



MILLION MEALS COMMITTEE OP/ED  
MARY F. MACOMBER – CHAIR, MILLION MEALS COMMITTEE

One in six residents of Broward County will go hungry tonight. For 38,000, hunger will result in health or life threatening conditions. Once upon a time, this seemed implausible. Tourism was booming, jobs were plentiful and the real estate market soared to new heights. When Florida's economy dramatically declined, it served to exacerbate the already growing hunger crisis. Hunger impacts all segments of the population and knows no racial or cultural boundaries. It does, however, fly under the radar of public consciousness, making it one of the most severe, yet little known problems in our community.

How bad is it? 211/First Call for Help, Broward's community information and resource hotline has seen a substantial increase demand for shelter, food, and other basic needs. In fact, calls for assistance have risen 50% since last year. Children have been especially hard hit. According to the School Board of Broward County, 300 students in our public schools are homeless. The stakes are high, as indicated by studies, which reveal an inextricable link between childhood hunger and the development of adverse physical and behavioral health conditions.

Fortunately, the Million Meals Committee works every day to eliminate the scourge of hunger in Broward County. Founded in 2001 by The Coordinating Council of Broward, the Committee is comprised of 80 agencies and supports a network of food assistance, disaster response, and human services programs, which assist children and seniors. Staff support is provided by the Children's Services Council of Broward County, which funded the first countywide hunger report in 2006.

Last month, the Broward County Board of County Commissioners proclaimed June 1-7 as Hunger Awareness Week. The Million Meals Committee will be working hard to not only increase knowledge about Broward's hungry population, but also provide ways that the community can pitch-in and make a difference.

There are many ways to get involved. From volunteering at food banks and pantries to donating as little as \$5.00, the cost a skipped meal, you can make a difference by joining Broward County's biggest "food fight." And don't delay, since the final day of school for Broward students is June 3rd. This means that parents and caregivers of thousands of Broward students must find alternates ways to fill the void of school breakfast, lunch, and afterschool snack programs. Visit the Million Meals Committee website, [www.millionsmeals.org](http://www.millionsmeals.org), to find out more information. Together, one meal at a time, we can eradicate hunger in Broward. Please join our effort!