

## [Opinion](#)

### **Law produces improved cuisine for the unfortunate**

Soup kitchens aren't generally known for gourmet cooking, much less good food, but better cuisine appears to be a welcome trend among a small but growing number of feeding programs throughout South Florida.

Healthy salads, chicken, even lamb kebabs and T-bone steaks — more grocery store chains, restaurants and other food providers are donating increasing amounts of leftover meals, meats, produce and other edible products to Feeding South Florida, The Salvation Army, The United Way and other nonprofits that feed the homeless and the hungry. For example, Publix, which currently has 80 stores making food donations, is expected to bump up its number of participating stores to 240 by the end of the year.

Credit a change in state law — the Jack Davis Florida Restaurant Lend a Helping Hand Act of 2008 — that expanded protections against lawsuits for those food vendors that donate perishable food to local feeding programs. The initial idea for the law came from an 11-year-old student who convinced state Rep. Ari Porth, D-Coral Springs, to push the bill through the process to become law.

By almost any indication, hunger remains a big issue in South Florida.

For example, the number of persons receiving food stamps in South Florida is close to 1 million, almost double that of a few years ago. Feeding programs continue to report increases in the demand for their services. And since the foreclosure crisis, the face of the area's homeless population has changed, too, with families and children populating their ranks and putting more strain on feeding programs.

Fortunately, state lawmakers passed a sensible bill three years ago that now allows feeding programs a fighting chance at helping their clients. The Jack Davis bill expands the definition of "perishable foods" to include those prepared at any licensed public food service establishment and provides protection from civil or criminal liability to those donors that give food to charities and nonprofit organizations.

The greater liability protections allow firms from Chipotle to The Cheesecake Factory to feed the less fortunate food that would normally be thrown out after one day's use. Fortunately, a simple change in state law apparently is bearing fruit.

**Bottom line:** Law protecting food donors a real boon.

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