

CFK Nursing Students Key to Vaccination Success at ORC & Beyond



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Long championed by the Foundation, the College of the Florida Keys Upper Keys Center is expected to open on time for the fall term this year at MM106 bayside. The 38,000 square foot campus will be an impressive structure at the entry to the Florida Keys and will accommodate many Ocean Reef-relevant programs including nursing, emergency medical technology, public safety, marine environmental technology, and construction apprenticeships. The Category 5 facility will also serve as an emergency operations center for the county.

You may have noticed yourself or learned in last week's Town Hall meeting that nursing students and faculty from the College of the Florida Keys (CFK) are playing an important role in Ocean Reef's ongoing vaccination effort. As Vice Chairman of both the Ocean Reef Medical Center and Ocean Reef Community Foundation **Michael Berman** put it, "We would not have been able to run the vaccination center, and have the Medical Center remain operational, without their help. Dr. Fry and her team were a godsend!"

We at the Foundation are thrilled to facilitate the college's support through our ongoing relationship. Our group has been instrumental in championing CFK's Upper Keys Center, now under construction and scheduled for completion this fall, since I first contacted them in 2015 to bring more educational and workforce training opportunities to the Upper Keys. While the benefits of CFK for Ocean Reef and all of Monroe County are many and obvious, we certainly did not foresee them coming to the rescue at a mass vaccination effort!

Jim Anderton, a former community college president who serves on the Foundation's board and committee to benefit the CFK capital project, says, "This is a wonderful example of the benefits of community/college partnerships and yet

another reason the ORC community should support CFK."

Anderton "readily agreed" to reach out to the college just before Christmas when "it was clear that their assistance in this herculean undertaking would be a win/win – a win for their nursing students who, under proper supervision, would get invaluable training in a real world setting and a win for ORC and adjacent communities who needed significantly increased medical staffing to administer the vaccines in a qualitative, quantitative, and timely manner." CFK President Dr. Jonathan Gueverra agreed and, despite the college being closed for winter break, quickly mobilized a team to make it happen.

CFK Director of Nursing & Health Sciences Dr. Carla Fry leads the Ocean Reef team of eight students under Dean of Sciences & Nursing Mark Roby. A Fulbright Scholar, Dr. Fry started her 33-year nursing career as a combat field medic in the US Army and, with a research focus in vaccine uptake in disparate populations, is totally in her element. She explains her students had been forced to work entirely virtually since last March because of the pandemic, so "When we learned of an opportunity to assist with the COVID-19 vaccine efforts at Ocean Reef, we jumped at the chance to become a part of solution!"



CFK/Ocean Reef Vaccination Dream Team.

Just after completing the first set of shots, Dr. Fry emailed me about the experience: "On behalf of Dr. Gueverra and the entire CFK family, we thank Ocean Reef for their hospitality and the extraordinarily well-organized vaccine effort. Our students have learned invaluable lessons in project management, patient care, and vaccine delivery. Special thanks to Michael Berman, Keith Young, and Christopher Grant for thinking of everything as they assembled the Ocean Reef Vaccine Dream Team! We are proud to be a part of history in the making."

A great story already, it does not end there. With experience and tested protocols for mass vaccination events gained at Ocean Reef, the CFK team is now ready to hit the ground running programs to vaccinate 800+ people per day throughout the Keys as more doses become

available. The college recently entered an agreement with the health department to become an official Point of Dispensing Site and is working with our Foundation, Monroe County and other entities in a coordinated effort to be ready to host mass vaccinations at their Key West campus and several other sites Keys-wide with just a day's notice.

To learn more about the CFK Upper Keys Center and/or COVID-19 Relief Fund efforts, please contact us at (305) 367-4707 or foundation@oceanreef.com. To donate, please send checks made payable to ORCF with "COVID" or "CFK" in the memo line to 35 Ocean Reef Drive, Ste. 148, Key Largo, FL 33037.

Your support of All Charities provides important funding for the Ocean Reef Community Foundation. Become a Patron Supporter, call (305) 367-5996 to learn more.