

# THE *Hope* REPORT

JANUARY 2024

from Hope Villages of America

Addressing Hunger + Housing + Abuse



## *United Way Suncoast Volunteers*

We extend our deepest gratitude to the incredible volunteers from United Way Suncoast who joined us recently at the food bank. Your dedication and hard work are making a real difference in the lives of those in need in our community.

Together, we're not just distributing food; we're spreading hope, kindness, and love. Your efforts are truly touching hearts and changing lives.

Thank you for embodying the spirit of giving and for being a beacon of light in our community. We're honored to have you as partners in our mission!



## *UPS Volunteer Day*

A massive shoutout to the incredible team from UPS who rolled up their sleeves and spent the day volunteering at our food bank! Your commitment to serving our community is truly inspiring.

With your support, we're able to reach even more individuals and families in need, providing them with essential food assistance and spreading hope in challenging times.

Thank you, UPS, for your generosity, hard work, and dedication to making a difference. Together, we're delivering not just food, but also kindness and compassion to those who need it most.



## *Congratulations to our Construction Contest Winner*

We have a winner! Kindred Acute Rehab takes home the crown in this year's CANstruction contest! Staff and patients from the rehab lent their creativity and talent to the winning design, showcasing their incredible spirit and determination.

A huge round of applause to Kindred Acute Rehab for their outstanding support and dedication! And a heartfelt thank you to all the groups who participated in this year's event. Your contributions help make a difference in the fight against hunger in our community.



## *Nova University Students Volunteer*

A BIG shoutout to the amazing students from Nova University for volunteering their time and energy at our food bank! Your dedication and support make a real difference in the lives of those facing food insecurity in our community. Thank you for your kindness and generosity!



## *The Oaks Youth Life Skills Class*

During a recent Youth Lifeskill class, the students had the chance to pick out their own flower seeds to pot, nurture, and watch grow at home. They've been challenged to take on the responsibility of watering their plants consistently, nurturing them into beautiful blooms. We can't wait to see the joy and happiness that blossoms from this simple act of care and growth!



## *HVA Awarded a \$250,000 Grant!*

We would like to extend a heartfelt thanks to the Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg and Bayfront Health for awarding us a transformative \$250k grant for The Haven at Jordan Park Project.

This generous support catapults us forward in our commitment to address the critical issue of domestic violence among black women, the number one health concern in this community. Together, we are creating a haven that goes beyond walls, providing safety, empowerment, and healing.

Thank you, Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg and Bayfront Health, for recognizing the urgency of this cause and standing beside us as we work towards a healthier, safer community for everyone. Your support is a beacon of hope, and together, we're making a lasting impact on so many lives.



# CURRENT EVENTS

**HOPE**  
VILLAGES OF AMERICA  
Addressing Hunger • Housing • Abuse

## TEEN DATING VIOLENCE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

FREE WEBINAR ON: 2.22.2024  
TIMES: 10AM and 2PM EST

FACILITATOR:  
JOHN LONG  
VP OF ABUSE SERVICES

REGISTER YOUR SPOT

We're excited to announce our upcoming webinar training focused on Teen Dating Violence and Social Media. This vital session will equip parents, educators, and teens themselves with essential knowledge and tools to navigate healthy relationships in the digital age.

Let's empower our community with the knowledge and skills to foster safe and respectful relationships online and offline. Together, we can make a difference!

Don't miss out on this crucial conversation! Click the link below to reserve your spot now.  
<https://calendly.com/thehva/teen-dating-violence-and-social-media-1>

YOU'RE INVITED!

Blue Jean Ball 2024

PRESENTED BY  
We Make It Simple  
**BIZCO**  
technologies  
Inclusion with proceeds to Hope Villages of America

**FRIDAY  
MARCH 22**

DINNER/  
DANCING 7PM    VIP HOUR 6PM

[HOPEVILLAGESOFAMERICA.ORG/BLUE-JEAN-BALL](https://hopevillagesofamerica.org/blue-jean-ball)

**Join us at our annual Blue Jean Ball**  
*presented by Bizco Technologies*

Mark your calendars for March 22, 2024, because you won't want to miss out on this incredible event! Join us for a night filled with laughter, live music, and heartwarming moments, all in support of our Food Distribution and Basic Needs Division.

Whether you're a longtime supporter or new to our cause, everyone is welcome to join in the festivities. So grab your favorite pair of blue jeans and get ready for an unforgettable evening!

Sponsorships and Tickets are available NOW! <https://hopevillagesofamerica.org/blue-jean-ball/>



# STAFF & VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHTS



## *Meet Rafael Vergara*

We're thrilled to introduce you to one of the newest members of our Hope Villages of America (HVA) family, Rafael Vergara, also known as "Ruffy" among his colleagues. Ruffy brings an inspiring story of resilience, dedication, and compassion to our Food Distribution Center.

