



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Naples Children & Education Foundation appoints Maria Jimenez-Lara as grants director**

NAPLES, Fla. (May 18, 2012) –Trustees of Naples Children & Education Foundation, creators of Naples Winter Wine Festival, have announced that effective immediately Maria Jimenez-Lara has assumed the position of grants director. She is responsible for administering the foundation’s grant process, in conjunction with the foundation’s trustee grant committee, to support NCEF’s mission of making a profound and sustainable difference in the lives of underprivileged and at-risk children in Collier County. Jimenez-Lara reports to Todd Foege, acting executive director of NCEF and Naples Winter Wine Festival, which is the foundation’s major annual fundraiser.

As grants director, Jimenez-Lara oversees NCEF’s yearly grants program, which awards millions of dollars to children’s charities each year. She also oversees multi-million dollar, long-term strategic initiatives directed at filling gaps in children’s services in five areas: early learning, medical/oral health, out-of-school programs, behavioral health and childhood hunger.

“We are very pleased to welcome Maria to NCEF,” said Anne Welsh McNulty, NCEF trustee and chairman of the board. “She brings tremendous children’s advocacy and grant-writing skills, which will be highly valuable to our foundation’s continued research and development of critical initiatives as well as our vigilant oversight of NCEF grants at work.”

Jimenez-Lara’s career includes 17 years in education dedicated to helping at-risk populations. Since 1999, she has served as director of charter schools for RCMA in Immokalee, the largest nonprofit childcare provider in Florida. While at RCMA, she coordinated the opening of the organization’s two schools and oversaw more than 410 students and 70 teachers and support staff. She previously served as a director at ASPIRA of Florida Inc. in Miami for four years where she designed and developed programs for at-risk Latino youth.

Jimenez-Lara earned a bachelor’s in therapeutic recreation/management from Florida International University and a master’s in public administration from Hodges University. She has received numerous accolades, including Golden Gate Local Fire Union Citizen’s award 2009; Woman of the Year Lifetime Achievement Award in Homestead, Fla. 2008; and was named one of the Rising Latino Leaders by El Nuevo Herald 1997.

NCEF has raised \$107 million at Naples Winter Wine Festival since 2001 and improved the lives of 150,000 children. A nine-person board, representing 69 trustees, governs the foundation. In its latest grant allocation in March, NCEF awarded \$7.43 million for 24 grants to children’s nonprofits and funded three strategic initiatives aimed at providing out-of-school programs in Immokalee, addressing behavioral health issues and improving children’s vision.

Naples Winter Wine Festival is ranked as the most successful charity wine auction in the nation since 2004 according to Wine Spectator, and the Luxury Institute named it a top 10 event for wealthy Americans. The 2013 festival will be held Jan. 25-27.

For more information about NCEF and the festival, visit [www.napleswinefestival.com](http://www.napleswinefestival.com).

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