

EDITORIAL OPINION

WANT SOMEONE FROM THE NAPLES DAILY NEWS
to speak at your event or club? Please go to
naplesnews.com/customerservice.

International support, community impact



DAVE GIBBONS

The high-energy atmosphere and excitement that guests experience at the Naples Winter Wine Festival (NWWF) inspires a level of global giving that is unmatched by peer organizations.

The festival provides one-of-a-kind experiences that attract philanthropists near and far.

Yet the ultimate purpose of the event, which is clear to attendees throughout the weekend, is to improve the physical, emotional and health outcomes of children in need in Collier County. We turn that purpose into action through our commitment to allocating 100 percent of the funds raised at the festival's live auction directly to our community's underserved children — no matter where our donors come from, their contributions stay behind to provide resources to children of this community all year-round.

The Naples Children & Education Foundation's (NCEF) annual Grants

Award Ceremony best illustrates this commitment. On March 13, NCEF awarded more than \$12.25 million to 34 of the most effective organizations serving underprivileged and at-risk children in Collier County, as well as five Strategic Initiatives made up of community partners that fill fundamental gaps in children's social services.

This is yet another great milestone in the longstanding and widespread impact we have had on more than 200,000 children in the community, and it would not be possible without the Naples Winter Wine Festival and its generous supporters worldwide.

In fact, 34 percent of bidders and 50 percent of total attendees fly into Naples from out of town to join us for three days in the best in wine and food, and the promise of year-round impact for children in need.

Attendees at our NWWF do have a lot of fun. It may be that the unique and exciting experience of our festival is what initially attracts so many from outside our local community to fly into Naples and to join us — there truly is

nothing like it. But we make sure that our attendees understand the real purpose of the weekend and are inspired by the good that their spending can do.

The festival emphasizes the mantra "It's all for the Kids" throughout the weekend. It all starts with Meet the Kids Day, a chance for attendees to meet the children they are helping one-on-one and understand the positive change that the past and upcoming festivals fuel. It is a combination of the excitement of the festival and inspiration of the foundation that motivates guests to come from far and wide and lift their paddles on auction day.

The exhilaration of the festival inspires extraordinary displays of generosity. This generosity is what enables Collier County to provide such critical services for children in need. It is that combination of excitement and proven impact that continues to attract people from far and wide. While they may give quietly to their own local charities, they still part with their dollars to help our kids here in Collier County year after year.

When that one weekend of fun is

over and our out-of-town guests leave, their dollars stay behind to provide help to kids in need for the next 12 months. This is so imperative because the need is palpable. The Naples Winter Wine Festival is the Foundation's main fundraiser and a critical source of support in Collier County. Without it, the many vital health and education services that we help provide for children would not exist at all. In a county with no independent, tax-based, public financial support for children's social services, we gladly take on the responsibility of bridging this gap.

When the festival concludes, our out-of-town guests return home, but their generous donations remain here to help kids long beyond their stay. By attracting attention, donations and sponsorships from within the local community and beyond, the festival provides NCEF with the resources to make an incredible impact on local children all year long.

We intend to keep both the fun, but more importantly the spirit of generosity, alive in Naples for many years to come.