

OCEAN REEF COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Back to School Spotlight on New Community Grants

By Amy Cornaire, Communications & Events Manager, Ocean Reef Community Foundation & All Charities

It's back-to-school time again. Students are returning to classrooms, teachers are welcoming new faces and families are settling back into the familiar rhythms of another school year. Over the years, we've shared many of the ways Ocean Reef Community Foundation Community Grants help students throughout the Upper Keys, Homestead and Florida City succeed in school and beyond.

That support begins with early childhood and school-readiness programs and follows students through elementary, middle and high school, and college and career training. Dozens of grants are providing academic enrichment, STEAM and music education, healthcare and mental health support, mentoring, athletics, after-school programming, college and career preparation, scholarships and even essentials such as food, hygiene items, shoes and school supplies.

This year's grants reach students directly at schools including Key Largo School, Coral Shores High School and Ocean Studies Charter School; Florida City Elementary School, Homestead Middle School, Homestead Senior High School and Somerset Prep Homestead, while many other programs serve students across multiple Upper Keys, Homestead and Florida City schools.

Altogether, ORCF's 2026 Community Grants include more than \$1 million in 36



City Year welcomed students back to Laura C. Saunders Elementary School, part of its work supporting students with academic and social-emotional development coaching.

programs helping children in and around our local schools.

Every year there's something new to add to the back-to-school story. Several new 2026 Community Grant recipients are expanding the ways ORCF funding reaches local students this year – introducing girls to STEM, developing tomorrow's leaders, meeting students' basic needs and helping high school seniors experiencing homelessness celebrate graduation and prepare for college.

At Homestead Middle School, Archangel Foundation received its first \$15,000 Community Grant for an after-school and summer STEM tutoring and enrichment program coordinated with Girl Power Rocks. The program combines academic support with exposure to science, technology, engineering and math, helping girls discover interests and possibilities that could influence their future studies and careers.

New grantee Breakthrough Miami received \$15,000 for academic enrichment and leadership development serving 140 students in grades five through 12 and into higher education, from Homestead and Florida City. Its long-term approach provides continued academic support, enrichment and leadership opportunities as

students progress from middle school through high school and beyond.

Sometimes helping a student succeed starts with the basics. His Hands & Feet received a first-time \$5,000 Community Grant for its Haven of Hope Pantry at Homestead Senior High School, providing food, hygiene items and school supplies right where students need them. The school itself also received a \$20,000 grant for new uniforms to support its growing band and build school pride.

And for students nearing the end of their K-12 journey, the Miami-Dade County Public Schools Foundation received a new \$15,000 grant for its Project UP-START Graduation Milestone Initiative. The program helps more than 94 Homestead and Florida City high school seniors experiencing homelessness participate in graduation events alongside their classmates and provides essentials kits for those continuing on to college.

There's also a new chapter in ORCF's longtime support of Kristi House and M.U.J.E.R. The two organizations have joined forces at The Healing Sanctuary, a transformative community resource serving children and families impacted by abuse, violence and trauma in Homestead. ORCF has



Families fill The Healing Sanctuary for its recent Back-to-School Backpack Event, where a \$200,000 ORCF Impact Fund grant is supporting renovations to this collaborative community resource.

invested \$200,000 through its Impact Fund toward renovations to help bring the vision for this collaborative campus to life. The Healing Sanctuary recently welcomed local children for a Back-to-School Backpack Event, providing a timely example of what this new partnership is all about: bringing organizations, resources and families together in one welcoming place to help children thrive.

These new programs join a much larger network of ORCF Community Grant recipients serving children and families and are part of the nearly \$2.7 million awarded Off-Reef through the 2026 Community Grants program to nonprofit organizations serving the Upper Keys, Florida City and the City of Homestead.

And behind every grant is the generosity of our Ocean Reef Membership. Through their support of All Charities, ORC Members make the Community Grants program possible – allowing it to grow, welcome new partners and find new ways to meet the changing needs of our surrounding communities.

To learn more, visit our office in the Business Center (35 Ocean Reef Drive, Suite 148), call 305-367-4707, or visit oceanreefcommunityfoundation.org.