**S**unlight Community Church has provided Grace Packs with a large pantry space at the rear of their building where volunteers gather every week to contribute in various ways including packing, sorting, stocking, delivering Packs to schools and many other tasks to ensure that food gets into the hands of kids on Friday afternoons.

Many other businesses, service organizations, community groups, churches and individuals assist Grace Packs with their mission through monthly donations, food contributions, packing parties, car washes or other beneficial activities. One such beneficial activity has been group collections of jars of peanut butter through Grace Packs' new initiative, The Peanut Butter Brigade.

Anyone interested in providing financial support to Grace Packs Inc. can do so by sending your donation to Grace Packs Inc., P.O. Box 881871, Port St. Lucie, FL 34988. Grace Packs Inc. is recognized as a 501 (c)(3) public charity. If you would like additional information on how to become involved through volunteering time, making food contributions or other activities, visit their website at [www.gracepacks.org](http://www.gracepacks.org) or contact them via their Facebook Page or email: [info@gracepacks.org](mailto:info@gracepacks.org).

### Grace Packs welcomes non-expired food items.

Suggested items include:

- Granola bars / Cereal bars
- Oatmeal packs
- Raisins
- Soups, stews, tuna
- Ramen Noodles / Vigo rice
- Chef Boyardee pastas / Mac & Cheese
- Crackers with cheese or peanut butter
- Jars of Peanut Butter (12 - 17 oz size)



*"What began in the heart of two St Lucie Public School District employees at one school has developed into a well-organized, 100% volunteer run program serving over thirty schools and nearly six hundred children every week."*

# Pandemic gives Grace Packs much food for thought

BY PATRICK McCALLISTER | Correspondent

Grace Packs has an unusual food-assistance model that counts on schools' participation.

That's presenting challenges in the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We no longer had access to our kids," said Laura Klosterman, director of Grace Packs. "What we've done – after much prayer – is give to the people we do have contact with."

Grace Packs is a hunger-prevention program that, as its name implies, gives children and youths meal packs to cover weekends when they don't have school cafeterias providing breakfasts and lunches. Usually food-assistance programs go through the parents approaching them to reach the children. Grace Packs goes to the children to reach the families. It does this by school personnel, called "gracies," watching for and nominating children and youths in need to receive the packs. That has spanned contact volunteers in more than 30 St. Lucie County schools and about 600 students getting meal packs a week.

It's hard to believe, but on a good week a fifth of St. Lucie children and youths are food insecure. Of course, St. Lucie isn't having good weeks at the moment. The novel coronavirus smashed into local life with the Florida Department of Health announcing on March 2 the disease it causes, COVID-19, was in the Sunshine State. On March 9, Gov. Ron DeSantis declared a state of emergency in all 67 counties. St. Lucie's children and youths started their spring breaks after March 13. During that time, schools closed for what has turned out to be a balance of the 2019-2020 school year. Grace Packs'

model crashed even as the need grew.

"St. Lucie Catholic (Church) raised food (in March)," Klosterman said. "We were going to pack it and send it to schools in April. That fell apart."

The not-for-profit uses space donated by Sunlight Community Church to store food and gather volunteers to pack weekend meals. Klosterman attends the St. Lucie West church, but Grace Packs is a stand-alone not-for-profit. It found itself with stocked shelves and closed schools.

But, Klosterman said, Grace Packs still had relationships. Local educators – gracies – still had some contact with their students. Gracies were hearing stories about homes running short on food. Grace Packs couldn't host its Wednesday packing time to send dozens to meal packs to schools on Fridays. But, it now had contact with families and their neighborhoods. It shifted from packs for and to children and youths, to giving lots of individual items to families.

"We gave to families who've found themselves in need," Klosterman said. "Many

had never been in need before. Then we opened it up to them to give to their neighbors. We did a drive-through day for them to pick up food for their neighbors."

Now the discussion is about schools reopening on Aug. 10. On June 11 DeSantis announced school reopening plans that include a \$475 million pot from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act for districts to draw from. Klosterman said Grace Packs is prayerfully waiting to see how a schools reopening shapes up for St. Lucie County to figure out how it will operate after August.

"We're going to have to find new ways to how we do things to bring food to kids," she said. "It's going to require engaging the community about the kids in need and how they can help."

What's certain is the days of dozens of volunteers standing shoulder-to-shoulder setting up students' meal packs are gone for the foreseeable future.

"We think we're going to be doing things in shifts, staggering days to make it safer for



Coordinator Wendy Stewart. PHOTO COURTESY OF GRACE PACKS

the volunteers," Klosterman said.

Still, Grace Packs will need volunteers, and food and cash donations. Its food bill has been about \$10,000 a month. Interested people can find out more about both donating and volunteering at [www.gracepacks.org](http://www.gracepacks.org). Klosterman said she's confident God will show Grace Packs the way.

"You have to color outside the lines and come up with ways to do this," she said. ■

## Solutions from Games Pages in June 12, 2020 Edition

7	9	5	6	3	1	8	4	2
6	4	8	5	7	2	9	3	1
2	3	1	9	8	4	5	7	6
3	8	9	1	5	7	6	2	4
5	7	6	4	2	9	1	8	3
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9	5	3	1	2	6	8	7	4
6	1	8	7	5	9	2	4	3
2	7	4	3	1	8	5	9	6
5	3	9	6	4	2	1	8	7

**ACROSS**

- 1 BARBER
- 5 QUEUE
- 9 HINDRANCE
- 10 TOT
- 11 RAY
- 12 ADVANTAGE
- 14 NIL
- 16 SKIMP
- 18 TIE
- 19 CAMEMBERT
- 21 CAP
- 22 OUR
- 23 SMALLBEER
- 25 SHYER
- 26 HOARSE

**DOWN**

- 2 ANNOY
- 3 BURSARS
- 4 RUN
- 5 QUEEN
- 6 EXTRACT
- 7 EXTREMESPORT
- 8 CHARINGCROSS
- 13 VOICE
- 15 LAMPREY
- 17 PATELLA
- 20 MISER
- 21 CRESS
- 24 ASH





**'PET' PROJECT AIDS SHELTER**

Elijah and Jordan Martin, 8 and 15, respectively, far left, pet the new family cat they adopted at the Save the Shelter event, hosted by the Humane Society of St. Lucie County, while Port St. Lucie Vice Mayor Shannon Martin, near left, shows off her newest kitten to Dee and Dan Wire. The event last Saturday raised money for the care of the animals in the shelter. ■

# Weekend meals for kids are in the bag, thanks to Grace Packs

BY PATRICK McCAULLISTER | Correspondent

It can be hard to believe, but there are children in St. Lucie County who look forward to Mondays, so they can eat enough again. Former educator Laura Klosterman, director of Grace Packs, said no child should go hungry just because it's the weekend.

"St. Lucie County, 21.3 percent of our kids are considered food insecure," she said. "That translates to 13,109 kids who do not know where their next meals are coming from."

Grace Packs is a hunger-prevention program that, as its name implies, gives school children meal packs to cover their weekends. "We purchase breakfast, lunch and dinner items and snacks," Klosterman said. The not-for-profit uses space donated by Sunlight Community Church to gather and pack weekend meals for the children who otherwise could go hungry. Klosterman attends the church, but Grace Packs is a standalone not-for-profit. It started after Lisa Ferrick and Klosterman heard local anti-hunger advocate Argee Walsh speak about a similar program to help food-insecure children.

"I really felt God calling me to do the same thing," Klosterman said. "Because I was a teacher at Oak Hammock (K-8 School) at the time, I thought I could start there. It was the coolest thing - I remember when I heard Argee speaking I felt God say, 'Laura you can do this. I'll help you.'"

Klosterman found out she wasn't the only one feeling divine inspiration to help ensure children had food on the weekends. The cafeteria manager at Oak Hammock did, too.

"(Ferrick) felt that same call, so we started at Oak Hammock together," Klosterman said. "That was in 2011."

"It started in a simple way: Teachers started donating to us, so we could feed a few kids we knew were hungry at Oak Hammock."

During the 2011-2012 school year the volunteers gave children at the school almost 700 packs of weekend food. Some-

one noticed and word got out. Area media started doing stories about the makeshift anti-hunger project. Someone at Morning-side Elementary School got in touch with Klosterman and Ferrick asking if they could expand to include some students at that school.

Things grew from there. Klosterman said. Schools with needs contacted her about students or organizations such as the Knights of Columbus Council #13042 offered help.

"All these people started helping," Klosterman said. "Then we were at Morning-side Elementary. Then we were at three schools, four schools."

Today, "we've just hit our 30th school that we're serving," Klosterman said.

She said on average, Grace Packs is now giving more than 500, approaching 600 at times, meal packs to St. Lucie County students weekly.



Local Girl Scouts recently pitched in to help pack weekend meals for St. Lucie County food-insecure students. ■

"We're usually spending \$10,000 a month for food," explained Klosterman.

In addition to individuals and local social-service organizations helping Grace Packs, it has received donations from businesses such as the Walmart Neighborhood Market in St. Lucie West.

Klosterman retired from education early in 2013 to dedicate herself full time to Grace Packs. But, the 39-year teacher isn't drawing a salary. Neither is anybody else, she said. Volunteers are always welcomed to just show up and pitch in. Klosterman said normally volunteers are preparing the students' packs Tuesday mornings from 9 a.m. to about noon, then again on Wednesdays starting around 11 a.m. The packing is done at the church, 477 SW Cashmere Blvd. in St. Lucie West.

"The best surprise for me has been seeing community members use their God-given talents and ideas and resources to join in this fight," Klosterman said. "That has been the best surprise. We can all make a difference. It doesn't matter how old we are."

Packing volunteers have been as young as 3. "We have a 94-year-old woman who comes

every Tuesday to help us," Klosterman said.

Of course, with a \$10,000 a month grocery bill, financial donations are always welcomed, too. Donations can be made at [www.gracepacks.org](http://www.gracepacks.org).

Hunger, sometimes, is closer than folks might think. Klosterman recently got a phone call from a staff member at St. Lucie West K-8 School. A student, the staff member said, was food insecure.

"She called and said, 'Laura can we put this child on immediately,'" Klosterman said. "Even in a quote unquote nice neighborhood, you still have people struggling. Definitely hungry is all over this county."

Grace Packs welcomes food requests for children from any employee at any school, or the school district, including bus drivers, teachers, janitors, principals and others. She said food-insecure children are often oddly left-handed.

"Some kids snafu or board food in the cafeteria," Klosterman said.

