



St. Matthew's House®

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**Making Holidays Worry-Free
for Struggling Families**

See How You Help!

Worry-Free Holidays for Struggling Families



It's that time of year ... Thanksgiving is just a couple weeks away and Christmas is right behind. And St. Matthew's House is busy getting ready to make the holidays special for our neighbors experiencing food insecurity.

No Thanksgiving dinner would be complete without a turkey, and our annual Turkey Drop ensures that every family who needs a turkey will have one. This event was started by our partners at Capital Wealth Advisors 20 years ago, and it gets bigger and better every year.

This year, we are on track to distribute 6,000 frozen turkeys and all the fixings to families in need. All of the food is donated, and it is packed and distributed by a dedicated team of community volunteers.

Alesi Fernandez, our Warehouse Logistics Manager, is deeply grateful for Capital Wealth's partnership. "They do so much for us each year, and they're an incredible team to work with. They have a heart for our mission, and they love to give back to the community."

Giving back is even more important this year, as food insecurity has risen steeply. Southwest Florida is considered one of the inflation hot spots, with the cost of housing, gasoline, and food spiking 7% over last year. Elizabeth McCoy-Ferreira, our Community Outreach Organizer, says, "The need is great. We're currently feeding 10,000 families on average every month through our Community Choice Pantry. We hear stories every day of struggling people trying to

decide whether to pay for food, medicine, or rent. The food is a great help to them to pay their bills and survive."

Alesi tells us the holiday season is particularly difficult for families in need. "They have increased social expectations and financial pressures including family gatherings, festive meals, and gifts. For those without sufficient resources, those expectations can intensify feelings of inadequacy."

Thanks to Capital Wealth Advisors and numerous donations and food drives, these families will be able to enjoy worry-free holidays.

Steve Brooder, CEO, says, "Food assistance is a way for St. Matthew's House and our partners to come alongside our community, to wrap our arms around them and tell them, 'We see you, we love you, and we want to give to you.' It's part of our mission to live out the teachings in Matthew 25. We're showing compassion and providing hope to those who are struggling."



If you would like to join us in our mission this holiday season, visit our website at stmatthewshouse.org/how-you-can-help/volunteer.





Chef Sean Provides Meals, Hope, Encouragement to Those in Need

Chef Sean O'Conner says the love for preparing food is in his blood. As Program Chef Manager at St. Matthew's House, he gets to spread that love across our shelters in Naples, Immokalee, and now Fort Myers. He manages the logistics, oversees the staff, and still manages to get some actual cooking done.

Over the years, Sean worked for several large restaurant groups and eventually owned a restaurant in New York. However, he struggled with addiction during much of that time. He entered the Justin's Place Recovery Program in 2021, and his life took a dramatic turn after graduation. He went back to school and earned a degree in addiction counseling. But his love for cooking, paired with his empathy for people who are hurting, brought him back to serve at St. Matthew's House.

Sean has never forgotten the hard times he endured. "I was homeless. I was addicted. So I see people differently. I'll sit down and eat with people at the feeding ministry and give them encouragement," he says.

Providing hot meals is the first step toward moving someone from crisis to contributor.

"When we offer them food, we also offer them resources, shelter, hope," Sean says. "We have professional people here who came through recovery, who came through being in homelessness, who have been healed from their addictions and their traumas. And they're giving back every single day here."

Sean tells us there are many reasons for hunger and food insecurity in our community, and many who need help. In addition to those struggling with addiction, he says, "There are the elderly who can't afford to pay rent, put gas in their car, and eat. There are those who are mentally ill, people who have been impacted by the hurricane, and those who are jobless."

With an estimated 1,500 holiday meals to serve in the Naples, Immokalee, and Fort Myers shelters this Christmas, the opportunity to reach more hurting people has grown tremendously. And Sean invites you to lend a hand.

"We'll need volunteers in all three locations. Volunteers can bring their families and start a legacy of volunteering. Then it not only impacts the community, but it impacts you, your family — everybody!"

Much to Celebrate This Christmas

Dear Friend,

Throughout this year we have seen the Lord work through us – and you – to transform lives in Southwest Florida.

Many of our residents had been on their own and suffering the effects of poverty, addiction, and homelessness. Few people cared for their well-being. But with your help, they have received the love of God, which renewed their hope.

Today, they have God's promise that He will help them through the troubles of life and that someday, they can see Him face to face.

That is why this Christmas will be a time for celebration at St. Matthew's House. There will be food, gifts, and singing. Children will delight in the joy around them, and their parents will know they are safe and have a better future.

That future extends to all who need St. Matthew's House. The new Community Choice Pantry and our women and children's shelter in Fort Myers are helping us reach more of our neighbors who struggle with hunger, homelessness, and addiction. In the years ahead, hundreds more will have the opportunity to move beyond their crisis.

At the same time, our hearts go out to those who remain outside, alone in the darkness of an uncaring world. We hope they reach out. We want them to see the light of Jesus Christ and follow Him.

Thank you for providing this wonderful place to welcome and care for those who are hurting. May God bless you as you celebrate His blessings this Christmas.

Sincerely,



STEVE BROODER
Chief Executive Officer



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Check Out Our Social Enterprises!

St. Matthew's House social enterprises help fund our overhead costs, so your donation goes toward our life-saving programs.

LuLu's KITCHEN

RESTAURANT & EVENTS

LuLu's Kitchen is our 8,000-square-foot, free-standing facility that is home to a full-service restaurant and more.
visitululus.com, (239) 774-5858

delicious by design

CATERING

Delicious By Design provides food and service by an award-winning professional catering team for receptions, weddings, dinners, themed buffets and luncheons.
deliciousbydesign.org, (239) 298-5028

St. Matthew's House

THRIFT STORE

St. Matthew's House Thrift Stores offer high-quality, gently used furnishings, decor, clothing and other goods in eight convenient locations.
(239) 774-0500

Port LaBelle Inn
& Conference Center

Port LaBelle Inn and Conference Center features spacious rooms with free WiFi, an outdoor pool, and sports courts on the property, with full-service, on-site catering.
(863) 675-4411



JOIN US FOR UPCOMING EVENTS:

November 14, 2024	Justin's Place 44th Graduation Ceremony
December 21, 2024	Annual Candlelight Vigil, 6:00–8:00 p.m.
February 6–8, 2025	Naples Automotive Experience
April 28, 2025	Dean Lind Memorial Golf Classic