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Naples Children & Education Foundation Invests a Record Over \$34 Million in Organizations Supporting Underprivileged and At-Risk Children in Collier County

NAPLES, FL (March 17, 2025) – The Naples Children & Education Foundation (NCEF), the founding organization of the Naples Winter Wine Festival, has invested a record over \$34 million in close to 50 non-profit organizations supporting underprivileged and at-risk children in Collier County. This includes \$8 million to drive enrichment and expansion of early learning opportunities.

Each year, NCEF supports local non-profits through the proceeds of the Naples Winter Wine Festival. This year's investment in future generations includes funding traditional grants of \$6.7 million and \$16.5 million for NCEF multi-year strategic initiatives that fill fundamental gaps in local children's services, plus another \$2.9 million in future projects and strategic initiatives.

In addition to funding traditional grants and multi-year strategic initiatives, NCEF has invested \$8 million in a new Early Learning Enrichment and Expansion Program to drive systemic change in Collier County, ensuring more children in the community have access to high-quality education.

“Our supporters showed an incredible amount of generosity at the 25th anniversary Naples Winter Wine Festival, allowing us to have a further profound and sustaining impact on underprivileged and at-risk children in our community,” said Stephanie Pezeshkan, 2024-25 NCEF Grant Committee Chair. “By investing in the most effective organizations, we ensure that our dollars drive meaningful change, improving lives and strengthening communities for the long term.”

This year, a total of 32 non-profit organizations received traditional grants, plus 17 additional agencies that help fill critical needs in the community by taking part in NCEF's multi-partner, multi-year strategic initiatives focusing specifically on early learning, healthcare and out-of-school time.

NCEF's unique approach, which emphasizes collaboration between organizations and bridges public and private resources, has become a blueprint for how to transform a community, one issue at a time. Each NCEF beneficiary is fully vetted and many utilize that process as a “Good Housekeeping Stamp of Approval.” The Blueprint Partner program builds upon that process.

To lay the foundation for the new Early Learning Program, NCEF commissioned the Florida Chamber Foundation to conduct a comprehensive study, identifying critical needs, strategic recommendations and best practices. Guided by this data-driven approach, funds will support such things as infrastructure improvements, staff salaries and program enhancements.

“This significant investment in early learning aims to close persistent gaps in early childhood education and marks the start of a transformative initiative to create lasting impact for children and families in our community,” said Maria Jimenez-Lara, Chief Executive Officer of NCEF.

The following is a list of NCEF 2025-2026 traditional beneficiaries and dollar amounts awarded:

Organization	Award
ABLE Academy	\$ 190,000
Avow Kids	\$ 127,200
Better Together Strengthening Families	\$ 200,000
Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Sun Coast	\$ 110,000
Boys & Girls Club of Collier County	\$ 450,000
Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation	\$ 75,000
Catholic Charities	\$ 295,000
Children’s Advocacy Center of Collier County	\$ 686,000
Conservancy of Southwest Florida	\$ 75,000
First Tee – Naples/Collier	\$ 75,000
Fostering Success	\$ 415,000
Fun Time Early Childhood Academy	\$ 490,000
Grace Place for Children & Families	\$ 400,000
Legal Aid Service of Collier County	\$ 600,000
Literacy Collier (<i>formerly Literacy Volunteers of Collier County</i>)	\$ 75,000
MusicScores Violin	\$ 50,000
Naples Therapeutic Riding Center	\$ 100,000
NCH Naples Comprehensive Health – Bilingual Perinatal Community Educator	\$ 84,000
NCH Naples Comprehensive Health – Pediatric and Special Needs Navigator	\$ 85,000
NCH Safe & Healthy Children's Coalition	\$ 50,000
Pace Center for Girls	\$ 100,000
Special Olympics Florida	\$ 127,500
St. Matthew's House	\$ 100,000
STARability Foundation	\$ 80,000
Taste the Impact	\$ 125,000
The Education Foundation of Collier County – Champions for Learning	\$ 225,000
The Salvation Army of Collier County	\$ 75,000
The Shelter for Abused Women & Children	\$ 150,000
United Arts Collier	\$ 85,000
Valerie's House	\$ 200,000
YMCA of Collier County	\$ 350,000

Youth Haven	\$	450,000
Total Traditional Funding	\$	6,699,700

NCEF Initiative Organizations and Blueprint Partners		
Initiative	Organization	Award
Early Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ABLE Academy • Early Learning Coalition of SWFL • Early Literacy & Learning Model (ELLM) • Guadalupe Center • Pathways Early Education Center of Immokalee • Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA) 	
	Total 2025-2027 Funding	\$ 4,310,000
Healthcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthcare Network • Lee Health Foundation – GCH Pediatric Rehab Immokalee • NCH Naples Comprehensive Health – NCEF Healthcare Director 	
	Total 2025-2027 Funding	\$ 2,280,000
Out-of-School Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boys & Girls Club of Collier County – Miracle Program • Boys & Girls Club of Collier County – Out-of-School Time Initiative • Boys & Girls Club of Collier County – Bolch Campus • Guadalupe Center • Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA) • The Immokalee Foundation 	
	Total 2025–2028 Funding	\$ 6,434,000
NCEF Special Projects/Out-of-Cycle Grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collier CARES • David Lawrence Centers – Capital Campaign • Florida Gulf Coast University – NCEF Early Childhood Development Center • Lee Health Foundation – GCH Pediatric Behavioral Health Naples Clinic (2025-2027) • Midwest Food Bank • Capacity Building 	
	Total Special Projects/Out-of-Cycle Grants	\$ 3,428,000

2025-2026 Traditional Grants	\$	6,699,700.00
Multi-Year Strategic Initiatives	\$	16,452,000.00
Early Learning Enrichment and Expansion	\$	8,000,000.00
Future Projects & Strategic Initiatives	\$	2,930,114.00
Total 2025-2026 Funding	\$	34,081,814.00

About Naples Children & Education Foundation

The Naples Children & Education Foundation (NCEF), the founding organization of the Naples Winter Wine Festival, is improving the educational, emotional and health outcomes of underprivileged and at-risk children. Through its annual grants and strategic initiatives, NCEF has impacted close to 90 of the most effective nonprofits in the local community, providing 350,000 children with the services and resources they need to excel. NCEF's unique approach, which emphasizes collaboration between organizations and bridges public and private resources, has become a blueprint for how to transform a community, one issue at a time.

About Naples Winter Wine Festival

The Naples Winter Wine Festival (NWWF), one of the world's most prestigious charity wine auctions, offers a weekend of unforgettable memories. Guests enjoy world-class food and wine during intimate dinners in elegant, private homes and other landmark settings throughout Naples and are invited to bid on once-in-a-lifetime travel and wine experiences during an electrifying live auction. Since its inaugural event in 2001, the NWWF has raised more than \$336 million, making a profound difference in the lives of hundreds of thousands of children in Collier County.

For additional information on the Naples Children & Education Foundation or the Naples Winter Wine Festival, contact Lisa Juliano at lisa@napleswinefestival.com or 239-514-2239.