Other signs of food insecurity, she explained, are frequent requests for food from other students and cafeteria workers, or just plain honesty.

"They'll tell their teacher or other important person, 'I'm hungry,'" said Klosterman.

To contact Grace Packs to nominate children, donate, volunteer or request a speaker email [info@gracepacks.org](mailto:info@gracepacks.org). ■

**Solutions from Games Pages in December 6, 2019 Edition**

1 3 7 9 6 3 8 2 4 3	1 2 7 6 8 5 4 3 4	1 N E W	1 S I E
2 8 3 4 5 5 6 7 1	8 4 3 2 6 2 7 1 3	2 W E A	2 W E A
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6 2 7 1 4 9 8 3 5	7 9 3 6 2 7 4 8 1	4 T H A L A N D	4 B O W N
8 3 5 3 8 7 4 1 6	4 7 1 8 3 9 2 5 6	5 B E N	5 B R O W N
4 1 8 5 3 6 9 7 7	8 6 2 5 4 1 3 7 8	6 T O G E T H E R	6 T O G E T H E R
7 1 1 8 2 4 3 8 9	6 4 5 2 7 8 1 9 3	7 S E E	7 T O G E T H E R
8 9 4 7 6 5 1 5 2	2 3 9 3 5 4 8 4 7	8 G E E K	8 H A B I T
7 8 2 9 2 1 7 8 4	7 1 8 4 9 3 5 6 2	9 G E E K	9 O U T R A G E O U S
		10 P I N	10 T W I N A R E
		11 R I C K	11 G I R L
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		13 M A Y	13 M A Y
		14 M A Y	14 M A Y
		15 M A Y	15 M A Y
		16 M A Y	16 M A Y
		17 M A Y	17 M A Y
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		27 M A Y	27 M A Y
		28 M A Y	28 M A Y

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Attend Our Open House  
January 23

# Hundreds attend Eighth Annual Giving Concert

By: Donald Rodrigue Nov 27, 2019



f t e b

Competing activities/new venue led to smaller crowd at this year's concert dedicated to Grace Packs program

FORT PIERCE – Organizers lauded the success of the Eighth Annual Giving Concert held Oct. 17 despite a smaller crowd and fewer participating choruses due to a schedule change, conflicting events in the St. Lucie County District and the move this year to a new venue.

Dan McCarty Choral Director Rolanda Jones has organized the Giving Concert since its inception in 2011 and said approximately 400 spectators attended the event held for the first time in the Fort Pierce Central High School Auditorium. Numbers of spectators have topped 700 in past concerts held at Lincoln Park Academy, but Dr. Jones said this year's event lacked choruses that traditionally have performed in past concerts.

"The Giving Concert was held two weeks earlier due to District events," she said. "In addition, several choirs were not able to participate due to other school-related activities and commitments."

Even in its reduced form, this year's concert included performances by choruses from Allapattah Flats K-8, Dan McCarty Middle School, Forest Grove Middle School, Fort Pierce Central High School, Fort Pierce Westwood High School, Lincoln Park Academy and Port St. Lucie High School. Dr. Jones remains upbeat about both the turnout and participants, saying she knew from the beginning the Giving Concert would be an annual event due to community support for the arts and a desire to help the less fortunate. Admission to the concerts is a non-perishable food item destined for Grace Packs, a weekly weekend backpack program that provides necessary food items to St. Lucie County students in need.

"The audience is very responsive to the many diverse songs that are performed at the Giving Concert and the students enjoy sharing their musical talent while supporting families in need," she exclaimed. "The students are aware that all of the food donations go directly back into our community through the Grace Packs program. For many St. Lucie Public School children – including many who actually performed in the concert – the breakfasts and lunches they eat at school are the only meals they can count on."

This year's concert did have some highlights for the event founder, which included first-time performances from two school choruses she labeled as "outstanding."

"They were the Dan McCarty Men of Note, which is a new choral group consisting of all seventh- and eighth-grade boys," she explained. "They performed Come Sail Away and Jack Was Every Inch A Sailor, (the latter) featuring a select group of soloists singing the comical retelling of the [Biblical] Jonah tale with a Newfoundland whaler as protagonist. In addition, the West Gate Middle School Choir under the direction of Zachary Maes and James Lebon participated in their first performance in the Giving Concert."

As the St. Lucie County School District's Liaison for the Arts, Assistant to the Superintendent Kevin Perry has worked alongside Dr. Jones to promote the Giving Concerts since the beginning and has watched the growing awareness among both the students who perform and the concertgoers in the community of the problem of weekend hunger.

"The interest in performing by our students continues to increase as they realize that some of their peers are food insecure, so they could very well be helping one of their friends or fellow chorus members," he said. "I think our individual schools along with this concert have truly increased their awareness and understanding of the food insecurity in our county and how it affects students and their ability to learn and do their best."

For Dr. Perry, the highlight of each concert is the mass choir performance at the end, when all the participating choruses join their voices in song. They culminated this year's concert with a mass rendition of God Bless America.

"To see all of the high-school and middle-school students join together to make one choir that totals about 250 voices is amazing," he exclaimed. "To hear their song of hope and inspiration and witness the smiles and sincerity on their face is truly heartwarming."

Laura Klosterman, a former St. Lucie County teacher, said she "led by God" to launch the not-for-profit Grace Packs program in 2011 after seeing children "coming to school sick on Mondays" due to insufficient food over the weekend. Although unable to attend this year's concert due to a visit to the Holy Land, Ms. Klosterman expressed her gratitude to the organizers, participants and the attendees for their generosity.

"We are so very grateful that we were chosen as the food recipients again this year," she said via email from Israel. "It shows how students can use their God-given talents to make a difference for their hungry peers."

Dr. Jones said that as of last year, "over 5,500 pounds of food" had been donated at Giving Concerts since 2011. Ms. Klosterman and her team of volunteers have been busy expanding the Grace Packs program to reach even more children over the ensuing years.

"Currently, we are humbled and blessed to be in 29 local schools," the latter explained in the email. "As the school year ended in June, we were feeding 702 students every weekend. Each new school year we begin new rosters when nominations from school staff come in. We are currently feeding close to 400 students each weekend."

As a former band director, Dr. Perry said he understands the importance of the arts in the development of well-rounded students.

"When our students sing, they offer the gift of music," he emphasized. "Our audiences offer a non-perishable item, and together through song and those items will make a happier, healthier community."

[https://www.hometownnewstc.com/news/hundreds-attend-eighth-annual-giving-concert/article\\_be3fad6e-1080-11ea-86b2-db25f5f5220b.html](https://www.hometownnewstc.com/news/hundreds-attend-eighth-annual-giving-concert/article_be3fad6e-1080-11ea-86b2-db25f5f5220b.html)

# Walmart donates \$10,000 to St. Lucie County insecurity nonprofit, Grace Packs

Catie Wegman, Treasure Coast Newspapers Published 5:07 p.m. ET Nov. 13, 2019



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For at least four weekends, nearly 500 children won't go hungry in St. Lucie County.

That's because Grace Packs received a record \$10,000 donation Wednesday that will allow the nonprofit to make at least 2,000 meals, with each costing between \$3.50 to \$5.

Those meals will go home each Friday with "food-insecure" students — those who don't know where their next meal will come from — to ensure they get enough to eat on weekends. The packs include soup, pasta, oatmeal, granola bars and apple juice.

"We just know that this money will go toward purchasing so much food and drinks for these kids, and we're grateful for the opportunity to get the word out that there is an issue of child hunger in this community," said [Grace Packs Director Laura Klosterman](#).

## Food insecurity

At the beginning of each new year, the staff at 29 public schools nominate students for the Grace Packs program, looking for warning signs of hunger such as depression, frequent stomach and headaches, and even stealing food from the cafeteria.

Grace Packs, which launched nine years ago at Oak Hammock K-8 in Port St. Lucie, eventually hopes to expand into all 44 public schools to help feed even more of the county's estimated 13,000 food-insecure children.

More: [Nearly 100,000 people go hungry on Treasure Coast](#)

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Though she was a teacher for over 30 years, Klosterman said she didn't realize how prevalent food insecurity was until she quit her job to launch Grace Packs full-time.

"When we started, we never thought it would go beyond the walls of Oak Hammock," Klosterman said. "And this has just been the best surprise."

Grace Packs is kept afloat by myriad grants, donations, fundraising campaigns from corporations such as Publix, local businesses such as Rick's Diner and civic clubs such as the Elks, as well as events such as the long-running Giving Concert.

## Walmart charity



Savannah Clements and Angela Smith pack food items for Grace Packs. (Photo: submitted)

The donation came from Walmart, thanks to Heather Gunnell, manager of the Neighborhood Market on St. Lucie West Boulevard. She, along with eight associates, has been volunteering with Grace Packs at least once a month for two years.

Gunnell was one of the 25 worldwide winners of the Walmart Associate Challenge, an initiative to spark random acts of kindness throughout communities. The surprise announcement was made during an event at her store Wednesday morning.

ADVERTISEMENT

"It feels surreal," Klosterman said, unable to hold back tears when she was unexpectedly awarded a \$10,000 check. "We've never received a grant this size."

Gunnell said her experience with Grace Packs has been "truly amazing."

<https://www.tcpalm.com/story/new/local/st-lucie-county/2019/11/13/walmart-donates-st-lucie-food-insecurity-nonprofit-grace-packs/2561166001>



Every year the Port St. Lucie Business Women awards thousands of dollars in grants from money raised in the organization's annual spring Fashion Show. The Community Action & Grants Committee of the Port St. Lucie Business Women is charged with the responsibility to consider projects in which to recommend providing financial grants. In keeping with the mission of the Port St. Lucie Business Women, all projects chosen must have a primary focus on programs benefiting women or children. Congratulations to our 2019-2020 Grant Recipients! Tykes & Teens, Sarah's Kitchen of the Treasure Coast, Inc., Inner Truth Project, Friends In Pink, Grace Packs, GraceWay Village, and Council on Aging of St. Lucie, Inc.



# Local diner hosts food drive to help SLC children

Sabrina Spangler, Special to TCPalm

Published 9:39 p.m. ET Dec. 17, 2018 | Updated 1:55 p.m. ET Dec. 18, 2018



(Photo: CONTRIBUTED BY SHEILA YOUNG)



PORT ST. LUCIE — Rick's Diner and Brady Young, of Port St. Lucie, are collecting food items that will benefit the children of St. Lucie County.

The main request is for protein items such as peanut butter, tuna fish, and Chef Boyardee-type canned meals. Easy open cans are preferred but not required.

