



It's Back to School Time!

How ORCF Community Grants Are Shaping Bright Futures

By Amy Cornaire, Ocean Reef Community Foundation & All Charities

As the school year begins, students from the Upper Keys to Homestead and Florida City are stepping into their classrooms with renewed enthusiasm, thanks to the Ocean Reef Community Foundation's 2024 Community Grants program. With your help, these grants are making a significant impact on countless young learners, ensuring they have the resources and opportunities to thrive academically, athletically, and creatively.

Before the first school bell even rang, many families benefited from the support of grant recipients like the University of Miami's pediatric mobile healthcare unit, the Keys AHEC mobile dental unit, Miami Lighthouse for the Blind & Visually Impaired, and In Jacob's Shoes. These programs help ensure students begin the school year healthy and ready to learn, setting the stage for a successful academic journey.

At Key Largo School, the AVID college readiness program, along with college field trips and teacher training, help to develop the habits and skills students need to succeed academically in a way that's both age-appropriate and challenging. KLS students will also soon be discovering new passions and honing their talents through ORCF Community Grant-supported programs like the Drama Club, Softball, and Baseball. These extracurricular activities foster



AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) is a national program designed to support and assist students to succeed in a college preparatory path for admission to universities and colleges.

teamwork, leadership skills, and confidence while creating a strong sense of belonging among students. Often, it's these extracurricular activities that keep kids engaged in school and out of trouble.

With their 2024 ORCF Community Grant, Ocean Studies Charter School in Key Largo has introduced a zSpace STEM lab, equipped with six laptops and immersive programming that will enhance students' understanding of complex scientific concepts through hands-on learning. Additional STEM programs enriching children's education and funded by ORCF Community Grants include technology support at the Centro Campesino Farmworker Center, the provision of 40 Chromebooks for four enFAMILIA out-of-school-time centers in Homestead and Florida City, as well as the Cox Science Center's Science Passport educational program in elementary schools in our surrounding communities.

At Coral Shores High School in the Upper Keys, the AVID teacher training program will better prepare teachers to guide students toward college eligibility and success, while positive reinforcement strategies create an environment where every student can excel. This year, ORCF Community Grants also provided small appliances for the Culinary Kitchen

and Yamaha motors to support marine maintenance certifications, opening doors for students exploring career paths beyond the traditional 4-year college route. Additionally, the Coral Shores Athletic Department Hardship Assistance Fund ensures that every student has the opportunity to participate in sports, regardless of financial constraints.

Our Community Grants program also embraces arts education, supporting opportunities such as the Adrienne Arsht Center's STEAM curriculum and the Busy Bees Great Adventure live performance field trip for 7th graders in Homestead/Florida City Title I schools. ArtSouth's arts education program at the Chapman Partnership Family Resource Center and Miami Dade College Homestead Campus is also bringing creativity to life for our local students.

And let's not forget the importance of after-school programs in supporting students' growth and development. In 2024, ORCF Community Grants funded such programs for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Miami, Branches Florida City, Centro Campesino, enFamilia, South Florida Council Boy Scouts of America, Girl Scout Council of Tropical Florida, Greater Miami Youth for Christ, and YMCA of South Florida.

ORCF's Community Grants



Health Information Project (HIP) empowers high school students to tackle the health crises of their generation through a school-based, peer-to-peer, comprehensive health education program.

are making a lasting impact on kids of ALL ages as they head back to school. With your help we're supporting early childhood programs like United Way's Success by Six and Florida Keys Healthy Start; K-8 programs such as City Year's focus on academic and social-emotional development coaching in Homestead schools; and high school initiatives like the Health Information Project (HIP), revolutionizing health education by training high school juniors and seniors to teach their freshmen peers. And with college scholarships from programs like Take Stock in Children, Mexican American Council, and our new Impact Fund Initiative, College of the Florida Keys Building Bridges Scholarship, ORCF is helping students at every stage of their educational journey, ensuring they have the support they need to succeed and thrive.

Through participation in All Charities Weekend and the ORCF Community Grants program, the generosity of our Ocean Reef Club membership is shaping lives and futures in our local schools. Thank you for being the cornerstone of our community's success!

See the full list of our 2024 Community Grant recipients here: oceanreefcommunityfoundation.org/grant-recipients/.