

SEASON of SHARING | 25 YEARS

PROVIDING 25 YEARS OF SERVICE BENEFITING THE COMMUNITY



Herald-Tribune

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COMMUNITY FOUNDATION of Sarasota County

SEASON OF SHARING - EMPOWERING NEIGHBORS TO HELP NEIGHBORS, INDIVIDUALS, AND FAMILIES WITH IMMEDIATE BASIC NEEDS REGAIN STABILITY THROUGH COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY

Neighbors helping neighbors in need



Photo credit: John J. Revisky

In the past 25 years, our region has changed significantly. Meteoric growth has transformed our region from a sleepy coastal corridor to a bustling metropolis. As new neighborhoods, high-rises, and shopping plazas have sprung up, our region scarcely bears resemblance to the version of itself that was in 2000, when the first Season of Sharing campaign raised \$121,400.

Season of Sharing was initially created by the Sarasota Herald-Tribune and the Community Foundation of Sarasota County as a safety net to deter homelessness by helping people facing financial emergencies. It was recognized in those early days that an unanticipated crisis could escalate into a domino effect of calamity that resulted in people losing their homes. The fund was set up to make payments toward housing, utilities, childcare, or auto repairs, so those at the economic edge would have a bridge to stability.

Over the years since that initial campaign, our community has faced challenges, together. In our communities, the past quarter century was punctuated by the global financial crisis and its impacts on our real estate market, red tide, the global pandemic, Hurricanes Charley, Irma, Ian, Debby, Helene, Milton, and other crises. Think of the ways in which each of these moments created hardships that threatened the security of so many of our neighbors.

Yet through it all, Season of Sharing has been there, a time-tested and trusted safety net that has empowered individuals and families to overcome setbacks. In the 25 years since its inception, Season of Sharing has raised and distributed \$42.5 million to more than 50,000 individuals and households. Those are big numbers but think about each person whose life was made better through Season of Sharing.

Perhaps the most affirming aspect of Season of Sharing is the community's outpouring of support. Over time, more than 60,000 gifts have been received, showing that it's not the grand gesture of a few, but the kindhearted generosity of so many, that creates a strong community. We've received gifts of \$5 and gifts of more than \$50,000, all showcasing the character of our community.

Long term recovery taking shape

Season of Sharing is a solid resource for people in the throes of weather-related financial hardship, especially following this year's historic hurricane season. Its purpose and function reach far beyond economic crisis brought on by storms, as you will read in this special section.

Our Community Foundation's Suncoast Disaster Recovery Fund is a resource for making our communities whole once initial relief efforts have concluded. Focused on long-term, community-wide solutions, the Suncoast Disaster Recovery Fund has been called upon since Hurricane Ian to support vital programs and help vulnerable people navigate property recovery. This year, The Patterson Foundation has contributed \$1.2 million, plus up to an additional \$1 million in matching dollars, to this fund. Learn more about long-term recovery efforts at www.cfsarasota.org

Season of Sharing also demonstrates the power of partnership. The Herald-Tribune has chronicled stories over the years that have highlighted the need, and celebrated the triumphs, of people facing and overcoming obstacles. Most recently, readers have been moved by the compelling stories told year-round by Sandra Amrhein, which shine a light on how this investment will make a difference.

The Patterson Foundation, longtime philanthropic partner to the Community Foundation of Sarasota County, has also been a stalwart collaborator since 2010. Over time, that's led to a generous gift of \$2.6 million from The Patterson Foundation, and this year they once again have committed to contributing \$100,000 for every \$500,000 raised by the community, in addition to an outright gift of \$1 million.

As we celebrate 25 years, I am proud of this initiative and all that it does for our community and says about our community. Here, neighbors look out for neighbors, and people step up to provide a little sunshine for someone else's stormy day.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Roxanne G. Jerde".

Roxanne G. Jerde, President and CEO
Community Foundation of Sarasota County

Economy then and now

In the year 2000, Sarasota County was busy adopting its 2050 long-term growth plan. Today, about half-way to that timeframe, we see a markedly different community than 25 years ago. True, there were then and always have been those in our community who fared better than others, but data reveals some trends that demonstrate how the county and those surrounding it – Charlotte, DeSoto and Manatee counties – are changing.

What was once a neighborhood-centric region now qualifies as a bustling hub of industry and innovation. Sarasota County has become increasingly sleek, modern and urban, and along the way, its economy has changed, and so have the needs of its residents.

