

After Feeding 1,000 Tampa Bay School Employees in One Day, Nueva Cantina Wants to Buy Lunch for 1,000 Tampa Bay Workers

TAMPA, FL, UNITED STATES, September 2, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Nueva Cantina, the Tampa Bay restaurant group known for its Mexican street food, fresh squeezed margaritas, and immersive themed bars, donated more than \$50,000 in meals during a single teacher appreciation event. Now, it is bringing that same generosity directly to local Tampa Bay workplaces.

Key Takeaways:

- The employee-owned, four-location restaurant group is committing to feed 1,000 local workers through surprise team lunches delivered to Tampa Bay businesses, with nominations open now.
- On August 8, 2026, Nueva Cantina donated more than \$50,000 in food and beverages to over 1,000 Tampa Bay teachers and school employees in a single day across its four locations.
- Nueva Cantina credits its employee-ownership model, which allows operators to greenlight community investments without corporate approval, for making giveback efforts at this scale possible.

The Story

Nueva Cantina wants to buy lunch for you and your coworkers! The employee-owned restaurant group has committed to feeding 1,000 Tampa Bay workers through surprise team lunches delivered to businesses across the region. Local shops, salons, clinics, garages, offices, job sites and other workplaces can be nominated through @nuevacantina on social media.

There is no purchase requirement, minimum team size or formal application. The lunches are simply intended to recognize the people who help keep Tampa Bay's businesses and communities running every day.



The commitment grew from an ongoing Nueva Cantina giveback series in which the team calls a local business as though it is placing a takeout order. They call and ask to speak with the manager of the local business and if they get ahold of a manager, Nueva Cantina reveals the real reason for the call: it wants to provide lunch for the entire team.

“Local businesses are made possible by the people who show up and do the work every day,” said Ben Stanczik, Chief Marketing Officer of Nueva Cantina. “Feeding a thousand local workers is our way of saying thanks for being here with us. We’re a small business too. We just happen to have four kitchens.”

The initiative follows one of Nueva Cantina’s largest community givebacks to date. On August 8, 2026, the restaurant group invited every teacher and school employee in Tampa Bay and surrounding counties to dine at any of its four locations for free.

More than 1,000 people participated, resulting in over \$50,000 in complimentary food and beverages served in a single day. Nueva Cantina covered meals of up to \$50 per person with no additional purchase required and no cap on participation.

The invitation included everyone employed by a local school, from teachers and paraprofessionals to front office employees, custodians, bus drivers and cafeteria workers.

“We’re not a chain restaurant or answer to investors in another state. We simply decided to give back to our local community at scale and got our entire organization ready to do it,” said Raul Medina, Owner and Chief Executive Officer of Nueva Cantina. “We wanted every teacher and school employee to know that they’re loved and appreciated. Now, we want to create that same feeling for teams at businesses throughout the community.”

Nueva Cantina credits its employee-ownership model with making giveback efforts of this scale



possible. Top-performing team members have the opportunity to become managing partners in their restaurants, giving local operators a direct stake in the company and the communities its locations serve. Where traditional restaurant concepts have outside investors, they retain full control over operating their business and reinvesting their profits into their existing locations and future restaurant growth.

Surprise team lunches will be delivered on a weekly, rolling basis as Nueva Cantina works toward its goal of feeding 1,000 local workers.

How can a Tampa Bay business be nominated for a free team lunch?

Anyone can nominate a local business by contacting @nuevacantina on social media. Businesses of all types and team sizes may be nominated, including offices, salons, healthcare practices, retail stores, garages, construction crews and other local workplaces.

Why is Nueva Cantina feeding 1,000 Tampa Bay workers?

The initiative is an extension of Nueva Cantina's ongoing local business giveback series and its recent teacher appreciation event. After providing free meals to more than 1,000 Tampa Bay school employees, the restaurant group committed to recognizing 1,000 additional people working throughout the community.

About Nueva Cantina

Founded in St. Petersburg in 2016, Nueva Cantina is an employee-owned Mexican restaurant group known for fresh, flavorful cuisine, fresh squeezed margaritas and themed bar experiences during every holiday season. Nueva Cantina has grown to four Tampa Bay locations in St. Petersburg, Downtown Tampa, Brandon and Palm Harbor, each offering a menu that blends traditional Mexican flavors with contemporary dishes. The company's employee-ownership model gives team members opportunities to grow into leadership and become partners in the business. For menus, reservations and additional information, visit www.nuevacantina.com.

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