



GOOD DEEDS

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Children at the **McKay Academy**, in Bradenton, were treated to a special celebration in advance of Christmas. The students enjoyed gifts, elves, face painting and a visit by Santa Claus as part of the “Flight to the North Pole” program.

The charitable effort provides compassion and goodwill to local families who have children suffering from life-threatening illnesses or special health problems. Each year, the **Manatee County Sheriff's Office** works in conjunction with the **Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport Fire Department** to orchestrate a special event on-site at the airport. This year, the program expanded into two area schools, including the McKay Academy, a private school managed by Goodwill Manasota for youths with various learning challenges.

Students were asked to write wish lists to Santa, which volunteers from the Sheriff's Office fulfilled using funds raised throughout the year. Sixty-two students at the McKay Academy were recipients of the overwhelming generosity of the Sheriff's Office. Overall, 275 area children received gifts through the program.

The **Florida Department of State's Division of Cultural Affairs** has honored **Embracing Our Differences** with a Diversity and Inclusion Award for its ongoing efforts to promote diversity and inclusion in Sarasota and Manatee counties.

The award, which will be presented at a special awards ceremony on Jan. 24 in Tallahassee, recognizes innovative and exceptional efforts that promote diversity in arts and cultural programming. Shirley Brown, a Sarasota County School Board member, nominated Embracing Our Differences for the award.

Since 2004, EOD's outdoor art exhibit, celebrating the theme of "enriching lives through diversity and inclusion," has showcased the art and words of thousands of artists and writers from around the world, including hundreds of area-based students and educators. Crucial to the organization's mission are its award-winning education initiatives.

Presented in partnership with the regional school districts and nationally recognized educators, these programs positively impact the lives of thousands of area teachers and students every year. These include annual workshops and retreats providing diversity curricula for area educators, free bus transportation for students and teachers to visit area cultural venues, and student docent programs in high schools.

As part of its Season of Sharing program and fund distribution, **Community Foundation of Sarasota County** recently awarded **JFCS of the Suncoast** \$50,000 to support families in need.

The funds will be allocated to local families who have special needs and/or extenuating circumstances requiring emergency financial support, including: first month and/or past due rental assistance, mortgage payments or other housing assistance; utility payments/deposits; emergency help with moving and/or storage; child care or summer day care expenses for working families in emergency situations; transportation assistance to and from work, car repair and/or medical appointments; clothing, such as uniforms, necessary to gain employment; required work tools for people with confirmed employment; and emergency food vouchers.

Eight grants totaling \$854,869 were awarded by **Sarasota Memorial Healthcare Foundation** to **Sarasota Memorial Health Care System** and five local community organizations during its fall 2017 grants cycle.

The grants were: \$427,829 for the SMH Rehabilitation Department, for equipment used for locomotion therapy, over-ground gait and balance training, a verticalization (tilt) table and an upper extremity (arm and hand) exoskeleton for adaptive arm weight support training. \$140,000 for **Community Health Centers of Sarasota County** for a comprehensive electronic health record system that will interface with the SMH electronic patient medical record

computer system. \$80,850 for **First Step of Sarasota** for medications and supplies for a medication assisted treatment program for indigent and uninsured drug addicted individuals who arrive at the SMH Emergency Care Center with opiate overdoses or IV drug use-related medical crises. \$76,000 for the SMH Clinical Research Center for salaries and technology for a pilot chronic obstructive pulmonary disease study to evaluate how remote health care management might reduce hospital readmissions and improve patient outcomes.

Also \$73,000 for the SMH Clinical Research Center for a pilot program for participants who don't medically qualify for the hospital's "Ornish Diet & Lifestyle Program." Grant funds cover salaries for a nutritionist and wellness coach to implement the pilot program. \$40,000 for **Vincent Academy**, a vocational school for adults with severe mental illnesses, to help integrate them into the community through gainful employment. The grant covers salary and benefits for a full-time "Outreach/Enrollment Coordinator" to connect hospital discharge departments, such as Sarasota Memorial, with local businesses, law enforcement, shelters and faith-based groups working with the mentally ill.

And \$9,690 for **Healthy Start Coalition of Sarasota** for prenatal and post-partum educational videos and printed materials in both English and Spanish. The printed materials will be given to new mothers when they are discharged from SMH. \$7,500 for **Florida Cancer Specialists Foundation** for nonmedical patient assistance. Florida Cancer Specialists Foundation fosters community resources for financial and emotional support and education for cancer patients. The grant is to assist cancer patients with nonmedical living expenses while undergoing treatment.

Donor investment and partnership support from two area private foundations will enable recovery program advancements at **Mental Health Community Centers**.

The **Wilson Wood Foundation** awarded \$20,000 for services at **Beacon House in Venice** and **Anchor House in North Port**, and the **Heron Creek Community Foundation** awarded \$5,000 in service funding to Anchor House in North Port. These awards provide opportunities for members attending

programs at those facilities to participate in wellness programs utilizing the national Substance Abuse and Mental Health Associations' Evidence-Based initiatives.

Members also receive personalized assistance from Certified Recovery Peer Specialists and work with Supported Employment Specialists to re-enter the workforce

JFCS of the Suncoast was recently awarded a \$60,000 grant from the **Charlotte P. Graver Fund** and **Community Foundation of Sarasota County** to provide support for JFCS' community-based outreach programs and events.

The funds will be used toward ongoing funding needs for JFCS' seven focal areas, which include outreach and support services for families, children, youth, cancer support, veterans, Jewish healing and seniors, as well as events that help raise additional funds for the nonprofit agency across a six-county region.

