



## **NCEF Announces 2024 Naples Winter Wine Festival Special Fund a Need Initiative “Putting Down Roots: Early Learning GROWS a Healthy Mind”**

**Naples, FL** (November 27, 2023) – The Naples Children & Education Foundation (NCEF) today announced that its annual Fund a Need for the 2024 Naples Winter Wine Festival will support its early learning and mental health initiatives. Every dollar raised for this special call to action auction lot named “Putting Down Roots: Early Learning GROWS a Health Mind” will support NCEF’s holistic approach of providing behavioral and mental health supports at an early age, ensuring local children receive the much-needed resources and services to allow them to grow and thrive.

Founded by NCEF, the Naples Winter Wine Festival (NWWF) enters its 24<sup>th</sup> year and ranks as the most successful international charity wine auction in the world, raising approximately \$269 million for at-risk and underprivileged children in Collier County. At the 2024 Festival, patrons will have a chance to show their support through a live auction on Saturday, January 27<sup>th</sup>, while supporters across the country who are unable to attend the Festival can make a direct gift to NCEF or participate through an online auction from Friday, January 19<sup>th</sup> to Tuesday, January 30<sup>th</sup>.

NCEF recognizes that early childhood development is more than just knowing ABCs and 123s. It is about the growth of the whole child, influencing academic skills like literacy and math along with social and emotional competence and overall health. So, for a second consecutive year, the non-profit organization is placing a special emphasis on mental health for its annual Fund a Need.

“This year, our community’s greatest need is expanding early learning and mental health support for underserved children,” said 2024 NWWF Chair Ralph Stayer. “The global pandemic combined with last year’s Hurricane Ian had a devastating impact on children’s education and mental health as they could not attend classes and many families were displaced. Donated funds will allow us to achieve our goal of providing access to support services and early intervention, increasing the resilience in youth locally, and allowing them to maintain mental and overall well-being when faced with adversity.”

Research has found that significant mental and behavioral health problems can and do occur in young children. A 2016 National Survey of Children’s Health found that an estimated 50,000 preschoolers were suspended at least once with their hitting, biting and pinching frequently labeled as misconduct rather than developmental delays, much to the detriment of the children.

While many mental health challenges can be traced back to a child’s formative years, environmental circumstances also can affect the well-being of youth. Research has found that by age 11, 65 percent of children served by Healthcare Network have experienced at least one adverse childhood experience. Unless recognized and treated, toxic stress can impair school readiness, academic achievement and both physical and mental health throughout the lifespan.

“Donations to our 2024 Fund a Need will equip early learning center staff with the resources necessary to meet the needs of students throughout Collier County,” said Jacki Guinn, NCEF Trustee and 2023 Grant Committee Chair. “Solutions will include therapy and/or counseling, interventions for children with learning disabilities and language barriers, and early learning scholarships. By working with a wide safety net of teachers, parents and physicians in our community, we hope to break down the walls between learning and emotional health.”

Contributions to the “Putting Down Roots: Early Learning GROWS a Healthy Mind” auction lot will help combat the current realities of early learning experiences and youth mental health:

- **58 percent increase** in hospitalizations of children under 18 from Mental Health Disorders between 2017 and 2021.
- **26 percent of children** are at risk for toxic stress from experiencing at least one traumatic childhood experience.
- **71 percent increase** in deaths by suicide among 10–14-year-olds in Florida, now the second leading cause of death for this age group.
- **14 percent of children** born to mothers with a history of trauma were born with developmental delays.
- **61 percent increase** in emergency room visits due to self-harm injuries of children under 18 between 2017 and 2021.

Every dollar raised will go to support NCEF’s strategic initiatives to focus on the future of local children. For more information or to make a donation, please visit [www.napleswinefestival.com](http://www.napleswinefestival.com).

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### **About Naples Winter Wine Festival**

The Naples Winter Wine Festival (NWWF), one of the world's most prestigious charity wine auctions, offers a weekend of unforgettable memories. Guests enjoy world-class food and wine during intimate dinners in elegant, private homes and other landmark settings throughout Naples and are invited to bid on once-in-a-lifetime travel and wine experiences during an electrifying live auction. Since its inaugural event in 2001, the NWWF has raised approximately \$269 million, making a profound difference in the lives of hundreds of thousands of children in Collier County.

### **About Naples Children & Education Foundation**

The Naples Children & Education Foundation (NCEF), the founding organization of the Naples Winter Wine Festival, is improving the educational, emotional and health outcomes of underprivileged and at-risk children. Through its annual grants and strategic initiatives, NCEF has impacted close to 90 of the most effective nonprofits in the local community, providing more than 300,000 children with the services and resources they need to excel. NCEF's unique approach, which emphasizes collaboration between organizations and bridges public and private resources, has become a blueprint for how to transform a community, one issue at a time.

For additional information on the Naples Children & Education Foundation or the Naples Winter Wine Festival, contact Lisa Juliano at [lisa@napleswinefestival.com](mailto:lisa@napleswinefestival.com) or 239-514-2239.