These items will be contributed to Grace Packs' food pantry. The food will then be distributed to schools in St. Lucie County. Grace Packs is a local organization that provides "weekly weekend food for students who lack an ample food supply."

Each year, the Grace Packs' pantry and the school pantries are in need of extra food items to cover the extended holiday breaks.

Visit [www.GracePacks.org](http://www.GracePacks.org) to learn more about its mission. Food donations can be dropped off to Rick's Diner, at its new location, 466 SW Port St Lucie Blvd, Suite 301, in the CocoVista Plaza.

Food donations will be accepted at this location until the end of this year.



## MORE STORIES



**Men's homeless shelter to open in Fort Pierce**

Dec. 27, 2018, 2:59 p.m.

<https://www.tcpalm.com/story/specialty-publications/your-news/st-lucie-county/reader-submitted/2018/12/17/local-diner-hosts-food-drive-help-slc-children/2344944002>

# Annual Giving Concert to benefit St. Lucie County students through Grace Packs

Kerry Padrick, Special to TCPalm

Published 4:19 p.m. ET Oct. 15, 2018



(Photo: CONTRIBUTED BY GRACE PACKS)



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ST. LUCIE COUNTY – The seventh annual Giving Concert is planned for Thursday, Oct. 25 at Lincoln Park Academy Auditorium, 1806 Ave. I in Fort Pierce.

The doors will open to the public at 6:30 p.m. and the concert, featuring area choral groups, will begin at

7 p.m.

The event, sponsored by St. Lucie Public Schools and organized by Choral Director Dr. Rolanda Jones, will benefit Grace Packs, which is a weekly weekend back pack program that provides necessary food items to students in need.

Admission to the concert is a non-perishable food item (Chef Boyardee products are suggested) donation.

The concert will feature choruses from Allapattah Flats K-8, Dan McCarty Middle School, Forest Grove Middle School, Fort Pierce Central High School, Fort Pierce Westwood High School, Lincoln Park Academy, Port St. Lucie High School, and St. Lucie West Centennial High School.

For more information on the Giving Concert, contact Dr. Rolanda Jones at [Rolanda.jones@stlucieschools.org](mailto:Rolanda.jones@stlucieschools.org).

<https://www.tcpalm.com/story/specialty-publications/your-news/st-lucie-county/reader-submitted/2018/10/15/annual-giving-concert-benefit-st-lucie-county-students-through-grace-packs/1651722002>

# Grace Packs gets grant, support from Publix Charities, St. Lucie West Elks

1/9/18

Laura Klosterman, For Luminaries Published 8:48 p.m. ET Jan. 9, 2018



(Photo: Provided by Grace Packs Inc./For Luminaries)



The mission and joy of Grace Packs Inc. is to provide weekly weekend food for children who lack an ample food supply, relieving the burden many of these children endure by being hungry.

Publix Super Markets Charities recently offered tremendous support to Grace Packs' efforts by

awarding it a \$5,000 grant.

The grant has allowed the organization to buy food for students in 24 schools in St. Lucie County. The goal throughout the school year is to furnish breakfast, lunch, and dinner items at the end of each week to students who may be suffering from food insecurity. As a 100 percent volunteer-led program, Grace Packs is grateful for the support from Publix Super Markets Charities.

## Elks also help Grace Packs

St. Lucie West Elks Lodge No. 2823 members hosted their annual Christmas party for Grace Packs families from Oak Hammock and West Gate Schools. While music filled the air, children and their families were treated to a delicious meal, wrapped presents, knitted hats, and handmade toys.

Elks and Elkettes have offered tremendous support to students struggling with food insecurity with generous donations to Grace Packs, delivering food and helping pack Grace Packs. The lodge has provided summer boxes of food and sent students to summer camp.

The Christmas party offers an end-of-year blessing to families from two participating Grace Packs schools.

Community members seeking to learn more about the Grace Packs program or to offer support can find more information on the website, [www.gracepacks.org](http://www.gracepacks.org).



FROM THE USA TODAY NETWORK

<https://www.tcpalm.com/story/specialty-publications/luminaries/st-lucie-county/2018/01/09/grace-packs-gets-grant-support-publix-charities-st-lucie-west-elks/1019315001>

# Every day, hunger follows kids around at school, on the playground and wherever they may go.

The mission and joy of Grace Packs Inc. is to provide weekly weekend food for students who lack an ample food supply, relieving the burden many of these children endure by being hungry.

## Did you know?

- On the Treasure Coast, 23.3% of our children are food insecure; this translates to 28,280 kids not knowing from where their next meal will come.



Research is based on "Map The Meal Gap 2017: Food Insecurity and Child Food Insecurity estimates at the County Level," supported by the Howard G. Buffett Foundation and the Nielsen Company.



- In St. Lucie County, 23.5% of children are considered food insecure. These 14,000 children represent the largest number of children in need on the Treasure Coast.

Our goal is to furnish breakfast, lunch, dinner and snack items at the end of each school week to students who may be suffering from food insecurity.

We are welcoming volunteers on Tuesdays and Wednesdays that would like to support our hungry children by packing and

even delivering Grace Packs to our participating schools. Interested individuals can contact me at [director@gracepacks.org](mailto:director@gracepacks.org) for more information.

God is continuing to bless us and is helping us expand. We now have a central pantry, which is located at Sunlight Community Church (located at 477 SW Cashmere Blvd. Port St Lucie, 34986).

Please join us on December 6th at our *Quarter Auction* to support Grace Packs. Contact us for details.



## Wishes granted: Port St. Lucie Business Women present grants to non-profits

Dorothy Kamm, YourNews contributor Published 3:49 p.m. ET Oct. 9, 2017



(Photo: CONTRIBUTED BY DIANE GALLAGHER/DSG DESIGNS & PHOTOGRAPHY)



PORT ST. LUCIE — Every year, the Port St. Lucie Business Women awards grants from money raised in the organization's annual spring Luncheon and Fashion Show.

This year, the group surpassed fundraising goals.

At its October meeting, the Community Action Grants committee presented \$8,000 in awards to nine

Treasure Coast non-profit organizations that benefit local women and children.

- Council On Aging of St. Lucie Inc. — \$1,500. Meals on Wheels delivers meals to homebound St. Lucie County residents 60 and older, especially those with the greatest economic and social need.
- Grace Packs Inc. — \$1,000. Weekend meals for children program will furnish two breakfasts, lunch, dinner and snack items at the end of each school week to carry children through the weekend.
- HANDS of St. Lucie County — \$500. Chronic disease diagnostic testing for female patients suspected of having heart disease or cancer, two of the three leading causes of death for women.
- Hibiscus Children's Center — \$1,500. Sanctuary4Kids program serves as a temporary location for abused, neglected and abandoned children to wait while investigators find a safe placement.
- The Inner Truth Project — \$250. Experiential Education Therapy teaches women who have experienced sexual trauma how to overcome difficult situations and gain valuable personal insights.
- Learn to Read of St. Lucie County — \$500. Family Literacy program.
- Mind & Melody — \$750. Innovative music programs for older adults with neurological impairment.
- SafeSpace — \$500. Food Pantry at its Emergency Shelter to offer nonperishable



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<https://www.tcpalm.com/story/specialty-publications/your-news/st-lucie-county/reader-submitted/2017/10/09/wishes-granted-port-st-lucie-business-women-present-grants-non-profits/745986001/>



## SLPS Donates to Grace Packs

On behalf of the SLPS District Office Events Committee, \$500 was donated to Grace Packs. Laura Klosterman and Lisa Ferrick from Grace Packs accepted the gift on behalf of the nonprofit organization that provides students and their families with weekend food source packages.



March 13, 2017 School News By Kerry Padrick



Grace Packs is an organization serving St. Lucie County that provides weekly weekend food for students who lack an ample food supply. Currently, Grace Packs provides service to 20 schools in St. Lucie County, thus relieving the burden many children endure by being hungry.

This past weekend, Grace Packs and St. Lucie Public Schools volunteers supported the Pan Florida Challenge — a two-day, 180 mile bike ride to end kids' hunger — one meal at a time. The ride started in Naples on March 11th and ended in Fort Pierce on March 12.

<http://lucielink.stlucie.k12.fl.us/grace-packs-and-pan-florida-challenge/>



## Mariposa Teachers Recognized for Their Work with Grace Packs

January 6, 2017 School News By WENDY MUNAO



Michelle Smith and Jenifer Scipioni were recently recognized by PNC Bank for their dedication and service to the students at Mariposa. Mrs. Smith initiated involvement with Grace Packs a few years ago and has been instrumental in continued support of this outstanding program. Grace Packs is designed to help students who are in need of food support. Every Friday, food items are sent home with identified children to augment the food available to them at home. Mrs. Scipioni has taken on the weekly logistical responsibility of this program and has even elicited help from a local Girl Scout troop in assembling the food items to go home each week. We are very proud of Mrs. Scipioni and Mrs. Smith!

<http://lucielink.stlucie.k12.fl.us/mariposa-teachers-recognized-for-their-work-with-grace-packs/>



St. Lucie Public Schools

2 hrs · 🌐

Grace Packs Donations Support Students

What started out as a small packing party for approximately 150 meals to support students and families in need turned into a holiday wish-come-true as donations poured in to accommodate over 300 meals. The St. Lucie Public Schools District Office Events Committee in conjunction with Grace Packs, Pan Florida Challenge for Hungry Kids, and St. Lucie County Fire District packed over 4,000 pounds of food into weekend packs on Tuesday in preparation for deliveries prior to the holiday break.

"Each year our Grace Packs December food drive campaign provides a boost for the Organization's ability to support students; however, the need to meet the basic nutritional requirements of our students stretches beyond the 'giving season.' Student hunger hampers student learning. We want to remove barriers to help our students succeed, and Grace Packs helps us do that," said Superintendent E. Wayne Gent.

Grace Packs is a nonprofit organization that provides students and their families with weekend food source packages. The program began in 2011 at Oak Hammock K – 8 School, and it now serves 18 schools. Grace Packs Organization exists through the support of schools and local community organizations. To learn more about Grace Packs, visit [www.gracepacks.org](http://www.gracepacks.org).



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# Schools hold annual Giving Concert

Concert raising donations for hungry students draws hundreds to Lincoln Park Academy

By Donald Rodrigue  
For Hometown News

FORT PIERCE -- More than 700 guests crowded into the auditorium at Lincoln Park Academy Oct. 26 to listen to the performances of local school choruses performing in the Fifth Annual Giving Concert to benefit the Grace Packs weekend food program.