During the holidays, **Dr. James Foley**, a Sarasota dentist, donated 500 packages of dental supplies for every needy, homebound client. The packages included a toothbrush, toothpaste and other dental items.

The **Smile Centre** doctors and team, along with the crew of **Sarasota County Dental Association** dentists, again participated in the annual Project Christmas Smile, founded and organized every year by **Dr. Thomas Doan**.

The goal of this event is to provide our community with much needed complimentary dental services for those suffering from discomfort who cannot afford treatment.

The Smile Centre, one of a handful of participating dental practices this year, treated 71 patients and provided \$29,000 worth of free dentistry.

The Florida Center for Early Childhood, a local nonprofit serving at-risk children and their families in Sarasota, Charlotte, Manatee and DeSoto/Hardee counties, was awarded a \$3,000 grant from the **Heron Creek Community Foundation** in North Port.

The grant will be used to acquire classroom supplies and furniture for children with special needs at the North Port campus of the Starfish Academy, The Florida Center's early education program.

Children First, the exclusive provider of Head Start programming for Sarasota County, recently received a \$4,500 grant from the **Junior League of Sarasota**. The funds will provide necessary support for Children First's "Career Readiness for Women" class, offered at no cost to low-income families through Children First's Families First Institute.

The Junior League of Sarasota founded the Sarasota Day Nursery, which would eventually become Children First Inc., in 1961.

The **Child Protection Center** in Sarasota has received a \$5,000 grant from the **PNC Foundation**.

The grant will fund the CPC's Personal Safety and Community Awareness program, which works in coordination with nearly every school in Sarasota County. The PSCA program reaches over 60,000 private and public school students, educating children at each and every grade level about personal safety.

Preschoolers and kindergartners are taught key personal safety rules, while older students learn about internet safety and anti-bullying.

CPC's PSCA team also trains hundreds of professionals who work with children, such as teachers, bus drivers and law enforcement officials, on how to spot and report physical and sexual abuse.

The **Harry Sudakoff Foundation** has awarded \$10,284 to **Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Sun Coast**.

This grant is to purchase a fingerprint scanner for the Sarasota office, which is needed to complete background screenings for volunteer mentors, and to renew the service contract for the Venice office's fingerprint scanner.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Sun Coast has received a \$14,466 grant from the **William G. and Marie Selby Foundation**.

The grant will fund one fingerprinting scanner for the Manatee office, needed to complete background screenings for volunteer mentors, a one-year service contract renewal for four fingerprinting scanners (which are located in Sarasota, Venice, Port Charlotte and Naples) and three computers and one printer for the Port Charlotte office.

The **Evalyn Sadlier Jones Foundation** recently awarded **Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Sun Coast** \$5,000 for its Mentoring Children of Promise program and the recently launched Next Steps to 21 program in Sarasota County.

Mentoring Children of Promise serves youth with one or both parents incarcerated in federal, state or local prisons/jails by providing them with specially-trained mentors and necessary support services. The youth in this program are among the most vulnerable in our community.

Next Steps to 21 provides continued guidance to the 10th to 12th grade youth it currently serves until they reach age 21, thereby placing them on a career pathway to sustainable independence.

United Way Suncoast has awarded \$40,000 to **Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Sun Coast** for its one-to-one mentoring programs in Sarasota County.

Big Brothers Big Sisters programs encourage children to set higher goals for high schools and college, improve their confidence in themselves, and help them have better, stronger relationships with their families.

MSC Foundation contributed \$1,000 to **Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Sun Coast** for its Community-Based program in Sarasota, Manatee, and Charlotte counties.

In the Community-Based Program, some Bigs meet their Littles on the weekends. Others get together with their Littles in the evenings. Each match develops a schedule that works for them.

Getting together doesn't require a special occasion or expensive activity, just a few hours every month doing things the Little and Big already enjoy. At the end of the day, it's really all about starting a friendship, providing guidance and inspiring the Little to reach his or her potential.

Home Banc of Lakewood Ranch team members, clients and friends recently collected over 100 pairs of new and slightly used shoes for distribution by **Soles4Souls**, a nonprofit that helps people in need by simply repurposing used shoes.

Over the past two years about 300 pairs of shoes have been collected.

New and slightly used shoes are still being collected at Home Banc's Lakewood Ranch office, 6230 University Parkway.

Local business owner **Danny Campos-Lopez** has found a special way to give back to area veterans.

Campos-Lopez, owner of Sharp Cuts Barbershop in downtown Sarasota, contacted **Goodwill Manasota's Veteran Services Program** team in December, offering to provide free haircuts to veterans in need. **Eric Davis**, who served for 10 years in the Coast Guard, was the first veteran to benefit – he was given a fresh new look for the holidays and additional veterans will enjoy the same in the coming year.

Goodwill Manasota's Veterans Services Program, launched in 2013, was created to help eliminate barriers to employment, provide opportunities for higher-paying positions for veterans and their families, and connect veterans with needed social services.

Family and friends came up with an idea of a Habitat for Humanity volunteer project during a celebration of **Jeff Pfeifer's** life.

Several dozen employees of Carpenter Contractors of America Inc. showed up on a Saturday in early January to install roof trusses on a Bradenton home in tribute to Pfeifer, a 30-year veteran of the company and vice president of construction.

Carpenter Contractors of America donated the materials and trusses for the **Manatee Habitat for Humanity** home and the crane service that lifted the trusses into position, in addition to the volunteer labor.

The employees will also plywood sheath the roof and build the interior walls.

A major portion of the construction costs has been sponsored by Sun Hydraulics Corp., which is also donating over 200 hours of volunteer labor.