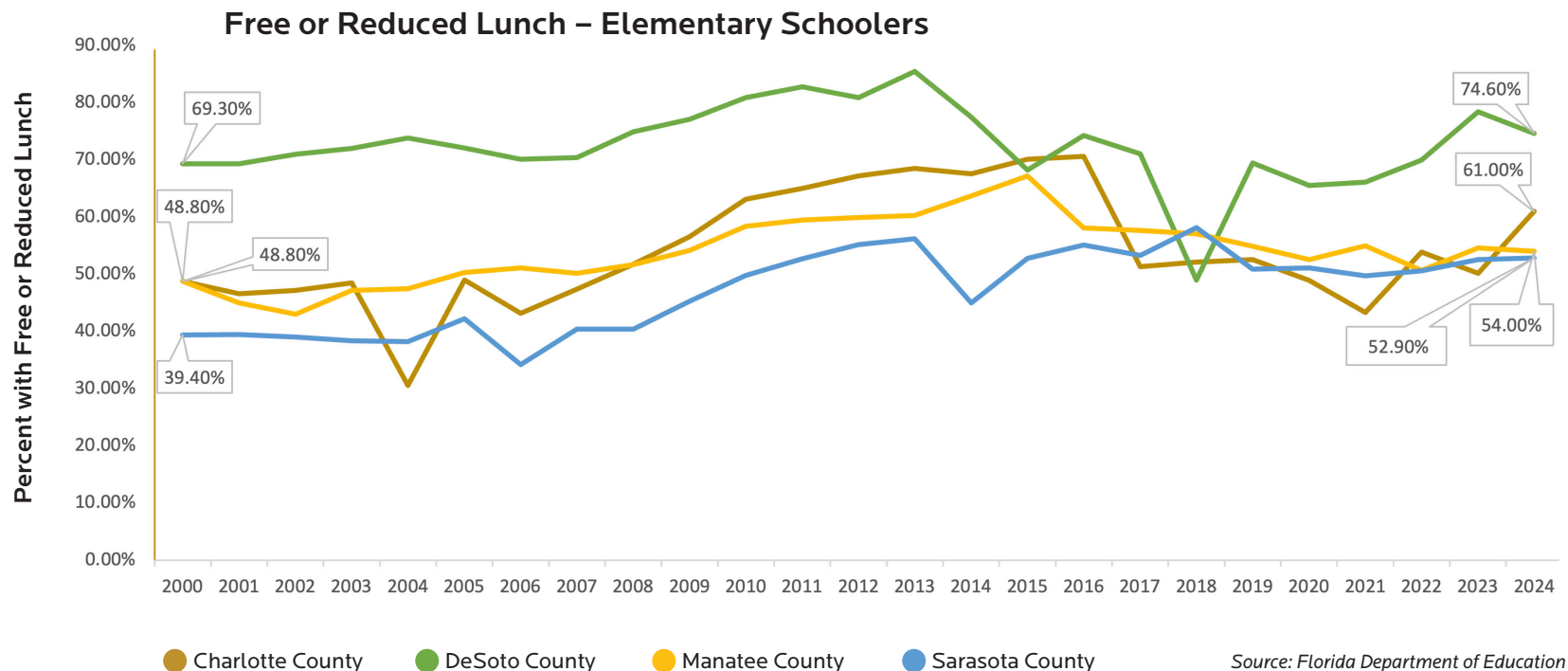
In the past 25 years, median household income

has risen in Sarasota County and surrounding counties—Charlotte, DeSoto and Manatee. In Sarasota County, median household income has gone up 85 percent over the past quarter century. But it hasn't kept pace with national trends: in the U.S., since 2000, median household income has more than doubled.

Closer examination also reveals that while some neighborhoods generally earn an income that leads to financial stability, other neighborhoods have seen stagnation. In Newtown's 34234 zip code, the median household income is \$55,000, compared with downtown Sarasota's 34236 zip code, where the median household income is \$95,000. Of course, such disparity is hardly isolated to the diverse neighborhoods of Newtown: many zip codes in the county have median household

incomes between \$60,000 and \$70,000, and low wage-earning families are finding it hard to make ends meet.

Keeping pace with the rising cost of living has been a struggle for many working Sarasota County families, despite the affluent population that calls the area home. One telling illustration of a population's economic security is its Free- and Reduced-Priced Lunch population. Often used as an indicator of poverty, those families qualifying for this benefit demonstrate significant financial need. In Sarasota County, the percentage of families qualifying for free school lunch has increased by almost 14 percentage points. Now, more than half of students enrolled in Sarasota County Schools qualify.



