

OCEAN REEF COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Building Bridges

In August of 2021 Key Largo was transformed with The College of the Florida Keys opening their Upper Keys Center. This facility, located at MM 106 became the second standalone location and serves as a third location for in person learning assuring that the College could reach the full population which is spread out over 100 miles across Monroe County.

The Ocean Reef Community Foundation along with several Club Members were instrumental in the building of this facility. Today, the Foundation and many Members continue to support and guide progress as the programs, offerings, apprenticeships and degrees evolve. The support ties directly to the newly created Building Bridges Scholarship that was formed by our OR Community Foundation this past December.

With a commitment of \$500,000 from our Impact Fund as a 1:1 match the goal is to create an endowment of \$1,000,000. This will provide \$50K per year for scholarship funds in perpetuity, all focused on students attending the Upper Keys Center. But not just any students. The Scholarship provides preference for Associates and their families that work for Ocean Reef, ORCA and our All Charities Recipient Partners. It also prioritizes residence of Monroe County



Building Bridges Scholarship recipients gather with ORCF President Richard Weinstein at the Upper Keys Center during a College recognition event last month.

and supports students for specific programs such as Nursing and Law Enforcement.

There are many other programs and degrees offered at the College. With registered Construction Apprenticeships in Carpentry, HVAC, electrical, and plumbing along with both an AS and BS for nursing, a BAS in Supervision and Management and a degree in Hospitality and Eco Tourism, the College can offer advancement and career opportunities that were previously unavailable in any form for this area of the Florida Keys.

Over the past year, which served as a proof of concept, the Foundation funded the Building Bridges Scholarship and over 60 students have been able to take advantage of that \$50K in funds. As a last dollar scholarship we ensure that all other federal and state grants that a student may qualify to receive are in hand before we step in to support. However, unlike many other

scholarships, Building Bridges will go on to financially support books, tools, uniforms and equipment - all critical for the Nursing and Law Enforcement programs. After hearing about this success, several Members have already provided matching funds for this scholarship that quickly put us well over halfway to our goal of fulfilling this match.

All of this is thanks to the generosity of all Members. The

Impact Fund was created as part of the All Charities Funding Agreements. This allows the Foundation to accumulate funds from the All Charities Gala and utilize them for larger projects that would not typically fall under the Community Grants Guidelines due to their size or overall cost. Additional impact projects have included the Helipad at Baptist Hospital and more recently a construction project for ARC, located in Homestead and serving those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, to reduce ambient noise distractions in their classrooms by completing their temporary walls to fully enclose each room.

We look forward to completing our match for this new scholarship and to sharing enlightening stories of the associates and their families that will avail themselves of this wonderful opportunity in the near future!