

# EditorialOpinion

WANT SOMEONE FROM THE NAPLES DAILY NEWS to speak at your event or club? Please go to [naplesnews.com/customerservice](http://naplesnews.com/customerservice).

## Guest commentary

# Season of giving is important, yet local need is year-round

By **Maria Jimenez-Lara**

CEO, Naples Children & Education Foundation

Americans give generously — and they give more during the holiday season.

Reports indicate that more than half the nation's charities receive most of their overall contributions in October, November and December, dubbing this time as the “season of giving.”



Maria Jimenez-Lara

While it's wonderful to see such generosity during the holidays, we cannot lose sight of year-round needs. Millions of people born into poverty — or thrust into it through no fault of their own — benefit from the consistent work of charities across the country and right here in Florida.

Unfortunately, many examples of this need can be seen right in our own community.

In Collier County, for instance, the Naples Children & Education Foundation (NCEF) is dedicated to ensuring that es-

sential services are provided to thousands of local children all year. We invest heavily in organizations that assist children, one of the neediest populations in our community. In fact, 63 percent of children live below the poverty level, making investments in early childhood education, children's health and child protection particularly vital.

Despite NCEF's philanthropy, the need for children services still far outpaces the charitable giving, especially in Collier County where the poverty rate is significantly higher than the na-

tional average. Teachers, parents and youth workers report heightened stress factors among children living in poverty, including exposure to trauma, mental health concerns, poor academic achievement and loss of family.

The needs of thousands of children follow no calendar.

To operate successfully, programs and organizations need donor assistance throughout the year, even when we don't have constant reminders to give.

The critical voids and availability of services in our own community indicate that year-

round charitable contributions, including donations of time, treasure and talent, make a positive difference. The nonprofits in our community have the know-how and track record to put our dollars and talent to work.

Results can be seen in improved kindergarten readiness, lower dropout rates, fewer juvenile arrests, higher graduation rates and more.

This “season of giving” can be more than a symbol of goodwill and hope for each new year. Giving throughout the year will influence lives for the better.