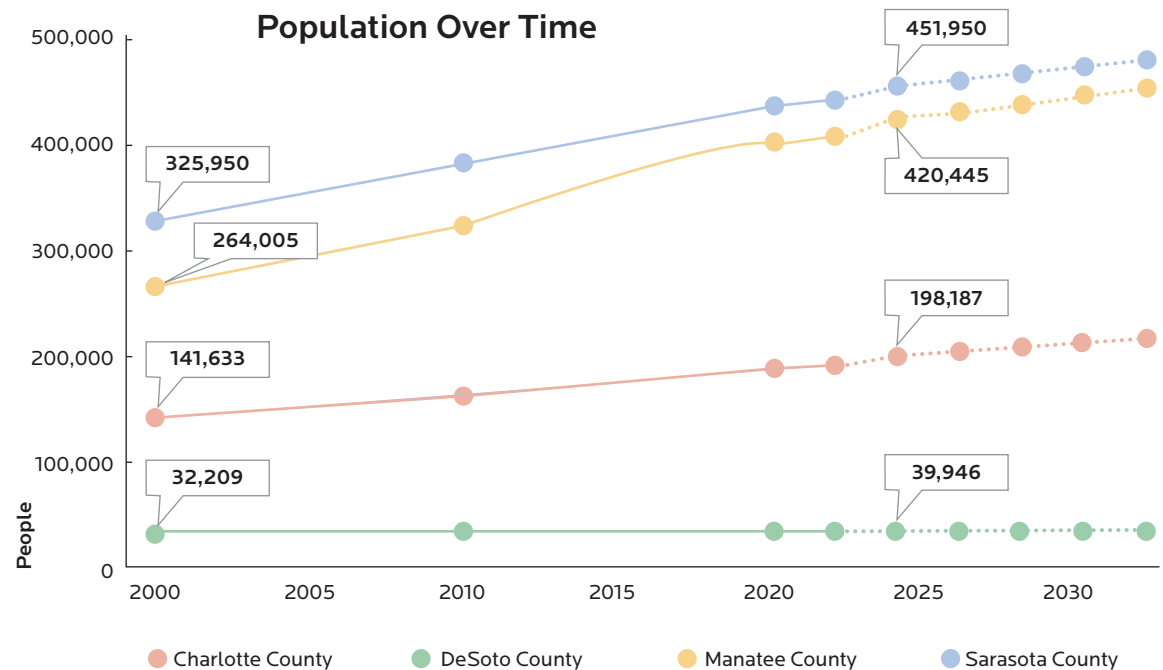
Population over time—insights to an increased demand for housing

Ever since rail travel became viable transportation in the South in the 1860s, Florida has been a popular vacation destination, luring tourists with its balmy climate and picturesque tropical landscapes.

Those features, along with economic opportunities, relative affordability, and diverse educational, cultural, and leisure offerings, continue to make the state an attractive place for an increasingly large population to call home.

Since the first population boom in the 1950s, after air-conditioning made heat and humidity tolerable, Florida became fast-tracked to become one of the most populous states in the nation. Now ranked as No. 3—after California and Texas—its population continues to rise. Since 2021, four of the 10 most rapidly growing metropolises in the nation were Florida cities, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

In Sarasota County, population growth has redefined the map. With development once mostly concentrated near the shoreline, new communities have sprung up in the east by the dozen. What once was a township mostly hemmed in by I-75 now sprawls well beyond. Lakewood Ranch—which just celebrated its 30th anniversary—occupies 891 square miles of what was in recent memory cow pastures. In 2022, the U.S. Census reported the Lakewood Ranch population at nearly 35,000 residents. To the south, what largely went underdeveloped in the planned community Wellen Park has gained nearly 11,000 residents since



Sources: US Census Bureau; US Census Bureau ACS 5-year

development began in 2014. Both Wellen Park and Lakewood Ranch have occupied spots in the top 10 fastest-selling planned communities in the U.S. since 2020.

Over the past quarter century, Sarasota County has picked up an additional 125,000 residents, and the growth trend is expected to continue. Currently, 451,000 people reside in the county, putting a strain on available housing, despite rapid development, and driving up home values. In 2024, the median home value is over \$420,000, two and a half times the median home value in 2000. For many, high values keep homeownership out of reach, limiting their ability to accumulate and pass along wealth intergenerationally.

The surging population has also tested infrastructure and service availability. More people have increased demand for human service agencies. Expansion to the outer corners of the county line has led to longer commutes and, for vulnerable residents, service deserts.

Further complicating housing availability is the damage caused by natural hazards. Initial reports by the Federal Emergency Management Agency assessed 1,600 houses in Sarasota County as impacted by Hurricane Ian. More recently, the spate of storms—Debby, Helene, and Milton--caused damage to thousands more homes in the county, shrinking housing stock and driving up costs through supply shortages and insurance premiums.

Deepening dependency: our aging population

While a growing population attracts and retains more young professionals to the area, Sarasota County has long been first and foremost a desirable retirement community. Quality healthcare, warm weather, and a robust arts and cultural scene all attract end-of-career people looking for an ideal place to spend their golden years.



The sudden death of her husband Frank left Agnes Hollander alone and struggling to get by. She relied on Social Security and his pension to cover bills—until his pension was wiped out. Agnes turned to Season of Sharing for assistance.

Photo credit: Thomas Bender, Herald-Tribune

Ranked at No. 18 on the U.S. News and World Report's Best Places to Retire in the U.S., Sarasota is home to a large contingency of aging people, and many are struggling to afford to live here. With median home values over \$420,000 (compared to the national average of over \$371,000), affordability is an issue in the county, and one that grows as the population ages.