Approximately 275 students sang in the choruses representing Dan McCarty and Forest Grove middle schools, Fort Pierce Central and Westwood high schools, Lincoln Park Academy and Allapattah Flats and Samuel S. Gaines Academy K-8 schools. Dan McCarty Choral Director Rolanda Jones has organized the Giving Concert since the first concert in 2011 and said the annual event has evolved significantly over the years. The participation of Samuel Gaines students represents one of the newest additions since that school recently incorporated music into its curriculum.

"The Giving Concert has become a major event that the community and students look forward to attending," she said. "There is an increased awareness of the importance of the arts and how it can ben-

efit all students."

Dr. Kevin Perry, assistant to St. Lucie Schools Superintendent E. Wayne Gent, reminded guests Oct. 26 of the significance of the donations, which serve as their admission tickets.

"In St. Lucie County, 27.8 percent of our children are facing food insecurity," he emphasized. "Your gift will benefit 'Grace Packs,' which is a weekly weekend backpack program that provides necessary food items to St. Lucie County students in need. To you it may just be a can of food, but to others, it is so much more."

Laura Klosterman, a former St. Lucie County teacher and president and founder of the not-for-profit Grace Packs program, said she felt led by God to launch the program in 2011 after seeing children "coming to school sick on Mondays" due to insufficient food over the weekend.

"Some were hoarding food in the cafeteria," she said. "Others shared with staff members that they were hungry."

The Giving Concert series was founded in 2011 as the first regularly scheduled school event to help provide non-perishable food items for the program, which has since grown to serve nearly 500 students at 17 District schools.



Photographer: Craig Jerome

The Fort Pierce Central High School Chorus performing under the direction of Shannon Arnold during the Oct. 26 Giving Concert.

"As the year progresses, we are adding more children to our Grace Packs rosters in each of our schools," Ms. Klosterman added. "Currently, we are serving approximately 450 students. We are thrilled that distribution began Nov. 4 at Centennial High School, our first high school."

Dan McCarty Middle School teacher Danielle Morningstar has helped organize the donations in the past and said this was her third year to attend the Giving Con-

cert.

"Every year it has been such a blessing to the different pantries," she said. "I think it is amazing having the ability to make such great connections with the students, and the rapport that I have been able to build because of Grace Packs is so rewarding."

Port St. Lucie resident Jewel Edwards

See CONCERT, page 9

# Quarters Auction to Support Grace Packs



*A Non-profit (501c3)  
Organization*

The mission and joy of Grace Packs, Inc. is to provide weekly weekend food for students who lack an ample food supply, relieving the burden many of these children endure by being hungry. Our goal is to furnish breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snack items at the end of each school week to students who may be suffering from food insecurity.

**Wednesday, November 16, 2016 • 6pm-9pm**

**Sons of Italy Lodge #2594**

**765 SW Dalton Circle, Port St. Lucie, FL 34953**

- Paddles: \$1 each
- 50/50: \$5 for 10 tickets
- We are accepting food donations at the auction!!!  
FREE Drawing for all guests making food donations.
- Cash Bar
- Hot Meals starting at \$6 available from Sons of Italy
- Community Volunteer Opportunities!  
*16 and up only.*

If you are unable to attend and want to donate go to:  
[www.gracepacks.org](http://www.gracepacks.org)

Patti Becker - *Auction Coordinator (772)370-8043*  
Karen DiGiovanni - *Sons of Italy Charity Coordinator*  
Laura Klosterman, Director - *Grace Packs, Inc.*



Suggested non-expired food items:

- Granola bars/Cereal bars
- Oatmeal packs
- Applesauce or Fruit cups
- Canned vegetables
- Soups or Stews
- Juice pouches
- Pastas (*Spaghetti, Ravioli, Mac and Cheese, etc.*)
- Ramen noodles
- Rice
- Peanut Butter
- Crackers with Cheese or Peanut Butter

*\*For the safety of our children, we respectfully request no glass containers.*

If you are unable to attend and want to donate go to:  
[www.gracepacks.org](http://www.gracepacks.org) Please contact the appropriate Grace Packs Coordinator, Gracie, for the school you would like to



[oakhammock@gracepacks.org](mailto:oakhammock@gracepacks.org)  
[morningside@gracepacks.org](mailto:morningside@gracepacks.org)  
[westgate@gracepacks.org](mailto:westgate@gracepacks.org)  
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[dalecassens@gracepacks.org](mailto:dalecassens@gracepacks.org)

*For all other inquiries, please email: [info@gracepacks.org](mailto:info@gracepacks.org)*



## GRACE PACKS... LOVE PROVIDES

"As school begins, we are seeking to begin the process of filling each of our Grace Packs schools' pantries and letting our community know the need and how helpful they can be!"

*Laura Klosterman*

### "THE FACE OF HUNGER"

The current child food insecurity statistics for St Lucie County reveal that 26.1% of our children (or 15,970 kids) do not know from where their next meal will come. This research is based on "Map the Meal Gap 2016: Food Insecurity and Child Food Insecurity Estimates at the County Level", supported by the Howard G Buffett Foundation and The Nielson Company.

The mission and joy of Grace Packs, Inc. is to provide weekly weekend food for students

who lack an ample food supply, relieving the burden many of these children endure by being hungry.

Our goal is to furnish breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snack items at the end of each school week to students who may be suffering from food insecurity.

We are pleased that our program continues to grow, and we are currently assisting students affected by hunger in fifteen schools.

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**Get *Personally* Involved • Get Your *Church* Involved • Get Your *Organization* Involved**

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Visit [GracePacks.org](http://GracePacks.org) for more information and assistance. PayPal account provided for those interested in donating.

*Grace Packs founded 2011 by Lisa Ferrick and Laura Klosterman*

[https://issuu.com/betterlivingmag/docs/final\\_summer\\_fall\\_2016/30](https://issuu.com/betterlivingmag/docs/final_summer_fall_2016/30)

## Knights of Columbus Supports Mariposa Elementary's Grace Packs

April 29, 2016 Post to District Site, School News By WENDY MUNAO



The Knights of Columbus Council #12159, from Holy Family Catholic Church, had fundraising events to raise money for Mariposa Elementary's Grace Packs Program. The Grace Packs mission is to provide weekly food packages for students in need. The men hosted four fish bakes, welcoming many from the church and community to a delicious meal; their wives baked homemade desserts and accepted extra donations to raise \$1,000 to support children who need food at Mariposa Elementary. Bill Kicker, one of the Knights, said they feel like it is their mission to partner with Mariposa Elementary to feed hungry children. Knights, Bill Kicker, Fred Daniels, and Fred Bradley presented the \$1000 donation to Principal Craig R. Logue. Holy Family's Women's Guild has also contributed to the program, which gives 40 students non-perishable foods every weekend. The Mariposa Grace Packs Team includes cafeteria manager Fred Buchholz, Science/Art Teacher Carla Bargeron, 4th Grade Teacher Jennifer Scipioni, and 2nd Grade teacher Michelle Smith; we are so thankful for the partnership with Holy Family Catholic Church and the Knights of Columbus!

<http://lucielink.stlucie.k12.fl.us/knights-of-columbus-supports-mariposa-elementarys-grace-packs/>

## Donation to "Grace Packs" by a Student at Palm Pointe

April 13, 2016 School News By Roberta Farrell



Isabella Sierra, kindergartner at Palm Pointe Educational Research School @ Tradition, collected over 400 food items for her sixth birthday party instead of gifts for herself. The items were donated to the school's "Grace Packs" program.

This program helps provide weekly weekend food for students who lack an ample food supply, relieving the burden many of these children endure by being hungry. She is a role model student and example that love provides. A huge thank you to this generous student!

Pictured from left is Isabella Sierra, Jennifer Gomez, Grace Packs Coordinator and Assistant Principal, Kathleen Perez.

<http://lucielink.stlucie.k12.fl.us/donation-to-grace-packs-by-a-student-at-palm-pointe/>

## West St. Lucie Elks host party for Grace Pack students



Provided by Laura Klosterman

The West St. Lucie Elks Lodge #2823 hosted a Christmas dinner for Grace Packs children from Oak Hammock and West Gate K-8 Schools. The children were delighted with a special visit from Mrs. Claus, Santa and a Merry Elf -- aka Marge Huntsberry, Mickey Sclafani and Vanessa Murtagh. For the past four years, the West St. Lucie Elks and Elkettes have generously supported Grace Packs, a nonprofit that ensures backpacks filled with weekend food supplies for students in 11 district schools. The party was just one of many ways the members show they care about this community

<http://www.tcpalm.com/specialty-publications/luminaries/st-lucie-county/west-st-lucie-elks-host-party-for-grace-pack-students-ep-865817835-341261311.html>



St. Lucie Public Schools is partnering with Grace Packs Organization to fill donation boxes to the brim with nonperishable food items such as peanut butter, oatmeal, cereal, canned goods, and more. These food items contribute to help meet an essential need of many students and their families in St. Lucie County who are food insecure which means they do not know where their next meal is coming from.

“Our food drive campaign in December provides a boost for the Organization’s ability to support students; however, the need to meet the basic nutritional requirements of our students stretches beyond the ‘giving season.’ Student hunger hampers student learning. We want to remove barriers to help our students succeed, and Grace Packs helps us do that,” said Superintendent E. Wayne Gent.

Grace Packs is a nonprofit organization that provides students and their families with weekend food source packages. The need is great as a recent Child Food Insecurity study shows that one in four students in St. Lucie County suffers from hunger. The program began in 2011 at Oak Hammock K – 8 School with over 600 Grace Packs distributed. The following year, the program expanded and more than doubled its distribution benefit. Today, Grace Packs Organization serves students and their families in many schools throughout St. Lucie County during the course of the year.

Grace Packs Organization exists through the support of schools and local community organizations. To learn more about Grace Packs, visit [www.gracepacks.org](http://www.gracepacks.org).

<http://portstlucie.macaronikid.com/article/1126416/grace-pack-boxes-are-filled-to-help-meet-students-needs>

# St. Lucie



## PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The mission of St. Lucie Public Schools is to ensure all students graduate from safe and caring schools, equipped with the knowledge, skills and desire to succeed.

**St. Lucie Public Schools** Grace Pack Boxes are filled with nonperishable food item contributions to help meet an essential need of many students and their families in St. Lucie County who are food insecure which means they do not know where their next meal is coming from.



