



Editorial | Hunger in the midst of plenty

Jul 23, 2022

THE ISSUE: *Food banks challenged by rising needs.*

OUR OPINION: *Each of us can help.*

Even as the pandemic has waned and the county is moving forward economically, almost half of the citizens of Citrus County struggle to pay for basic needs such as food and shelter. And they are not just the unemployed. In every community there are hardworking individuals, including teachers and health care providers, restaurant servers and cooks, mechanics and store clerks who keep the county economic engine running, but who aren't always sure they can put food on their own tables.

These are people who are Asset Limited, Income Constrained, but Employed, referred to by the acronym ALICE, for households who have incomes above the federal poverty level, but who struggle to afford basic household necessities such as housing, food, health care, child care and transportation. These people live paycheck to paycheck and are one emergency away from crisis.

As the county has in many ways prospered with the pandemic being relegated largely to the background, inflation has also eaten away at incomes. For those on the economic margin, the rising cost of food and gas, higher rents, and other cost increases has increasingly meant a harder struggle to provide the basics, and an increasing reliance on food pantries to put food on the table.

According to Barbara Sprague Community Food Bank executive director, the total number of people served of the various local food pantries and agencies that distribute food is higher now than during the pandemic. She said they are serving well over 70,000 people a month.

Most, if not all, of the 50 plus food pantries, shelters and ministries purchase good and non-food items from the Community Food Bank. The food bank acquires food in bulk and distributes in to the various food distribution centers in the county.

Currently, the Black Diamond Foundation has made a challenge grant to the food bank. They have committed to match dollar for dollar up to \$50,000 donations to the food bank made during July. This is a generous contribution and we hope it will be matched by equally generous donations from members of the public. To donate online, go to www.feed352.org or text DONATE to 352-280-3391. Donations can also be made over the phone at 352-628-3363 or by mailing a check to Community Food Bank, 6259 W. Cardinal St., Building B, Homosassa, FL 34446.