For those living on a fixed income, medical expenses, or the death of a spouse—both likely

scenarios—can lead to financial catastrophe. Through the years, Season of Sharing has been called upon to provide our elderly neighbors with a bridge to economic security.

Another economic outcome of a county that comprises more than half of its population with residents over the age of 64 is the increased dependency on those of a working age, a concept known as the age dependency ratio.

An area's age dependency ratio compares the number of residents not suited for work (children under age 18 and those over 64 years old) to the working-age population, measuring the burden workers bear of supporting children and the elderly. The higher the ratio, the greater the burden on the workforce.

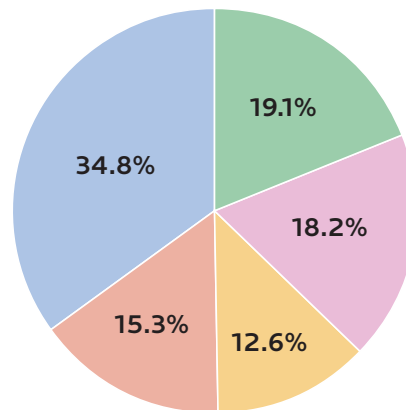
Sarasota County has an age dependency ratio of 105.2, meaning that for every 100 working-age individuals, there are about 105 dependents, nearly 80 of which are aging adults (the national total dependency ratio in 2020 was 63.6, according to the U.S. Census Bureau). The results of high age dependency ratios vary,

BABY BOOMER GENERATION POPULATION CHANGE

	2000	2024
Charlotte County	23%	40%
DeSoto County	23%	26%
Manatee County	26%	30%
Sarasota County	25.6%	35%

but among them are higher healthcare costs and greater challenges financing services and pension programs. These have implications for everyone.

One outcome of a high age dependency ratio can be outsized demand for public services, which places greater pressure on the nonprofit sector to bridge widening service gaps. Another outcome, common in this area, is delaying retirement. The elderly are increasingly becoming part of the working poor. Women are particularly vulnerable, thanks to inequities in women's earnings and retirement benefits, coupled with longer lifespans. Many elderly, especially women, become vulnerable to losing housing, and Season of Sharing has been an invaluable resource, providing stability for this population with unique needs and limited resources.



Generations by Population

- Silent - Born between 1925-1945
- Baby Boomers - Born between 1946-1964
- Gen X - Born between 1965-1980
- Millennials - Born between 1981-1996
- Gen Z - Born between 1997-2016

Sarasota County, FL

Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2018-2022



When baby Jarel's medical complications caused his parents to miss work to attend surgeries, they fell behind on bills. They turned to Season of Sharing to stay in their home.

Photo provided

MEDIAN HOME VALUES

	2000	2024
Charlotte	\$118,892	\$265,800
DeSoto	\$80,216	\$138,307
Manatee	\$140,221	\$356,763
Sarasota	\$164,659	\$420,812
Florida	\$105,500	\$347,372
US	\$119,600	\$364,775



Facing an eviction notice after unexpected rent hikes, Mary Jackson found stability in help from Season of Sharing.

Photo credit: Angie DiMichele, Herald-Tribune

A cost too great for many: rising rents in Sarasota

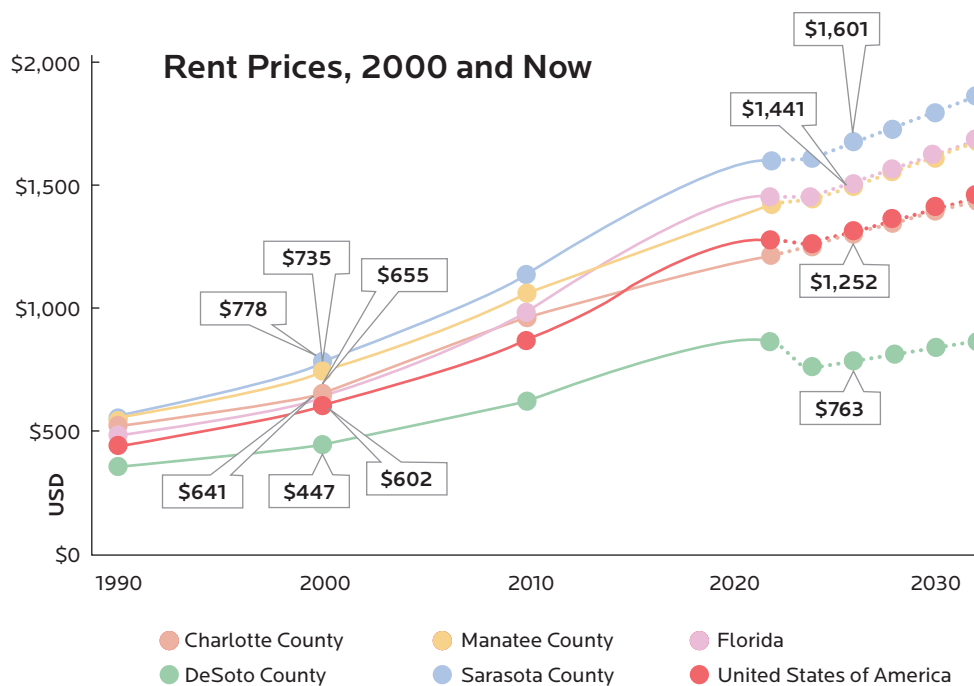
Rents in the county have more than doubled since the inception of Season of Sharing 25 years ago.