<https://www.linkedin.com/company/st-lucie-public-schools>

# Giving Concert deemed a success

## Oct. 28 event raised food items for Grace Packs program

By Donald Rodrigue  
For Hometown News

FORT PIERCE — More than a thousand area residents watched students from several St. Lucie County schools sing with their school choruses in the Fort Pierce Central High School auditorium Oct. 28 to help raise food items and create awareness about weekend hunger among their less-fortunate classmates.

The choruses and choir directors from Allapattah Flats K-8, Dan McCarty and Forest Grove middle schools, Fort Pierce Central and Westwood high schools, Lincoln Park Academy, Northport K-8 and St. Lucie West Centennial High School all performed under the guidance of Dan McCarty Choral director Rolanda Jones, who has organized the event since its inception. Each of the groups performed both separately and in unison at the concert to express their support for the Grace Packs weekend food program, which sends home food packages to qualified children every Friday afternoon.

"It is with this idea that led me to organize the Giving Concert as a tool to nourish the hearts, minds and bodies of our community," Ms. Jones said. "All

songs performed were a true representation of love, unity, peace and community."

After the performance, Dan McCarty Middle School teacher Danielle Morningstar said she and Grace Packs Vice-President Lisa Ferrick counted more than a thousand food staples brought in that night as the admission price to the concert.

"We counted 988 non-perishable food items," she said. "Lisa shared an additional 100 or so with White City Elementary School, and a Fort Pierce Central High school teacher still has many cans that were donated by her students and families."

Ms. Morningstar says her volunteer work with the Grace Packs program is even helping her to become a better teacher.

"I make connections and build relationships with the students, and that is a huge part of working with and teaching them," she said.

Laura Klosterman, the president and founder of the nonprofit Grace Packs program, said she even had a donation come in as a result of *Hometown News* media coverage before the event.

"A local businessman pledged a generous donation this month to our newest school to help support their children," she said, referring to the launching of Dan McCarty Middle School's Grace Packs food bank. "Then, he shared that he wished to adopt this school for the remainder of the school

"When I arrived I saw boxes being filled with food, and I know that means a child will have something to eat and they will feel the support that comes along with participating in the Grace Packs program."

**Laura Klosterman**  
President and founder of Grace Packs program

year to support their hungry little ones in our program."

The other schools participating in the Grace Packs program are Allapattah Flats K-8, Lakewood Park, Mariposa and Morningside elementary schools, and Oak Hammock and West Gate K-8 schools. Lakewood Park Principal Dianne Young says her school has participated in the Grace Packs program for three years, but this was her first time to attend a Giving Concert.

"It was uplifting to see all of the talent our students have and how they are growing in their ability to perform," she said. "In addition, when I arrived I saw boxes being filled with food, and I know that means a child will have something to eat and they will feel the support that comes along with participating in the Grace Packs program."

Ms. Klosterman, who says she felt led by God to launch the program in 2011, recently saw the concert broadcast on the St. Lucie Educational Channel and said one particular spiritual piece really made an impact on her.

"I was so pleased when I saw teacher Shannon Arnold from Fort Pierce Central High School and her group," she said. "One of her selections was 'Let Everything That Hath Breath Praise the Lord' from Psalms 150:6. Now, my husband and I were the ones getting blessed!"

Ms. Young says she is "extremely thankful for Laura Klosterman and her team" and has seen a significant change in some students since they began participating in the Grace Packs program.

"We used to have students arrive at school on Monday mornings and were running frantically to breakfast, in a bad mood and at times willing to push others aside to get to the food," she said. "With Grace Packs in place, students are not frantic, but know that breakfast is waiting on them. The Monday morning start for the week is much smoother for these students."

For more information on the Grace Packs program, visit the website at [www.gracepacks.org](http://www.gracepacks.org).

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## ST. LUCIE COUNTY YOURNEWS

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### Giving Concert is Oct. 29

By Dr. Kevin Perry

Posted: Oct. 15, 2014

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0

FORT PIERCE ? The third annual Giving Concert is planned for Oct. 29 at 7:00 p.m. at the Lincoln Park Academy Auditorium located at 1806 Avenue I in Fort Pierce.

The event, sponsored by the St. Lucie Public Schools and organized by Dan McCarty Middle School choral director Dr. Rolanda Jones, will benefit "Grace Packs," which is a weekly weekend backpack program that provides necessary food items to St. Lucie County students in need.

Admission to the concert is a non-perishable food item to be donated to this organization.

The concert will feature choruses from Allapattah Flats K-8 School, Dan McCarty Middle School, Fort Pierce Central High School, Fort Pierce Magnet SOTA, Fort Pierce Westwood High School, Lincoln Park Academy, Northport K-8 School, Southport Middle School and St. Lucie West Centennial High School.

TOP



#### MORE YOURNEWS

More remembrance bricks installed

Free Thanksgiving meal at First Church of God

Welcome holidays at Tree of Lights

'Sebastian History on a Tree' at library

EL-DOEs holds Toys for Tots dinner-dance

#### NOW TRENDING

Report: Proposed composting site could contaminate canals, degrade environment

<http://www.tcpalm.com/yournews/st-lucie-county/giving-concert-is-oct-29-ep-678469284-341403201.html>



## The Giving Concert Benefits Students

ST. LUCIE COUNTY – The fourth annual Giving Concert is planned for October 28th at Fort Pierce Central High School in the auditorium located at 4101 S. 25th Street in Fort Pierce. The doors will open to the general public at 6:30 p.m. and the concert boasting area choral groups will begin at 7:00 p.m.

The event, sponsored by St. Lucie Public Schools and organized by choral director, Dr. Rolanda Jones, will benefit *Grace Packs* which is a weekly weekend backpack program that provides necessary food items to students in need.

Admission to the concert is a non-perishable food item that will be donated to *Grace Packs*.

The concert will feature choruses from Allapattah Flats K-8, Dan McCarty Middle School, Forest Grove Middle School, Fort Pierce Central High School, Fort Pierce Westwood High School, Lincoln Park Academy, Northport K-8 School, and St. Lucie West Centennial High School.

<http://lucielink.stlucie.k12.fl.us/the-giving-concert-benefits-students-2/>

## Community action grants presented to local non-profits

BY: Dorothy Kamm

POSTED: 6:46 AM, Aug 31, 2015

TAG: luminaries | st lucie county



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Every year the Port St. Lucie Business Women awards grants from money raised in the organization's annual spring Luncheon and Fashion Show.

The Port St. Lucie Business Women Community Action Grants committee presented awards totaling more than \$9,000 to seven Treasure Coast nonprofit organizations that benefit women and children in our community at their August 20 meeting.

Council On Aging of St. Lucie, Inc. received \$1,500 for its Meals on Wheels program. Meals on Wheels delivers meals to homebound St. Lucie County residents 60 and older, especially those with the greatest economic and social need.

Grace Packs, Inc. received \$1,500 for their program that provides weekly weekend meals to children. In St. Lucie County one in four children are food insecure, meaning that they lack not only having enough food, but they also do not know from where their next meal will come. Grace Packs is a program whose goal is to provide breakfast, lunch and dinner food items at the end of each school week to students whose families are food insecure.

Inner Truth Project received a grant of \$1,458 for its "Be Your Own Hero" therapist-led program that uses a step-by-step guide to help women who have lived through sexual violence move from victim to survivor to a place of thriving. This weekly course requires a yearlong commitment.

The Inner Truth Project offers services to adult survivors of sexual violence, allowing them to bravely share the truth about their experiences in a safe environment to actualize emotional strength, hope, health and well-being.

Making Strides Against Breast Cancer received a grant of \$1,500 that will go toward research, early detection and prevention of breast cancer, the second leading cause of cancer death in women.

St. Lucie County Education Foundation received \$1,500, a sum that will be matched 100 percent by State Grant funds. The Education Foundation supports the teachers and students of St. Lucie Schools District through programs not funded by tax revenue. It has earmarked funds for use by teachers to underwrite creative classroom projects that provide a unique and result-oriented learning

experience for students.

Suncoast Mental Health Center, Inc. received a grant of \$525 for its Children's Activity Fund. Suncoast provides assessment, counseling and supportive services to children and families in the Treasure Coast area.

WPSL Christmas Kids of St. Lucie County received a grant of \$1,500 to be used to pay for swimming lessons for six children. The Christmas Kids, sponsored by WPSL radio, provides toys for more than 1,800 children referred by St. Lucie county Community Services and other agencies, funds summer recreation programs for children and provides medical supplies and school clothing for families who have no other place to turn to for help.

The Port St. Lucie Business Women's Community Action Committee will continue studying critical community needs to make decisions for future funding. Recipients for 2016 will be chosen later this year.

Plans are underway for the Port St. Lucie Business Women's 26th Annual Luncheon and Fashion Show to be April 23, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Harbour Ridge Yacht & Country Club, 12600 N.W. Harbour Ridge Blvd., Palm City.

This event is the organization's major fundraiser that supports its Community Action Grants & Awards to local nonprofit agencies that work with women and children in our community and provides scholarships for women attending Indian River State College.

The Port St. Lucie Business Women is a professional organization dedicated to promoting the interests of business women and serving our community in an effective way. For more information visit [www.pslbw.com](http://www.pslbw.com). "Like" us on Facebook for updates about our event, programs and community involvement.

A A A

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[http://www.tcpalm.com/niche/luminaries/st-lucie-county/community-action-grants-presented-to-local-nonprofits\\_41902072](http://www.tcpalm.com/niche/luminaries/st-lucie-county/community-action-grants-presented-to-local-nonprofits_41902072)

## Port St. Lucie Elks Lodge 2658 Helps Local Children

BY: Carol Raymond

POSTED: 1:02 PM, Jun 5, 2015

TAG: st lucie county ugc



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PORT ST. LUCIE — Port St. Lucie Elks Lodge 2658 on Lennard Road has been helping Morningside Elementary School with its GracePak program.

The lodge donated and delivered food weekly to fill backpacks with nutritional food and snacks to feed children whose families are having a difficult time presently.

The Elks Lodge 2658 Charities Committee started helping the GracePak program with a grant from its Elks National Foundation. The lodge initially thought they would be able to cover a weekend a quarter.

Then the members of the lodge started donating items for the backpacks as well as monetary donations to help purchased the much needed food items. The lodge had delivered over 3600 pounds of food to the program this school year along with backpacks and T-shirts.

The T-shirts were donated by Christine and Dennis from The Shell Bazaar on Federal Highway in Port St. Lucie.

They also happen to be members of the lodge. Another contributor is the Treasure Coast Hispanic American Club who have been generous with their donations. The vision of Port St. Lucie Elks Lodge 2658 is to make our presence known throughout our community.

