

## **NEWS RELEASE**

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United Way  
Emerald Coast

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **UNITED WAY EMERALD COAST AND FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH IN WALTON COUNTY ANNOUNCE OPENING OF LITTLE FREE PANTRY**

(Ft Walton Beach, FL – April 7, 2021) The Florida Department of Health in Walton County (DOH-Walton) and United Way Emerald Coast (UWEC) held a ribbon cutting ceremony on April 7, 2021, officially opening the Little Free Pantry at the DOH-Walton Office in DeFuniak Springs, FL.

The last couple of years, Little Free Pantries have been popping up nationwide in an effort to address hunger. UWEC was recently awarded funding through a CARES Act grant for COVID-19 relief to bring ten of these pantries to Walton County. These stand alone, small, weather-proof pantries draw awareness to food insecurity while creating a space for community members to take what they need and give what they can.

When UWEC presented the idea to the Walton County Health Improvement Partnership (WCHIP), they were thrilled to get involved and help find homes for the pantries where they were needed the most. “Food insecurity is an important public health problem facing families in Walton County,” stated Holly Holt, Health Officer and Administrator of the Florida Department of Health in Walton County. “Through collaborations with community partners like UWEC, we are trying to make healthy food options more accessible for families that might be unsure where their next meal is coming from.”

WCHIP is a partnership of over 45 community service organizations, local governments, healthcare agencies, and volunteers with a goal to make Walton County a healthier place to live, learn, work, play, and pray. If you would like more information or would like to be involved in WCHIP, please visit [walton.floridahealth.gov](http://walton.floridahealth.gov) or email [wchip@flhealth.gov](mailto:wchip@flhealth.gov).

Walton County businesses and organizations interested in hosting a Little Free Pantry are encouraged to contact Brittnee Orr, UWEC Director of Community Impact, at (850) 243-0315. UWEC will install the Little Free Pantry free of charge and provide the first three pantry refills as needed.

*United Way Emerald Coast is a local, volunteer-governed organization that works with hundreds of partners to fight for the health, education, and financial stability of every person in Okaloosa and Walton counties. To drive positive change, United Way Emerald Coast evaluates our community's diverse needs, mobilizes the caring power of the community, and directs resources to the areas that will have the most positive impact in our community.*



## THE LITTLE PANTRY

Take what you need.  
• Give what you can. •

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