

# Duffy's brings in Girl Scouts, Palm Beach School of Autism students to decorate pie boxes for Meals on Wheels

By Alex Kushel

Duffy's Sports Grill and the Duffy's Foundation recently provided support to the Meals on Wheels of the Palm Beaches Pie It Forward Thanksgiving program to help homebound seniors in Palm Beach County.

The Duffy's Foundation collaborated with the Girl Scouts of Southeast Florida and the Palm Beach School of Autism to assemble and decorate boxes with pies at its headquarters in Lake Worth. Each pie donated will underwrite a week of meals for a homebound senior.

Now in the eighth year in a row supporting the event, Geri Emmett, Duffy's Foundation chairwoman, said they packaged 50 pies during the first year. They assembled 375 boxes of pies this year at its headquarters. The boxes of pies were picked up at three locations, including the Palm Beach County Convention Center in West Palm Beach, Roger Dean Chevrolet Stadium in Jupiter and Duffy's Sports Grill in Delray Beach.

About 25 chefs from restaurants, resorts and country club donate the pies that are sold by Meals on Wheels of the Palm Beaches: \$30 for apple, pecan and pumpkin and \$35 for key lime.

Supporters can order the pies for a two-week period beginning Nov. 1 every year. Then they can pick them up at one of the locations on a designated day the week of Thanksgiving.

"When I think of people being homebound, they don't have family nearby and don't have the ability to just go to the restaurant,"

Emmett said. "They can't drive and they are living on a fixed income. When you are in the restaurant business, food is plentiful. When I think of the scarcity of food and others not having access to it, we are very lucky. We all have to be in this together to help. They really count on a volunteer coming to their home with a meal and delivering it to them. If they do not have that meal, they may not eat."

She said the Duffy's Foundation mission and the collaboration with groups in the community has allowed them to help others in need.

"We are embedded in our 33 communities and this program is just one of the ones we get behind with the foundation," she said. "We are fortunate to have a company that believes in community. I am involved with several of these groups like Meals on Wheels and the Girl Scouts because it brings me deeper into our communities where our Duffy's families live."

Emmett is the co-chairperson of Meals on Wheels and the chairwoman for the Girls Scouts this year.

"The Girl Scouts are there for service," she said. "I can always call on the Girl Scouts to help and the girls are there and that is what I love. They will do whatever is needed and that is important. The Girl Scouts' causes are always helping others with food donations. It's a cause near and dear to my heart."

Grace, who has been a member of Girl Scouts of Southeast Florida for seven years, participated in the event to decorate pie boxes.

"I feel good about it and it's a great thing to do and opportunity," she said.

"I enjoy the Girl Scouts because it can help teach and prepare you and I can learn different skills. I like community service and helping others and it's a great experience."

Joe Webb, president of Duffy's Sports Grill, praised the Girl Scouts of Southeast Florida, Palm Beach School of Autism and volunteers for their effort.

"We have been here to support Meals on Wheels for several years," he said. "The number of homebound seniors we are able to help feed is just outstanding. These folks have nowhere else to go and are in need of meals. For us to be a part of that is just fantastic."

Webb said the Duffy's Foundation has been involved with several causes across the state, including the aftermath of Hurricane Ian.

"We matched donations from our MVPs (the Duffy's loyalty program) toward Hurricane Ian relief funds," he said. "Our MVPs are the most loyal and nicest people and so generous. They always support us. It's an easy thing for us to match and it makes us feel great about what we are doing."

The Palm Beach School of Autism students helped assemble and decorate boxes for the event. Patrick Pierre Jr. serves as the director of the school's Project Next transition program. He works with students ages 18 to 22 on the autism spectrum to find opportunities in the community for job and vocational training.



Volunteers decorate the pie boxes before they are sent to the distribution sites for the Meals on Wheels of the Palm Beaches Pie It Forward Thanksgiving program. **ALEX KUSHEL/ CONTRIBUTOR PHOTOS**

"We have had a long-standing partnership with Duffy's," he said. "Duffy's has opened some of the restaurants to us to allow the students to come in and work on job training. It's really been beneficial to them. They are learning and working on vocational skills that they can take to obtain jobs in the community. It's very important. Duffy's has been one of our main partners to this day in growing our program and allowing a place for our kids to learn. We had several students move on and get jobs in the community, which has been great. Duffy's has been a big part of preparing our students for those outside jobs."

The Duffy's Foundation has been involved in several philanthropic efforts, including Toys for Tots. They have built a relationship with the Orange Bowl as well.

"We have a great relationship with the Orange Bowl and supporting kids



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through youth sports," Webb said. "The teams celebrate after their win at our restaurants."

Duffy's Sports Grill, which has 33 locations, is looking to continue to grow across the state next year.

"We are very excited how things are going in Florida," Webb said. "The season is back and it's going strong."

Visit [mowpbpie.org](http://mowpbpie.org) for information about next year's Pie It Forward.