Our families are a part of this community as well. Besides being a social club we have so much to offer college scholarship programs, drug free and youth programs, local veterans meet at our lodge on a weekly basis. It is with great pride we helped those in need.

[http://www.tcpalm.com/ugc/st-lucie-county-ugc/port-st-lucie-elks-lodge-2658-helps-local-children\\_91659251](http://www.tcpalm.com/ugc/st-lucie-county-ugc/port-st-lucie-elks-lodge-2658-helps-local-children_91659251)



Better Living Marketplace St Lucie Magazine  
May '15-July '15 Issue

[http://issuu.com/betterlivingmag/docs/blm\\_may\\_2015\\_web](http://issuu.com/betterlivingmag/docs/blm_may_2015_web)

# Grace Packs... Because Love Provides



*A "Grace" at Oak Hammock, Ms. Jasi, hands out a Grace Pack.*

Grace Packs began at Oak Hammock on October 7, 2011. During the 2011-2012 school year, 672 Grace Packs were given to allay student hunger. During the 2012-2013 school year, 1,344 Grace Packs were given. In the past two school years, with Grace Packs being provided, the incidents of students visiting the school clinic on Mondays complaining of headaches and stomach aches have dramatically diminished due to food being provided over the weekends. Grace Packs exists through school and local community support and engagement.

The mission of Grace Packs is to provide weekly weekend food for students in need. The goal is to provide breakfast, lunch, and dinner foods at the end of each school week to students whose families may be food insecure.

You as our community partner can make an impact!

For persons needing help, they can check with their children's school to see if there is an established Grace Packs program within the school. Currently, Grace Packs is in eleven St Lucie County schools. For people who may want to get involved, they can contact Laura Klosterman, at 772-607-2596.

<http://gracepacks.weebly.com>

*"We know that God is the Founder and we are the co-founders. (Ms. Lisa and I both felt led to begin Grace Packs.)" Laura Klosterman*

**D**id you know that many students do not want to go home from school because there is a lack of food at home? Some students visit the school clinic on Mondays complaining of stomachaches and headaches. These illnesses often are because the children have had little food over the weekend.

Children continue to struggle with hunger on the Treasure Coast, according to a new study released by Feeding America. More than one in four, or 26.7 percent of children in St Lucie County are going hungry, according to the Child Food Insecurity 2013 study. The largest numbers of potentially hungry children on the Treasure Coast reside in St. Lucie County. "Food insecure" is defined as people who don't know from where their next meal will come.

Is Grace Packs a cause you would like to be a part of? Would you consider partnering with us in this worthy cause?



# West St Lucie Elks Voice Newsletter



My Fellow Elks,

WE ARE STILL IN NEED OF FOOD FOR OUR SCHOOL CHILDREN. ITEMS NEEDED: OATMEAL PACKS, INDIVIDUAL CEREAL BOXES, RAMEN NOODLES, CHEF BOYARDE CANS, VIENNA SAUSAGE, FRUIT CUPS, JUICE BOXES. IT WOULD BE GREATLY APPRECIATED AS WE ARE TRYING TO HELP 3 SCHOOLS, OAK HAMMOCK, WESTGATE, AND ST. LUCIE WEST K-8.

### COMMITTEE CORNER

We have now formed some new committees and will be posting updates on their activities on a regular basis:

Lodge Activities Committee Chairperson—Fran Hendertilo

This committee will be meeting to discuss all suggestions brought up by the members to increase our participation and entertainment pleasures at the Lodge.

So far we have come up with the following activities:

Bakeless Bake Sale till 4/30/15

Personal Promotion Committee - Rosemary McInerney

Rosemary has personally taken on the task of call our members and informing them of upcoming events and our need for membership support.

### VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Our new year is beginning, we need volunteers to show their support of the Lodge.

Do you have an 1 hour to help us out. We need help in the kitchen, dining room, cleaning staff and more. Come in and see

### Notes from the Secretary's Desk

Carol Heintz, Secretary

The dues notices for April 1, 2015 thru March 31, 2016 have been mailed. Please note that your dues have decreased .50 due to a decrease in Grand Lodge insurance. That is for this year only. Also note on your statement that should you want to receive your newsletter via e-mail rather than through the US Mail, please sign and date on the line provided. Without your approval, we can't e-mail your newsletter to you. Should you have any questions about your statements, please feel free to contact me. Please do not throw away your old member card until the key card lock has been changed, and that we make sure your new card works.

Have a great month, and I hope to see all of you around the Lodge. Stay safe and healthy. Once again, I'm at the Lodge every Thursday from 10AM to 3PM. You can also contact me on my cell at 708-1376, and at home at 777-3226.

Carol

### ELKETTE'S PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I would like to thank all Elkettes for their help making our Valentine's Day Dinner Dance a great success.

I would like to urge all Elkette members to attend the meeting scheduled for Friday April 3. at 3:00 PM

# White City Elementary

[Home](#) [About Us](#) [Administration](#) [Cafeteria](#) [Faculty and Staff](#) [Kids at Hope](#) [Parent Newsletter](#) [Policies](#) [Resources](#)  
[Principal's Blog](#)

[Home](#) » [News](#) » [Introducing Grace Packs Program at White City Elementary 2/18/2015](#)

## Introducing Grace Packs Program at White City Elementary 2/18/2015

White City Elementary is a school which has 100% of its students receiving both free breakfast and free lunch based on the poverty level of our families. But often, when they go home, there is little or no food to eat. These families have been impacted by loss of jobs, illness or choosing to pay a utility bill over a food bill because of necessity. We are trying to help our students by instituting Grace Packs, a program whose goal is to provide breakfast, lunch, and dinner food items at the end of each school week to students whose families may be food insecure. But we desperately need your help in donating food items to our food pantry or making a monetary donation that will be able to let us buy these items. Currently we have 40 children receiving a grace pack each week but there are over 45 students on our waiting list! We need your help to enable us to add these students to our program and to sustain the grace packs until the end of the school year. Items we need include:

canned meats and pasta  
oatmeal  
cereal bars  
canned vegetables  
mac and cheese  
soups  
crackers  
tuna fish  
juice boxes  
peanut butter jelly  
canned chili



### Latest Tweets



White City  
Elem  
@WCE\_Principal



- White City Elementary Kindergarteners released their butterflies from their garden. <http://t.co/cTLi2ZrefB> about 3 days ago

### White City Elementary

905 W 2nd Street  
Fort Pierce, FL 34982  
Main Office: (772) 468-5840 ☎  
Fax: (772) 467-4067 ☎

### Documents

- [Code of Conduct](#)
- [Dress Code \( 2014 – 2015\)](#)
- [Information for Families](#)
- [PIP](#)
- [School Calendar](#)

Example of Grace Packs program awareness placed on a school website

2/18/15

<http://schools.stlucie.k12.fl.us/wce/2015/02/18/introducing-grace-packs-program-to-white-city-elementary-2182015/>

Home

TCPHC Newsletters

2015 1st Wed. Happy Hours

Christmas Party 2013

Christmas/Caribbean 2013

2014 1st Wed. Happy Hours

2013 1st Wed. Happy Hours

Full Moon Party 8/13

Relay for Life 2013

RFL Fundraiser 2013

St. Patrick's Day 2013

National Margarita Day

TCPHC 10th Birthday Bash

Join Our Phlock

Contact the PHlock

Charities

Phlockings Elsewhere

2012 1st Wednesday HH's

2012 TCPHC Events

**Our next "1st Wednesday Happy Hour" will be held on June 3, 2015 beginning at 5:30 pm at the Stuart Grille & Ale House on US 1 in Stuart, FL.**

**COLLECTIONS THIS MONTH:**

**Grace Pack Item for February:**  
**Individual servings of Mac N Cheese**  
**Non-perishable food items for the Morningside School Grace Pack Program**  
**Suggestions: individual cereal boxes; pop-tarts; envelopes of oatmeal, soup or grits; Ramen noodles; Mac-n-cheese; Vienna sausages; Spaghetti-O's; granola bars; fruit strips or gummies; individual boxes of non-perishable milk (Yoo-Hoo); small cups of peanut butter**

~~Toiletries for the Homeless (Salvation Army)~~

**Plastic Bags for the Council on Aging "Meals on Wheels"**

**Magazines and Books for Our Veterans**

**Labels for Education**

**Pop/Soda/Beer Tabs for Molly's House**

**Remember ~ It is ALWAYS 5 o'clock somewhere!**  
**Great PHun & prizes! - See the greeters & sign the Ship's Log.**  
**TCPHC Name Badges are required for members - get a temporary Name**



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## Help White City's Grace Packs feed students over the weekend

POSTED: 10:46 AM, Jan 2, 2015  
TAG: st lucie county ugc

A A A | 2 SHARES

SHARE ARTICLE



PORT ST. LUCIE — Did you know that many students do not want to go home from school on the weekends because there is a lack of food at home? Some students visit the school clinic on Mondays complaining of stomach aches and headaches. These illnesses often are because these children have had little food to eat over the weekend.

Children continue to struggle with hunger on the Treasure Coast, according to a new study released by Feeding America, our nation's largest domestic hunger-relief organization which assists a network of 200 food banks across the country . Eighty-eight percent of households in St. Lucie County have been identified as food insecure. "Food insecure" is defined as people who do not know from where

their next meal will come. How does this affect our most precious resource? This translates into more than one in four, or 26.7 percent of children in St. Lucie County going hungry, according to the Child Food Insecurity Study released in 2014.

White City Elementary is a school which has 100 percent of its students receiving both free breakfast and free lunch based on the poverty level of our families. But often, when they go home, there is little or no food to eat. These families have been impacted by loss of jobs, illness or choosing to pay a utility bill over a food bill because of necessity.

We are trying to help our students by instituting Grace Packs, a program whose goal is to provide breakfast, lunch, and dinner food items at the end of each school week to students whose families may be food insecure. But we desperately need your help in donating food items to our food pantry or making a monetary donation that will be able to let us buy these items. Currently we have 29 children receiving a grace pack each week but there are over 45 students on our waiting list! We need your help to enable us to add these students to our program and to sustain the grace packs until the end of the school year. Items needed include:

canned meats and pasta

oatmeal

cereal bars

canned vegetables

mac and cheese

soups

crackers

tuna fish

juice boxes

peanut butter and jelly

canned chilli

Donations can be dropped off at White City Elementary School, 908 West Second St., Fort Pierce, or please call Mrs. Crammer at 772-468-5840 ☎.

