

Super Hero: Ocean Reef Community Foundation

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For more than 55 years, The College of the Florida Keys has continuously evolved to meet the growing need for higher education in Monroe County. Covering a service area of 126 miles (the length of the Keys), the College has worked to maximize its impact and relevance to the economies and needs of each population center in the Keys. In evaluating the needs of CFK's service areas, it became clear that a stand-alone facility in the upper Keys was critical to the success of our students, the College, and the community's workforce demand.

Since 2013, the College's quest has developed through various stages from feasibility studies and educational programs review to location selection and funding consideration. Over this evolution, one important group emerged that shared the College's vision for higher education in the Upper Keys, understood the importance of community, and was ready to "roll up their sleeves" and work toward supporting the goal of a new center in Key Largo. This extraordinary group was the Ocean Reef Community Foundation and its members.

For them and their work, the College is forever grateful.

Ocean Reef Community Foundation (ORCF) and their resident-supporters have a long rich history of providing critical support to numerous non-profit organizations in the Keys and south Miami-Dade County. The spirit of charity and desire to maximize the impact of giving motivated Ocean Reef members to establish the Ocean Reef Community Foundation in 1994. ORCF's Community Grants Program funds dozens



From the left: ORCF Vice President Stephen Woodsum, CFK Vice President of Advancement Dr. Frank Wood, CFK President Dr. Jonathan Gueverra, and ORCF Grants Committee Chair Janie Sims.

of worthy charities in the interest areas of Education, Youth, Health & Family Services, and Community in the Upper Keys, Homestead, and Florida City each spring. Including 2020 grants, the program has donated more than \$11 million to improve the quality of life in the communities where Ocean Reef employee families live since the All Charities collaboration began in 2008.

For Monroe County, Ocean Reef Community is one of the largest employers and CFK is the largest provider of higher education. A partnership between the two was a natural fit. In recent years, ORCF has supported the College's needs for nursing lab equipment, welding education infrastructure, "Game-Changer" scholarships, apprenticeship scholarships, and most recently capital support for the Upper Keys Center. Upon the College's selection and purchase of the site for the Upper Keys Center, a dedicated leadership group emerged from within the Ocean Reef Community. Under the leadership of **William Nutt**, ORCF's Chairman, a group of education-minded philanthropists, comprised of **Alan Goldstein, Jim Anderton, Bill Parfet, Michael Berman, Steve**

Markel, Tom Davidson Sr., and Ed Hajim, answered the call to assist the College and launched an effort to raise funds. Based on the work of this extraordinary group and the Ocean Reef Community Foundation, the College recently received a \$1.2 million

contribution toward the Center and a pledge of another \$1.2 million.

This generous support combined with a Federal EDA grant awarded to the College, CFK Foundation support, and other private assistance reaches a total of \$20 million, the cost to complete the Center. Hats off to the Ocean Reef Community and all who have worked to make this dream come true. The College looks forward to a long productive partnership to benefit our students and our community.

To learn more about this important project, contact committee members listed in the story or the Foundation directly at 367-4707 or foundation@oceanreef.com. To join us in supporting the new campus and wealth of opportunities it will create for Ocean Reef employees and the whole Upper Keys community, mail checks payable to Ocean Reef Community Foundation, with "CFK Upper Keys Center Fund" in the memo line, to 35 Ocean Reef Drive, Ste. 148, Key Largo, FL 33037.



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