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Community Foundation of East Central Florida Supports Mobile Benefits Program with \$3,125 Donation

Citing the need to support basic needs services in Flagler County, Nita Schmellick, president and CEO of Community Foundation of East Central Florida arrived at the March 8 meeting for Mobile Benefits Program, a Flagler County outreach and presented committee members with a check for \$3,125. The donation, provided by the Foundation's Flagler Community Fund, was accepted gratefully by Ray Salazar of the United Way Volusia/Flagler Counties and Doug Baxter of the Flagler County Chamber of Commerce & Affiliates on behalf of the Mobile Benefits Program.

According to Ms. Schmellick, her foundation's board of directors determined that focusing on the support of basic needs was essential in selecting donation recipients for 2011. "Instead of putting out a request for grant proposals, the foundation board decided to make grants that would have a more systemic impact on the community," she said. "The Mobile Benefits Program does this by helping residents receive food stamps or other benefits. Many of these people are seeking help for the first time, and do not know how to navigate through the system. The Mobile Benefits Program will eliminate barriers while giving many more residents services and support they need."

The Mobile Benefits Program is designed to help capture a portion of the millions of unclaimed federal dollars for Food Stamps (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP benefits) in Flagler County. These unclaimed dollars would assist local residents in need, while simultaneously boosting the local economy. The program will be staffed by a salaried Mobile Benefits Specialist, who will travel throughout the county helping residents through the benefits application process and provide user-friendly advice. The overall goal is two-fold: to reach out and assist the county's "new face of poverty" and to streamline the application process, so that residents will obtain their eligible benefits in a timely and efficient manner.

The Flagler County Chamber of Commerce & Affiliates, United Way of Volusia-Flagler Counties, Florida Department of Children and Families, Center for Business Excellence and Second Harvest North Florida, Grace Community Food Pantry, Doug Courtney, Sandra Mullen and other

community members collaborated to launch this initiative. The community investment required is \$57,000 per year for two years, after which time Second Harvest will take over project funding. The program could potentially generate more than \$800,000 in benefits for eligible households per year, and boost local retail spending.

All contributions, no matter the amount, will help make a difference in Flagler County. Donations are accepted online or by mail to Second Harvest North Florida, Attention: Flagler County Mobile Benefits Program, 1502 Jessie Street, Jacksonville, FL 32206.

For more information, please visit www.mobilebenefitsprogram.org or contact Alicia Casas of the United Way of Volusia-Flagler Counties at 386.366.9052. To see the Mobile Benefits Program video, [click here](#).

Established in 2000, the Community Foundation of East Central Florida is a not-for-profit enterprise that provides grant making and charitable services to a particular geographic area. The Foundation's mission is to enhance the quality of life in Volusia, Flagler and Putnam counties by increasing perpetual giving, building community leadership and connecting donors with causes to support. The Foundation is a member of the Community Foundations of Florida and the Council on Foundations. For more information about the Community Foundation of East Central Florida, visit www.cfecf.org or contact Nita Schmellick, President/CEO 386-734-4075.