Other Drop off Donation Sites:

The Feathered Nest, 1203 W. Midway Road, Fort Pierce

Madison Estate Gallery, 4925 Oleander Avenue, Fort Pierce

[http://www.tcpalm.com/ugc/st-lucie-county-ugc/help-white-citys-grace-packs-feed-students-over-the-weekend\\_67521314](http://www.tcpalm.com/ugc/st-lucie-county-ugc/help-white-citys-grace-packs-feed-students-over-the-weekend_67521314)



# Morningside Elementary

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[SAC](#)

[Home](#) » [Parents](#) » [Grace Packs](#)

## Grace Packs

Grace Packs are going strong and we are servicing 50 students! If you are a business partner and are interested in sponsoring this program for the 2014-2015 school year, please let us know!

As always, thank you for your support!

### Latest Tweets

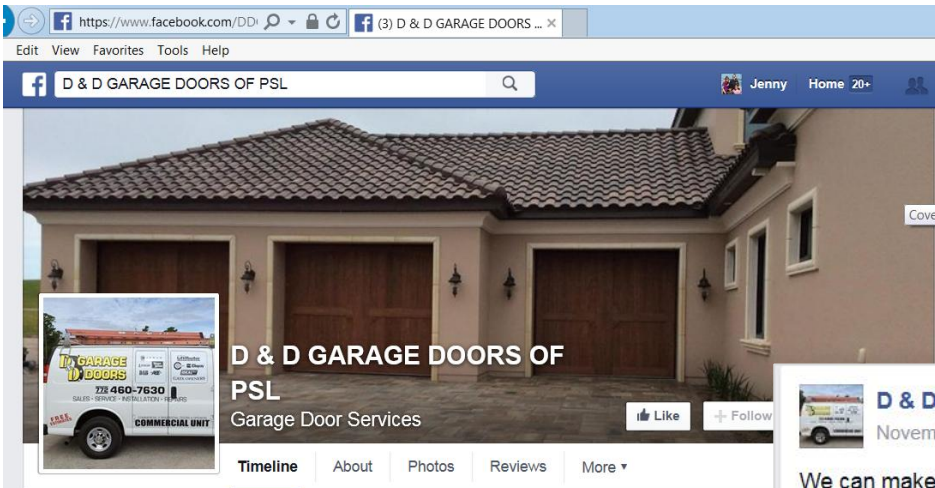


Cortina Bell-Gray

@MSE\_Principal



- Thank you to our Volunteers and Business Partners! You are the #best!



[www.facebook.com/DDGaragedoors](http://www.facebook.com/DDGaragedoors)

<https://www.facebook.com/DandDGarageDoors>

**D & D GARAGE DOORS OF PSL**  
November 7, 2014 · 🌐

We can make a difference one child at a time. Come and help us feed the hungry by dropping of can foods to our business location at 500 Kitterman Road. Every little thing counts! Also you can help us support the grace pack by going to our Facebook page and write "Port St Lucie is Feeding the hungry!" Every comment we get stating the above passage we will donate \$1 to Oak Hammock Grace Pack!

Like · Comment · Share

👍 5 people like this. Top Comments ▾

🔄 1 share

**D & D GARAGE DOORS OF PSL**  
December 7, 2014 · 🌐

D & D GARAGE DOORS donated a check for \$400 and our wonderful customers donated about 250 pounds of food to GRACE PACKS to benefit kids in local schools.

Like · Comment · Share

👍 16 people like this.

## Backpack Buddies and Grace Packs Unite to Feed Children in Need at Mariposa Elementary

Posted on Nov 24, 2014



The head of Backpack Buddies, Nancy Blosser, and the head of Grace Packs, Laura Klosterman, have teamed up to help students in need of food on the weekends. Together they donated over \$1600.00 worth of food to Mariposa Elementary. Michelle Smith, also pictured, is part of a team of teachers and staff members that pack food into backpacks to send home with students over the weekend. "No child should go hungry. We want them to know that we love them and care about what goes on in their lives outside of school as well," said Smith. "We just want to be the hands and feet of Jesus," said Laura Klosterman. Together they are helping over 45 students and their families at Mariposa Elementary.

### Latest Tweets



Craig Logue

@MAR\_Principal



- Chess Night at Mariposa!  
[bit.ly/1bMwOpR](http://bit.ly/1bMwOpR)  
about 2 weeks ago

### Assignments

- Hidden Path- Music
- Mary Had a Little Lamb- Music
- Music
- Summer Music Practice

<http://schools.stlucie.k12.fl.us/mar/backpack-buddies-and-grace-packs-unite-to-feed-children-in-need-at-mariposa-elementary/>



# The Knightly News

[www.kofcknights.org/?CNO=13042](http://www.kofcknights.org/?CNO=13042)

THE KNIGHTLY NEWS is published monthly

St Bernadette Council #13042 Knights of Columbus,

**NOVEMBER 2014**

**VOLUME 14**

**ISSUE 11**

## GRACE PACKS AT WEST GATE K-8 SCHOOL OCTOBER 2014



G.K. RAY SIERRA AND INSURANCE FIELD AGENT JEFF KOHUTH PRESENT CHECK FOR \$ 500.00 TO PRINCIPAL ROBERT CRANMER AT WEST GATE SCHOOL K-8 ON 1050 N.W. CASHMERE BOULEVARD PSL.



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MANY STUDENTS GO HUNGRY ON WEEKENDS



CHARITY IS THE FIRST PRINCIPLE OF THE KNIGHTS



LAURA KLOSTERMAN IS THE DIRECTOR OF GRACE PACKS (SHE IS ON LEFT WITH WHITE BLOUSE). YES, HER HUSBAND IS OUR BROTHER JOHN KLOSTERMAN

<http://www.kofcknights.org/Councils/November%20Knightly%20News%20Newsletter.pdf>



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## Grace Packs feeds children on weekends

BY: Sydney Liebman  
POSTED: 8:54 AM, May 16, 2014  
TAG: luminaries | hidden treasures



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It's difficult to imagine, but 26-percent of the children in St. Lucie County are food insecure. Many show up at school on Monday mornings suffering from headaches and stomach problems, because they haven't eaten since lunch-time on the Friday before.

Laura Klosterman, now a retired teacher from Oak Hammock K-8 in Port St. Lucie, identified the problem in 2011 when she realized several of her own students couldn't concentrate on their school work

and would make frequent visits to the school nurses on Mondays. She was inspired by the "Backpack Buddies" program offered at Manatee Elementary School through a local food bank, which sends children home with a package of food on Fridays. Unfortunately, Oak Hammock did not qualify for participation in that program, so Laura recruited the help of Lisa Ferrick and Hellon Singletary and, together, they have worked towards filling that weekend gap with a program they call Grace Packs.

"Naturally, the school district was concerned about the liability of distributing food that might be outdated," said Laura Klosterman. "So we went through the necessary training and legal paperwork in order to be able to provide this service to these children."

She also says that changes in personalities have been noticed since the children can eat on weekends. "The children are better behaved, better focused and test better," she continues.

Since starting the program at Oak Hammock, six other schools have also started Grace Packs programs. Each school has volunteers who are responsible for maintaining the food supply.

The response for support for the Grace Packs program has been tremendous, with food and cash donations coming from parents, churches, civic organizations and businesses. The Grace Packs pantry at Oak Hammock is currently full of food that will be packed into bags and discreetly given to the children in need. Students from some of the school's clubs volunteer their time to help pack the bags, and Ms. Kathleen Donnen's eight-grade class is designing Grace Packs' website.

A very emotional Lisa Ferrick says, "That was me growing up. I was hungry. All I had was school lunches."

The 67 children served by Grace Packs at Oak Hammock have seen the difference a well-balanced diet can make, and if you'd like to help continue the program's success, call Laura Klosterman at (772) 607-2596. No child should go hungry.

<http://www.tcpalm.com/niche/luminaries/grace-packs-feeds-children-on-weekends>

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# TREASURE COAST PROGRESS & INNOVATION

MAY 2014

QUARTERLY REPORT

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## HIDDEN TREASURES

# Feeding for success

### GRACE PACKS



PHOTO BY SYDNEY LEBMAN

Hellon Singletary, Lisa Ferrick and Laura Klosterman oversee the Grace Packs program at Oak Hammock H-8 in Port St. Lucie.

By SYDNEY LEBMAN

lclm1412es@scripps.com

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<http://www.bdbmc.org/clientuploads/Newsletters/P&I%20-%20May%202014.pdf>



*Home » Lakewood Park Elementary shows appreciation to food program sponsors*



## Lakewood Park Elementary shows appreciation to food program sponsors

The staff at Lakewood Park Elementary School recently acknowledged Laura Klosterman, St. Lucie County coordinator for the Grace Pack Program, and Andrea Pierson, cafeteria manager, for their work for students in need. The Grace Pack's mission is to provide weekly, weekend food packages for students whose families may be food insecure. To participate in the program, go to [www.stlucieschools.org](http://www.stlucieschools.org), click on the Schools tab, and go to the Lakewood Park Elementary School site, and click on Grace Pack for a complete list of food needs. Pictured, from left, are Principal Dianne Young, Andrea Pierson, Laura Klosterman, and Assistant Principal Tammy Smith.

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## DAR awards the Grace Pack program

BY: Montell  
POSTED: 3:56 PM, Dec 10, 2013  
UPDATED: 3:56 PM, Dec 10, 2013  
TAG: st. lucie county



PICTURE BY MONTELL TRUITT [SHOW CAPTION](#)

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PORT ST. LUCIE - On Nov. 13, at the St. Lucie River Chapter meeting, a Community Service award was presented to Laura Klosterman on behalf of the Daughters of the American Revolution by Regent Barbara Hatfield.

Klosterman started the Grace Pack program at the Oak Hammock school, kindergarten through 8th grade, as a volunteer to donate and pack food for children to take home for the weekend. These packs also go home with the child for free lunches during the week.

Klosterman procured community leaders and retailers in donating and feeding

these children. A hungry child can not learn.

This story is contributed by a member of the community and is neither endorsed nor affiliated with TCPalm.

<http://www.tcpalm.com/news/dar-awards-the-grace-pack-program-34341>



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## Project growing to feed hungry Port St. Lucie students over the weekends

BY: Rikki Klaus

POSTED: 7:36 PM, Oct 6, 2012

UPDATED: 10:05 PM, Oct 6, 2012



VIDEO BY WPTV

+SHOW CAPTION

PORT ST. LUCIE, Fla - Special needs teacher Laura Klosterman had to do something. Two years ago, she realized some kids at Oak Hammock K-8 School probably weren't getting enough to eat over the weekend. She says they'd come to school with belly or headaches.