When Season of Sharing began, its main objective was to keep people in their homes. In those days, the median rent in Sarasota County was \$778 a month, a figure unimaginable in today's market, where the median rent in Sarasota County fluctuates at about \$1,600.

In the past 25 years, home values in Sarasota County have skyrocketed, with the median home value in 2024 reported at \$420,812, a 155 percent increase from values in 2000. The increase in home values over the last 25 years has put home ownership out of reach for many. Demand for rentals has enabled landlords to command higher payments.

While it costs more both to rent and purchase a home in Sarasota County now than in 2000, housing costs are a burden disproportionately shouldered by renters. While median household incomes have risen since 2000, that growth has been enjoyed mostly by homeowners, who earn an average median income of \$85,000. Renters, meanwhile, earn a median household income of \$59,000.

What's more, rental agreements change more often and with less predictability than mortgage agreements, often placing renters in a precarious situation—accept a monthly increase or find another rental in an increasingly competitive housing market. Since 2022, nearly 90 percent of Season of Sharing funding has supported housing costs.



Sources: US Census Bureau; US Census Bureau ACS 5-year

The big cost of our smallest neighbors

When many families consider the cost of having a baby, many items figure into that calculation: cribs, car seats, diapers, all the accoutrements of a tiny person. It all adds up, but one expense that can't be included in a baby shower registry is childcare.

One fast-growing expense in Sarasota County is the cost of early childcare. Infant care is nearly four times as much as it was in 2000, now costing families an estimated average of \$12,200 annually, 14 percent of the average median household income. Toddler care in 2024 is an estimated \$11,000 annually. And of course, that's for one child. Families with multiple children may be more easily priced out of early childcare.

Affordable, accessible childcare is essential for parents to remain in the

workforce. Without it, parents might have no other choice but to reduce work hours or leave their jobs entirely. Both scenarios have impacts on the economy.

It's not just family finances or short-term economic factors that make accessible early childcare an essential part of a healthy community. Early childcare and education help create an equitable foundation that sets children up for success later in life. For the current school year in Sarasota County, 57 percent of children are ready for kindergarten, based on scores from the FAST Early Star Literacy screener. Early learning programs could have an impact on school readiness that sets the stage for success, making accessibility even more critical.



A Sarasota County Commission decision to pause funding to the Early Learning Coalition of Sarasota County (ELC) placed military veterans Victoria Lopez and Lee Lavallee in a pinch as they struggled to afford care for their three children, even with good jobs as a teacher and county worker. ELC turned to Season of Sharing to help this family and dozens like them facing the predicament after the decision.

Photo credit: Mike Lang, Herald-Tribune

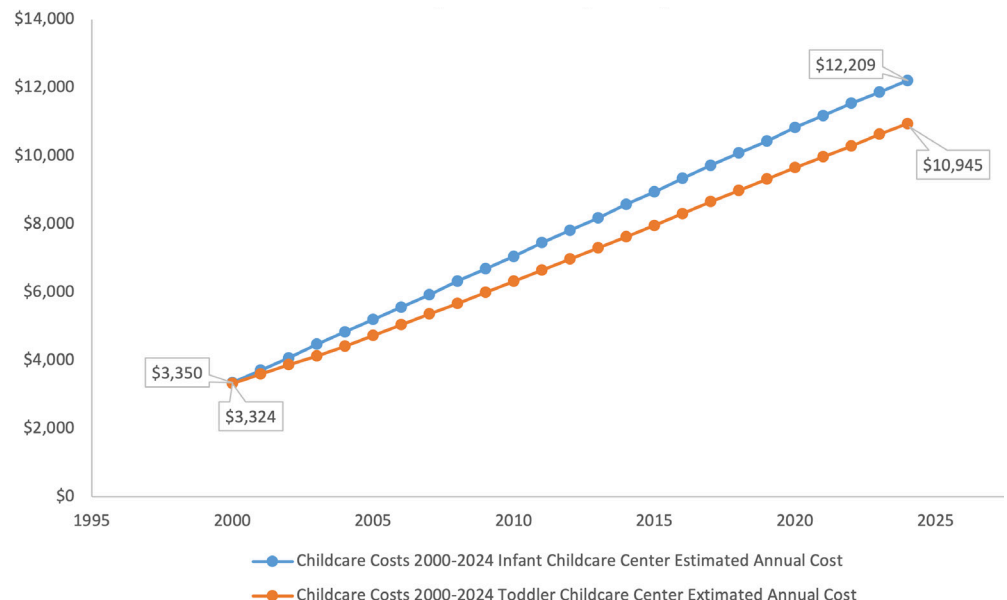


Amid COVID childcare closures, Christopher Sayre—who was spending up to half his weekly paycheck on childcare—was forced to stay home for two months. He fell behind on bills and faced termination of his utilities. Season of Sharing kept the lights on and helped him catch up on rent, allowing him to recover financially.