Joining our team on November 2, 2023, Ruffy quickly became an integral part of our operations, serving as a warehouse driver responsible for picking up food donations from various routes throughout Pinellas County. But his journey to HVA is one filled with challenges and triumphs.

In 2020, amidst the tumultuous times of the Covid-19 pandemic, Ruffy found himself in a difficult situation. He lost his job as a Stewart Assistant on a ship, a role that provided for him and his young daughter. Suddenly thrust into the role of a single father, Ruffy faced the daunting task of providing for his family with limited resources.

Despite the obstacles he faced, Ruffy remained resilient. He took on various part-time jobs, including working as an Uber Driver, in an effort to make ends meet. However, it wasn't until 2023 that Ruffy found the stability and fulfillment he was searching for when he joined HVA on a full-time basis.

Outside of work, Ruffy's greatest joy comes from spending time with his three-year-old daughter. Whether they're exploring the playground, enjoying movie nights at home, or embarking on road trips together, Ruffy cherishes every moment he gets to share with his little one.

When asked about his experience at HVA, Ruffy lights up with enthusiasm. He appreciates the sense of camaraderie and teamwork that permeates throughout the organization, describing it as a place where everyone works together. Most importantly, Ruffy finds fulfillment in knowing that his work directly contributes to helping others in need, aligning perfectly with the values and mission of HVA.

Ruffy's story serves as a reminder of the power of perseverance and the impact of lending a helping hand. We're incredibly grateful to have him as part of our HVA family, and we look forward to seeing the continued positive impact he'll make in the lives of those we serve.

Thank you, Ruffy, for your dedication, resilience, and unwavering commitment to making a difference!



## *Meet Scott Baker*

We are delighted to shine a spotlight on one of our exceptional volunteers, Scott Baker, whose dedication and passion for helping others have made a significant impact within our organization.

Scott began volunteering with Hope Villages of America (HVA) in January 2021, bringing with him a wealth of experience and a heart filled with compassion. After retiring from the healthcare industry, Scott felt a deep desire to continue making a difference in the lives of others. Inspired by an article in Readers Digest highlighting the challenges faced by military families and the increasing issue of food insecurity exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, Scott was drawn to contribute his time and resources to HVA.

The mission of HVA resonated deeply with Scott's values and aspirations for community service. He recognized the importance of addressing food insecurity and providing assistance to those in need, and HVA provided the perfect platform for him to make a meaningful impact.

Despite being retired, Scott leads a vibrant and fulfilling life, filled with hobbies such as golfing, boating, and traveling. In fact, he has an upcoming trip to Athens and Santorini scheduled for April. Scott also cherishes spending quality time with his two children and four granddaughters, who bring immense joy and fulfillment to his life. His passion for family extends beyond leisure activities, as he co-owns a Brewery, Roadmap Brewing Co., with his son in San Antonio, TX.

Reflecting on his journey, Scott emphasizes the importance of community and the profound impact it has had on shaping his perspective and enriching his sense of being. He believes that giving back to his community not only unites individuals but also fosters a deeper understanding of the circumstances faced by others.

Scott's commitment to service and his dedication to making a positive difference exemplify the spirit of HVA. His generosity, both in terms of time and resources, serves as an inspiration to us all. We are immensely grateful to have Scott as part of our volunteer team, and we thank him for his invaluable contributions to our mission of serving those in need.

Thank you, Scott, for your unwavering dedication, compassionate spirit, and tireless efforts in making our community a better place for all!

# Advancement & Communications

**97%**

Grants awarded vs. goal

**\$2.5M YTD**

JANUARY 2024



**1,155**

Volunteer Hours



**3.9K**

Followers



**1.9K**

Followers

**2K**

Impressions

**261**

Impressions

**7**

Media Placements

# Mission Impact

## YEAR-TO-DATE

### FOOD DISTRIBUTION and BASIC NEEDS

**79,209**

individuals served

**1,137,757**

lbs of food given directly to people

**4,412,986**

lbs food given to area agencies

**663,035**

lbs of fresh produce distributed

### ABUSE SERVICES

**9,137**

safe nights for women and children  
at the Safe House

**3,962**

individuals helped with services  
provided though the Outreach Center

**1,899**

hotline calls received

**4,609**

participants in Peacemaker and  
Youth Advocate presentations

### HOMELESS PREVENTION PROJECT + HOUSING STABILITY SERVICES

Homeless  
Outreach Services

**1,710**

Goldsmith Gardens  
+ The Oaks

**63**

adults and children living in affordable housing  
operated by Hope Villages of America  
(households)