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**Charitable grants of \$7.9 million awarded to nonprofits by Naples Winter Wine Festival founders**  
*Funds support 22 charities and three strategic initiatives aimed at transforming children's lives*

NAPLES, Fla. (April 11, 2011) – Trustees of the Naples Children & Education Foundation, founders of the Naples Winter Wine Festival, presented \$7.96 million in grant checks to charitable organizations benefiting Collier County's underprivileged and at-risk children. During the April 10 ceremony, at the Naples Botanical Garden, 22 charities received checks totaling \$5.82 million to help fund programs and services, and expand offerings as needed. Grants ranged from \$25,000 (St. Matt's Camps for Kids Program) to \$1 million (Boys & Girls Club of Collier County). In addition, grants totaling \$2.14 million were awarded for multi-year, strategic initiatives aimed at fighting hunger, addressing behavioral health issues, and increasing capacity and access to quality early learning programs.

"This is the 11th year that NCEF trustees have had the privilege of putting festival proceeds to work for children in Collier County," said NCEF trustee Bruce Sherman, who along with his wife Cynthia chaired the 2011 festival. "These children have physical, emotional and educational needs that are inhibiting their potential, and thanks to the generosity of festival supporters, we are providing a medical, academic and social safety net."

Added Cynthia, also an NCEF trustee, "Grants presented today cover a range of children's services from building a playground at the Immokalee Child Care Center, to funding therapists at Catholic Charities for victims of sexual assault and familial sexual abuse, to grants for early learning at Guadalupe Center and through the Immokalee Early Learning Initiative."

According to Anne Welsh McNulty, a research study was key in determining grant allocations for this year and beyond. The study, conducted by the University of Florida's Lastinger Center for Learning and commissioned by NCEF, showed progress made in serving children's medical and dental needs. It also revealed huge spikes in children's hunger and homelessness due to the economy, and showed that mental health and out-of-school needs remain critical.

"The study shows that NCEF has gotten off to a very good start, but there is lots more to be done," McNulty said. "NCEF takes a holistic approach to helping children, and with no bureaucracy to slow us down, we are positioned to swiftly respond to identified needs."

NCEF's Lunch Boxes of Love initiative to end childhood hunger in the county, which was funded through a special auction lot at the January wine festival, is providing nutritious meals for children and their families using a specially outfitted mobile pantry. NCEF is also working on a permanent improvement to the food distribution system in the county for children in need. "This initiative will reach 50,000 to 60,000 children over three years – more than any other single NCEF initiative," said Robert Scott, NCEF trustee and board chair.

Grants awarded to eight organizations, including the Boys & Girls Club, the Southwest Florida Workforce Development Board and St. Matt's, fund out-of-school programs such as after-school and during the summer for 3,300 at-risk children who otherwise would be left wandering the streets or home alone. The grant awarded to Collier County Child Advocacy Council funds the agency's work on behalf of abused and neglected children. NCEF's H.U.G.S. initiative, which got under way after a fund-a-need lot at the 2010 festival raised more than \$600,000, is beginning to make inroads. Collaboratively run by several organizations, H.U.G.S. screens children for early identification of mental health issues and provides intervention as well as spearheading a campaign to wipe out the stigma attached to mental illness.

Following is a complete list of 2011 NCEF grants awarded:

Able Academy	\$185,000
Boys & Girls Club of Collier County	\$1,000,000
Catholic Charities	\$125,000
The Children's Hospital of Southwest Florida	\$150,000
Collier Child Care Resources Inc.	\$175,000
Children's Advocacy Center of Collier County/CPT	\$460,000
Eden Florida	\$150,000
Early Literacy and Learning Model Program	\$350,000
Friends of Foster Children of Southwest Florida	\$300,000
Fun Time Early Childhood Academy	\$120,000
Guadalupe Center of Immokalee	\$732,000
Immokalee Child Care Center	\$287,000
Immokalee Housing & Family Services	\$40,000
Greater Marco Family YMCA	\$200,000
Naples Equestrian Challenge Inc.	\$60,000
Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA)	\$280,000
The Shelter for Abused Women & Children	\$320,000
Southwest Florida Workforce Development Board Inc.	\$337,000
St. Matthew's House/St. Matt's Camps for Kids Program	\$25,000
Tutor Corps	\$63,000
VisionQuest	\$61,000
YMCA of the Palms	\$400,000
Strategic initiative grants:	
Collier H.U.G.S. (Health Under Guided Systems)	\$1,050,000
Immokalee Early Learning Initiative	\$460,000
Lunch Boxes of Love (fighting childhood hunger)	\$630,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$7,960,000</b>

Social service agencies in Collier County are largely dependent on foundation grants, fundraisers and private donations to keep afloat. Charities that apply for NCEF grants go through a rigorous vetting process, and those that receive funding are monitored to ensure grants are effectively administered. Collaboration is stressed, with charities mandated to work together to fill gaps in service. "NCEF has helped change the paradigm, from agencies operating in isolation, to a spirit of cooperation, open communication and sharing," Scott said. "It is gratifying to see, and enables us to accomplish more for the kids."

In addition to charitable check presentations, the celebratory afternoon attended by 300 guests included a mini-food festival presented by 11 local restaurants belonging to Naples Originals – a group of independent, locally owned and operated restaurants. “NCEF has done so much for children in our community,” said Lisa Boet, president of Naples Originals. “Our chefs and restaurateurs were delighted to honor the trustees, charity representatives and other guests by doing what we do best.” Guests also enjoyed wine from the 2011 Naples Winter Wine Festival.

Since 2000, the Naples Children & Education Foundation has been dedicated to making a profound and sustaining improvement in the lives of underprivileged and at-risk children in the county, where pockets of poverty threaten thousands of children’s ability to thrive. Through the Naples Winter Wine Festival, NCEF has raised more than \$94.5 million since 2001, and proceeds have impacted more than 125,000 children through a total of 37 charities. In addition to yearly grants for individual charities, funding is provided for five strategic initiatives: early learning, medical/oral health, out-of-school programs, behavioral health and childhood hunger. Major initiatives that NCEF has funded in collaboration with other private and public entities have included a pediatric dental clinic and an early learning center.

The 2012 Naples Winter Wine Festival will take place Jan. 27-29. For more information about Naples Winter Wine Festival and Naples Children & Education Foundation, visit [www.napleswinefestival.com](http://www.napleswinefestival.com) or call 888-837-4919.