Photo credit: Thomas Bender, Herald-Tribune

Sarasota County Annual Childcare Costs 2000-2024

(estimated from US Dept. of Labor)



A home on shaky ground

Over the past 25 years since the inception of Season of Sharing, a confluence of factors has shifted economic realities for Sarasota County, leading to a burgeoning number of people living on the economic edge.

Brisk population growth, escalating real estate values, increasing rents, and a climbing number of age-dependent people—the product of a large aging population combined with the arrival of young professionals starting families here—have all culminated in a more precarious financial situation for a growing number of residents.

That reality can be seen in the housing-cost burden. In Sarasota County, 30 percent of the population spends 30 percent or more of its income on housing, utilities, and related expenses, like property insurance and taxes. For these households, affording more than basic goods and services is a struggle. When a crisis strikes, whether a medical emergency or damage wrought through natural disaster, these families become vulnerable to economic calamity.

Even in an economy where the unemployment rate has fluctuated within a healthy realm, less than five percent, many families are just one crisis away from financial adversity. In Sarasota County, 41 percent of the population lives at or below the ALICE (Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, but Employed) threshold. These are families with working adults that are still challenged to afford necessities.

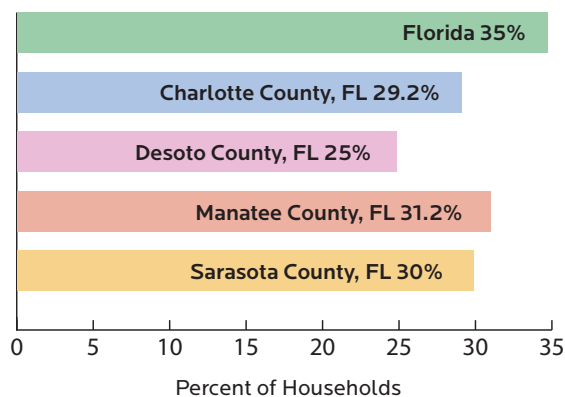
In many cases, the ALICE population are members of our essential workforce: child- and eldercare providers and service industry

workers are some who contribute value to our community but live near the edge, living above the Federal Poverty Line but regularly forced to choose between essential goods and services.

This is especially bad news for the growing number of people constrained to living farther away from jobs, schools, and other common destinations, adding longer commutes and the cost of fuel to already stretched budgets.

The Community Foundation of Sarasota County has partnered with local nonprofit, private, and civic organizations to support affordable housing solutions that can reduce the strain felt by so many families for the long term, including Lofts on Lemon, the affordable workforce housing apartment complex that offers new, quality amenities in a convenient location. The foundation has also worked with nonprofit organizations that provide housing to the area's most vulnerable residents, namely Harvest House and Project 180.

Percentage of Owner and Renter Occupied Households with Monthly Housing Costs 30% or More of Household Income



A former private pilot based in the northeast, Thomas Sosnowski moved to Venice in 2001 to care for his mother after his father's death and retired here shortly after. Living on a fixed income, Thomas couldn't afford the repairs when his car broke down, threatening to cut him off from necessary services and an active life. Season of Sharing covered the repairs, helping him afford other necessities like rent and minimizing disruptions.

Photo credit: Mike Lang, Herald-Tribune

Long-term affordable solutions will be key in keeping people in their homes and minimizing disruptions wrought by escalating housing prices, increasing rents, and competition for what's available. But crises are inevitable and the availability of immediate help is a critical part of keeping any community healthy.

Season of Sharing has been a resource to those living at this precipice in Sarasota County and surrounding Charlotte, DeSoto and Manatee counties, a community safety net funded by residents that recognize the social benefits of safeguarding people's basic needs. It has provided an economic bridge and the assurance that comes with the knowledge that this community cares for one another.

Season of Sharing Key Steps

1

DONORS GIVE TO SEASON OF SHARING

Season of Sharing funds are raised by the Community Foundation of Sarasota County year-round, with an annual official fundraiser kickoff each fall. The Community Foundation collects no administrative fees, so 100% of dollars collected goes directly to those in need.

2

HELP IS REQUESTED BY THOSE IN NEED

Families and individuals with a specific need for financial assistance call 2-1-1 or work with a social worker. 2-1-1 refers individuals to an agency social worker who is able to address their needs – such as rent/mortgage, utilities, child care, or transportation.

3

AGENCY COMPLETES APPLICATION

An agency social worker or case worker determines all available resources have been used, completes the Season of Sharing application on behalf of the client, and submits all the necessary documentation.

