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****Media Alert****

Local Social Service Agency Available to Discuss issues of Hunger and Poverty in Polk County

Polk County-A recent Gallup poll conducted showed that one in three Polk County families find it difficult to put enough food on the table. The numbers landed Polk County third in the nation in food hardship.

“Local families are struggling,” said Brenda Reddout, Western Region Director of Catholic Charities of Central Florida. “When the refrigerator and cabinets are bare, and parents are worried about what they are going to feed their children for dinner; we are all in trouble.” The Agape Food Bank, a program of Catholic Charities of Central Florida, in the Western Region is tasked with helping alleviate hunger in Polk, Highlands and Hardee counties. The food bank distributes over 5 million pounds of donated food and other products each year to food pantries serving the public. The food distribution warehouse serves over 240 not-for-profit member agencies in the community.

“But as many social services agencies are experiencing, the need for assistance is surpassing our capacity to help,” said Reddout. “And as we are going into the holiday season, and with the state of the economy, we expect more and more families to turn to us for help.”

Catholic Charities of Central Florida has two food pantries in Polk County that are supplied by Agape Food Bank:

*Catholic Charities of Central Florida
Western Regional Headquarters Office
1801 East Memorial Blvd.
Lakeland, FL. 33801*

*Catholic Charities
Winter Haven Office
532 Avenue M NW
Winter Haven, FL. 33881*

How the Public Can Help:

With the growing need; donations are crucial to helping feed hungry families in the community. Donations can be dropped off at the two locations mentioned above. For large amounts of food and/or products, please visit the Agape Food Bank at 625 McCue Rd., Unit #2 Lakeland, FL 33815. Food items especially needed include peanut butter and jelly, macaroni and cheese, tuna, canned meat, other canned goods including fruit, and cereal. Other items include food gift cards for clients of Catholic Charities, diapers, and personal hygiene items. The Agape Food Bank has a need for gas cards for the diesel fuel to run their vehicles. Monetary donations are welcome. The public can call 863-686-7153, ext. 3015 for any specific questions, including drop off hours.

“We ask that for those that are able to extend a helping hand, please do so, we all need to come together as a community in order to tackle this issue we are facing in our very own backyards,” explained Reddout.

Catholic Charities of Central Florida, Inc. is one of the foremost providers of social services in the state of Florida, having served more than 130,000 men, women and children over the past year. Catholic Charities of Central Florida's mission is to provide vital social services to people in need, regardless of race, religion or social status to improve the lives of individuals, families and the community.

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