"Because they're helpless. They can't go to the store and get food, and the families are in need," said Klosterman.

So, she started "Grace Packs." It's a food program for kids in need, inspired by a Manatee Academy project. Grace Packs started with 11 kids last October. Since then, the numbers of kids has grown to 40.

"I love them, and I'm very touched when you see them in the hallway, and they'll give me a thumbs up because it's that sort of secret way of saying I know who you are, and they know that I know who they are," said Klosterman. "They're very special."

The kids receive a bag of food to take home Friday. It's meant to last them the entire weekend. It contains breakfast foods like oatmeal and dinner foods like soup.

Parents, teachers, even people Klosterman doesn't know donate the food. Seventh grader Dorian Adams' dad donates regularly. Now, the 12-year-old helps pack Grace Packs.

"I think they think of me as a big role model, like, wow this kid is giving me food for the weekend and helping my family out," said Adams.

Klosterman says every week, the program gets a few more students. Teachers, nurses, even students themselves identify who's in need. Klosterman says now that her program is grounded, she wants to

Klosterman says now that her program is grounded, she wants to help the weekend food initiative spread.

"We want now for other Treasure Coast schools to know that this is a program that they can absolutely start," said Klosterman, who wants to advise interested parties.

To catch up with her for help, call her school at 772-344-4490. Phone there also if you want to donate food or money to Grace Packs.

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## Port St. Lucie schools' food program gives weekend fuel to hungry kids

BY: By Sue-Ellen Sanders Special to Treasure Coast Newspapers  
POSTED: 3:00 AM, Oct 3, 2012  
TAG: port st. lucie | st. lucie county newsbreak | st. lucie county schools | top tablet ipad stories



CHRISTOPHER ARNOLD/TREASURE COAST NEWSPAPERS Oak Hammock K-8 School Cafeteria Manager Lisa Ferrick (right) and seventh-grader Dorian Adams put together Grace Packs at the school. The bags of food are distributed each Friday to needy students who might otherwise not get the proper nutrition over the weekend. "We know how hard it is in today's economy to keep food on the table," said Ferrick. "So we're just trying to give back a little bit."

<http://www.tcpalm.com/news/port-st-lucie-schools-food-program-gives-weekend>

### GRACE PACKS CONTACT

Call Laura Klosterman at 772-344-4490 to donate cash or food for Grace Packs at Oak Hammock or Manatee K-8 schools, or for information on how to start a program at another school.

PORT ST. LUCIE — Children with Monday morning headaches and stomach aches were the first clue for Laura Klosterman that there was a need for her to take action at her Port St. Lucie school.

"These kids were turning up in the clinic and my heart would break to hear that they hadn't eaten much, if anything, since they had had their school lunch the Friday before," the Oak Hammock K-8 special needs educator said.

Then Klosterman heard about a program called Grace Packs from Angie Walsh, a teacher at Manatee K-8 in Port St. Lucie. Walsh had begun the program to send food home for children dependent on free school lunches during the week.

"After Angie spoke, during our church ministry, our minister urged us to, 'Go out and do something ...' and I knew it was my call to action. I had that passion to organize a similar program at our school."

Now Klosterman spends her lunch breaks planning and packing. Working with fellow organizer Lisa Ferrick, the school's food service manager, they send weekly food packages home for the weekend with more than 30 kids who are "food insecure."

The women, who began the program last fall, gather food in packages for kids, who range in age from pre-kindergarten to middle school, who teachers identify as needing nutritious meals at home over the weekend. The kids get a bag of food to take home on Friday, so they can be sure of healthy eating all weekend long.

Since the program began October 2011, more than 700 bags of food have been sent home.

"We send them home with food for the whole weekend, for themselves. And if they have a sibling, then we give them a package, too."

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"We send them home with food for the whole weekend, for themselves. And if they have a sibling, then we give them a package, too."

The packages vary each week, but typically contain granola, breakfast bars and/or oatmeal for each breakfast, peanut butter, fruit cups, toaster pastries, cheese crackers, tuna fish or soup for lunches and canned meals for dinner.

When the two announced to other teachers and parents what they were doing, the response was astounding, they said. Band teacher Amy Isenhower started a peanut butter drive competition, collecting 237 jars from her middle school students. Another teacher used her couponing skills to get the deep discounts on food purchases they needed — one buy was for 17 boxes of cereal for \$1.17. One parent with a small business used her Facebook page to share news of the program.

Soon the entire community embraced it, Klosterman said. They've received a grant from Walmart and involvement from other businesses, churches, civic organizations such as the Elks Club and Knights of Columbus, as well as parents and students. One parent and child began adding gift bags containing sundries such as shampoo, soap and washcloths, even scented pencils.

"One Friday afternoon, I ran into a little kindergarten girl as she was returning from picking up her Grace Pack from the clinic. She was clutching the bag of food close, arms wrapped around it and her eyes were shining, with a big smile on her face," Klosterman said. "That's what we're working for."



## Digest: Oak Hammock salutes our Grace Pack Squad

BY: news release  
POSTED: 5:27 PM, Apr 17, 2012  
TAG: oak hammock k8 school

A A A

SHARE ARTICLE



Oak Hammock salutes our Grace Pack Squad. It is Friday afternoon and there is a lot of activity in Oak Hammock's clinic. Nurses are busy with students, but not for the reason you may think. The nurses are distributing Grace Packs that are filled with food for the children in need. These students, who may have had little food at home, are leaving school with food to help with breakfast, lunch, and dinner for the weekend. Each Grace Pack costs approximately \$4 and the smiles are priceless. Grace Packs is a weekly weekend food program that benefits Oak Hammock students needing extra help. Grace Packs has had tremendous support from the staff, students, parents, and Port St. Lucie churches, clubs, and local businesses. For more information, contact Lisa Ferrick or Laura Klosterman at 772-344-4490. Don't miss PTO's Chuck E. Cheese Night April 30. There is a PTO general meeting May 3.

<http://www.tcpalm.com/news/digest-oak-hammock-salutes-our-grace-pack-squad>

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## Oak Hammock helps needy students

BY: Laura Klosterman

POSTED: 1:12 PM, Nov 23, 2011

UPDATED: 1:12 PM, Nov 23, 2011

TAG: st. lucie county



Carmen Peterson, Principal of Oak Hammock K-8 School presents Jeffrey Kohuth, St. Bernadette Knights of Columbus Council 13042 member, with a plaque in recognition of the five hundred thirty dollar check donated to Grace Packs. Pictured from l-r are Kerri Walukiewicz, Assistant Principal, Lisa Ferrick, Cafeteria Manager, Jeffrey Kohuth, Knights of Columbus, Carmen Peterson, Principal, Laura Klosterman, Teacher, and Kim Jay, Assistant Principal

PORT ST. LUCIE - It is Friday afternoon and there is a lot of activity in Oak Hammock's front office clinic. The nurses are busy with students, but not for the reason you may think. The nurses are cheerfully giving out Grace Packs that are filled with food for the children in need. These students are headed home with food to help with breakfast, lunch, and dinner for the weekend. Each Grace Pack costs approximately four dollars; the smiles are priceless.

Food is a passion for many of us. At Oak Hammock, that passion has taken on the form of Grace Packs, a weekly weekend food program that benefits students needing extra help. Currently, twenty-five students have been recommended for the Grace Packs program which began on October 7, 2011, and will run through June 1, 2012.

After hearing a woman named Angee Walsh from Sunlight Community Church speak of the program she instituted at Manatee School, Laura Klosterman felt led to initiate the Grace Packs Program at Oak Hammock. Lisa Ferrick, the Cafeteria Manager had the same passion. Laura and Lisa have had the tremendous support from Oak Hammock staff, local churches, and the community. St. Bernadette Knights of Columbus provided a generous donation of five hundred thirty dollars the first month. Other churches have generously committed to donating food items for our shelves. Students have even become involved. An eighth grade student gave twenty dollars that her grandparents had given her so that classmates could have weekend food. The outpouring of love has been beautiful. If you would like to learn more about Grace Packs, please contact Laura Klosterman at 344-4490. Grace Packs...Love Provides



# WEST GATE PTO



## GRACE PACKS

HOME VOLUNTEERS GRACE PACKS GALLERY CARNIVAL BOX TOPS CALENDAR BUDGET SPONSORS CONTACT BOARD

### Our PTO Grace Pack Program

**West Gate PTO** has adopted a program called **Grace Packs**. We are working hard to make a difference for some of our students who may have found themselves in need. We are raising money, shopping, collecting food, collecting donations, and packing food to be distributed each Friday. The program costs roughly \$700 a month to run, so donations are very important. Our goal is to send home 2 proteins, 2 fruits/snacks and 2 breakfast items with each child on Fridays, to help supplement their meals at home for the weekend.

For more information about the Grace Pack program, please contact us at:  
[WestGatePTO@aol.com](mailto:WestGatePTO@aol.com)



<http://westgatepto.wix.com/westgate-pto#!grace-packs/crtd>

# Surfside Church

Creative Expression, Life Change, Community Involvement

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## OUR MINISTRIES

We seek to follow the example and teaching of Jesus Christ in all of our ministries.

### Children

We are a kid friendly church! We have a special children's message during our Sunday morning worship time. After the children's message the kids go to the social hall for active hands-on learning experiences.

We have a staffed nursery available every Sunday.

### Prayer

Our prayer team meets every Wednesday at 6:00 pm to pray for the needs of our community and members. You may send a prayer request to our prayer team by using the contact form on this website.

### Celebrate Recovery

Celebrate Recovery meets every Thursday at 7:00 pm. Celebrate Recovery is a support group for adults who are recovering from emotional hurts or trying to overcome bad habits or break free from addictions. Jesus Christ is the higher power at Celebrate Recovery!

### Youth

Our youth group meets on Wednesdays at 7:00 pm. The group is open to all students in grades 6-12. Friends and guests are always welcome. You don't need to be a member of the church to attend the youth group.

### Music

Our music is modern and led by keyboards and guitars. Our worship band is growing with plenty of room for new musicians.

### Comm

Every month w  
other communi  
Mustard Seed I

We are always

## Community service

Every month we visit Port St. Lucie Restorative Care. We also partner with other community service agencies including Habitat For Humanity, Mustard Seed Ministries, Grace Packs, and CareNet.

We are always looking for ways to serve Fort Pierce and Port St. Lucie.