4

APPLICATIONS AND CHECKLISTS SENT

Season of Sharing applications are reviewed by local fiscal agents. These agents process checks, sending payments on behalf of those in need directly to the entity due. No checks go to individuals.

5

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF SARASOTA COUNTY PROVIDES SUPPORT TO AGENCIES

Support and resources are provided to agency social workers and case managers annually. The network consists of nearly 100 human services organizations.

Season of Sharing is a partnership between The Patterson Foundation, Sarasota Herald-Tribune, and the Community Foundation of Sarasota County

The power of the pen: stories of Season of Sharing

Community newspapers have changed dramatically in the last 25 years, to the point of extinction in hundreds of small towns across America. The cost to community cohesion is incalculable.

When the Season of Sharing campaign was launched by the Herald-Tribune Media Group and the Community Foundation of Sarasota County in 2000, local newspapers were pervasive. They were read by a majority of households in most towns and were central to a community's sense of itself. Even for those who didn't subscribe, word-of-mouth information tended to emanate from what was reported in that morning's edition.

It was a powerful force that, when used for good, could be transformative.

It was against this backdrop that Season of Sharing was intended to harness the power of journalism to address a compelling community need. In the simplest terms, that need was emergency funding, free of time-consuming red tape, that would be just enough to help our low-income neighbors get past an unanticipated financial emergency.

At its most fundamental level, the problem that Season of Sharing addresses is poverty. What continues to make it especially compelling, though, is that it is helping those who are prevailing over poverty. They are predominately working families and retirees who are "getting by" until they aren't, typically because of a health crisis or an unexpected breakdown of a support system.

Periodically over the years the Herald-Tribune staff has stepped back to take a more comprehensive look at the underlying problems of poverty and homelessness. In-depth, fact-based projects are also a long-held tradition of responsible journalism.

Season of Sharing's stock-in-trade, though, has been the telling of personal stories, one by one, of local residents thrown off a precarious track.

In the hands of gifted writers like Saundra Amrhein and others before her, these stories have served as windows into the lives of people whose world has been turned upside down. What has made these stories especially moving is the extent to which hard work, good intentions and devotion to family have been evident. In most cases, the bridge funding of \$1,000-\$2,000 was enough to get them back on track.

The miracle of citizens banding together, with the astute guidance and financial support of the Community Foundation and The Patterson Foundation among others, to raise more than \$42.5 million has been the envy of cities across the country. It has demonstrated a level of empathy and generosity that it seems safe to say is unmatched on a per-capita basis.

Also remarkable is the extent to which local media's impact continues to be felt. While newspapers are not as ubiquitous today as they were 25 years ago, the Herald-Tribune's continued partnership with Season of Sharing has helped to sustain this community's sense



Diane McFarlin
Photo provided

of itself as a place striving to ensure that everyone has a decent quality of life.

The legacy of Season of Sharing is not only the thousands of local residents who have been pulled from the brink of homelessness. It is also the dramatic way that it continues to demonstrate the power of storytelling and how it can lead to life-changing results.

Diane McFarlin is the former publisher of the Sarasota Herald-Tribune and former board chair of the Community Foundation of Sarasota County. Season of Sharing was her idea, conceived with past-President and CEO of the Community Foundation Stewart Stearns in 2000, during her tenure at the Herald-Tribune.

For community, by community

A rising tide lifts all ships

Throughout its 25-year history, Season of Sharing has raised and distributed more than \$42.5 million to more than 50 million households, covering rent or mortgage payments, utility bills, childcare expenses, and auto repairs for people confronting an unanticipated financial calamity that threatens to upset the already precarious balance of their lives.

While the tremendous outcomes of Season of Sharing have helped stabilize our community one person at a time, the impact also started one person at a time. The massive support system has been built from the contributions of many, each gift an act of caring from a neighbor stepping up to safeguard values our community holds dear, namely that all who live here should have a safe place to call home and a decent quality of life.

From a spring, a river

Season of Sharing began in 2000 with an ambitious goal: to help people recover from economic upheaval through averting evictions. That year, through 1,200 gifts, the community raised \$121,000 to offer a financial lifeline to those experiencing need. In the 2023-2024 campaign the community raised \$4.2 million through 2,650 gifts, all of which has been invested back into the community. Since 2000, 60,000 gifts have been received. That's our community's commitment to the well-being of their neighbors.

Over the years, support grew to include notable gifts from individuals and private foundations, including longtime partner, The Patterson Foundation. Since 2010, thanks in large part

to the incentive of providing matches for funds raised through the community, which has inspired giving over and over. In the last 14 years, the contributions of our community, dollar-by-dollar, has unlocked a \$2.6 million contribution from The Patterson Foundation.

