

SWFLATODAY

WE CARE



Meals of Hope President and CEO Stephen Popper, left, talks to donors about how the organization is responding to the increased community need and strained food supply chain brought on by the coronavirus pandemic at Meals of Hope in Naples on Thursday. PHOTOS BY ALEX DRIEHAUS/NAPLES DAILY NEWS

Citizens raise \$50K for Meals of Hope

Religious, community groups join together to help during pandemic

Andrew Atkins Naples Daily News
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

Concerned Citizens, Collective Action

Theresa Shaw's hope for tomorrow goes hand-in-hand with her passion for doing something today.

"With all of us, there is a hope for tomorrow. In order for us to be part of the success of it, we need to do all that we can do now to make a difference," she said. "And we can't wait. It's now that we need to make sure that people have what they need."

And so it happens that Shaw, executive director of Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Naples, joined together with a number of others who shared her passion to form a collective: Concerned Citizens for Food Availability. The group comprising 50 people represents individuals, churches and community leaders raising money for

Meals of Hope, a North Naples nonprofit.

Beginning with a \$25,000 donation from Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Concerned Citizens for Food Availability leveraged its connections to raise more than \$50,000, Shaw said, which was presented to Meals of Hope on May 28.

Volunteers don't plan on stopping any time soon, either, Shaw said.

"We don't foresee there being any changes with the need in the near future, so what we'd like to do is to continue this and allow other people who have interest in helping people to join us," she said. "If they would like to support us in their endeavor, they can just write their checks to Meals of Hope."

Checks made to Meals of Hope through the Concerned Citizens for Food Availability should have "Concerned Citizens" in the memo line so the group can track contributions. Donations may also be made online at the Meals of Hope website.

See CITIZENS, Page 4A



From left to right, David Hinds; Wynn Watkins, director of membership for Kiwanis Club of Naples on the Gulf; Maria McCormick; Bill McCormick, president of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Greater Naples; Stephen Popper, president and CEO of Meals of Hope; Pastor Steven Wigdahl, of Emmanuel Lutheran Church; Theresa Shaw, executive director of Emmanuel Lutheran Church; and Della Burt-Bradley, Collier County Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, pose for a photo with a \$50,000 donation at Meals of Hope in Naples on Thursday.

Citizens

Continued from Page 3A

Words of the woods

Denver Boxleitner, a rising senior at Island Coast High School, was one of 100 topical winners in this academic year's National High School Poetry Contest for her poem, "The Cruel Woods."



Boxleitner

"Soon I'll be less hesitant and get up close/ Approach the thing that scares me the most," the poem reads.

"The Cruel Woods," which Boxleitner wrote in an email was about a popular guy at school she had a crush on, is a 20-line poem she wrote for an honors English class. She noted that poetry is a means to achieve her dreams.

"I hope to write a young adult fantasy novel. Poetry prepares me for that," she wrote. "I wish to become a cartoonist and work for Disney."

In Boxleitner's spare time, she enjoys hiking through locales like Yosemite National Park, the Grand Canyon or Arches National Park. Aside from her poetic achievements, she is also a Take Stock in Children scholarship recipient and a member of the National Honor Society. She's competed for three years on the varsity bowling and tennis teams and volunteers at the Northwest Regional Library in Cape Coral.

This win is just the beginning for Boxleitner, who said she thinks she will always write poetry.

More good news

Thanks to members of the Cape Coral community, an 88-year-old woman has a brand new bike after hers was stolen, according to the Cape Coral Police Department.

Cape Coral High School's Anchor Club thanked members of the Cape Coral Police Department for their service during COVID-19 with a parade, sidewalk chalk, stuffed animals, hand-written cards and donuts.

The Cypress Cove at HealthPark Florida in Fort Myers surprised 16 graduating high schooler employees with a ceremony celebrating their milestone. The community created a sign for each graduating employee.

Following a \$20,000 donation in April, Chris and Kara Resop and Chris and Brianna Sale and their children donated another \$15,000 in cash and supplies to give to the Redlands Migrant Christian Association to assist with 15 Immokalee farmworker families.

As part of a campaign to provide aid for healthcare workers on the frontlines of COVID-19, SWFL Stronger Together, Bank of America donated \$75,000, helping the campaign surpass \$1 million in total contributions.

The Laguna Lakes community in Fort Myers celebrated its graduates Thursday evening with a car parade and live music. Neighbors stopped at each graduate's house to drop off cards, flowers and gifts to celebrate their accomplishments.

A \$25,000 grant from the League Club to the Immokalee Club will help the latter assist students in its Career Pathways: Empowering Students to Succeed program by helping those who may underperform on the reading portion of the Florida Standards Assessments due to a language barrier. The grant will support the online platform of Achieve 3000, a reading support program.

Firefighters with the San Carlos Park Fire District helped rescue 3 kittens and their mother from a culvert underneath a driveway on Wednesday, May 27 according to the district's Facebook page.

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