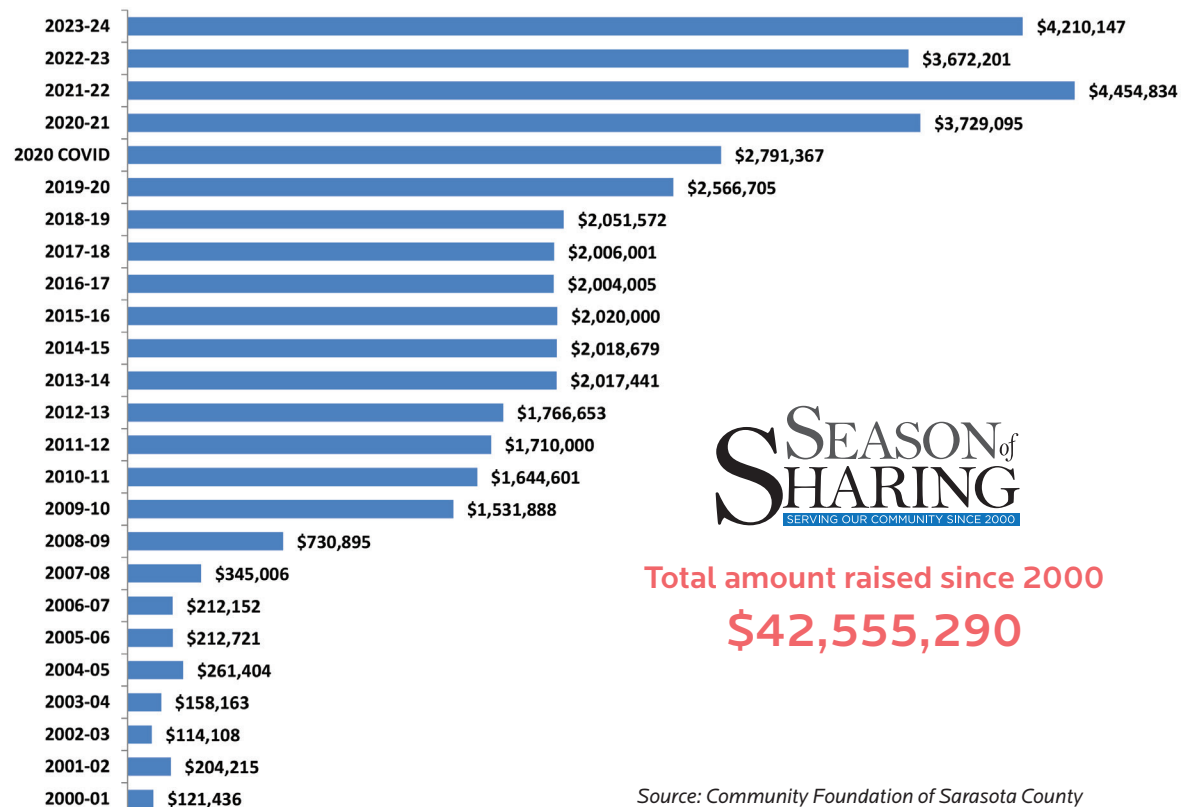
Help when it's needed, where it's needed

Season of Sharing is an effective, immediate way to help those in need when they need it. The Community Foundation works with a network of human services agencies to deliver payment directly to service providers—the rental offices, utility companies, childcare centers, and auto repair shops—without delays that could incur further fees and cause

damaging economic ripple effects, and every dollar contributed to Season of Sharing—100 percent of funds raised—is used to address needs, with no administrative costs.

Whether addressing personal emergencies or community-wide crises, Season of Sharing has empowered people to recover with dignity and regain security.

For a quarter of a century, Season of Sharing has been a trusted and time-tested safety net—built dollar-by-dollar by the contributions of everyday people—that has provided relief from stormy days and assurance of sunnier tomorrows.



Help for every season.



DONATE TODAY

Visit CFSarasota.org
or call 941-556-2399
or mail to Season of Sharing,
2635 Fruitville Road,
Sarasota, FL 34237

A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE
Herald-Tribune

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HELP TODAY BRINGS TOMORROW'S JOY

Many families in our region are just one paycheck away from unimaginable losses. For 25 years, Season of Sharing has helped our neighbors in crisis regain stability after an unanticipated setback, and in that stability, rediscover the joy that arises with the assurance that this community cares for one another. Over two and a half decades, more than 60,000 gifts have been made—that's neighbors coming together to ensure a brighter tomorrow. Neighbors helping neighbors: that's something to smile about.

I would like to make a gift to **Season of Sharing** of \$ _____.

Designate my gift to: Charlotte DeSoto Manatee Sarasota Where most needed

My check payable to **CFSC/Season of Sharing Fund** is enclosed.

I would like to charge my gift to my: Visa MasterCard Discover American Express

Card Number _____ Exp. Date _____ Security Code _____

Name on Card *(please print)* _____ Phone _____ Email _____

Billing Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Signature _____

Donate securely online today! www.CFSarasota.org

I would like to learn more about:

Community Foundation of Sarasota County Manatee Community Foundation

(Optional) My gift is: In honor of In memory of _____

Please notify (name and address) _____

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