

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**TBD**

## Mental Health Awareness Month: NCEF and Nicklaus Children's Pediatric Behavioral Health Program Now Delivering Care in Collier County



*Pictured from left to right: Kristin Hunt, Healthcare Initiatives Director at Naples Children & Education Foundation; Monica Roos, Senior Director of Development at Nicklaus Children's Hospital Foundation; Dr. Marisa Azaret, Director of Clinical Psychology at Nicklaus Children's Hospital; Evelyn Terrell, Associate Vice President of Strategy and Network Services at Nicklaus Children's Health System; Maria Jimenez-Lara, CEO of Naples Children & Education Foundation; Sarah Zaiser-Kelly, Senior Vice President of Grants and Community Impact at Naples Children & Education Foundation; Dr. Sara Rivero-Conil, Associate Director of the Department of Psychology at Nicklaus Children's Hospital; Paula DiGrigoli, Senior Director of Nicklaus Children's Hospital at NCH Partnership.*

**NAPLES, FL** – In recognition of May as Mental Health Awareness Month, Nicklaus Children's Health System is proud to highlight the successful launch and ongoing expansion of its pediatric behavioral health services in Collier County. These services are being delivered through a generous \$1 million grant from the Naples Children & Education Foundation (NCEF). This initiative, now actively serving families, is a collaborative effort with Lighthouse Pediatrics and

NCH's (Naples Comprehensive Health) pediatric practice, bringing much-needed mental health services to children in Collier County and surrounding areas.

The local community plays a vital role in this expansion. The Department of Psychology at Nicklaus Children's has partnered with primary care centers that serve underinsured children and families in Collier County to provide a range of services, including screenings, interventions, consultations, care coordination, and education. Mental health specialists are available to families to ensure children receive the care they need within their communities.

Following initial visits, patients and their caregivers are connected with local organizations to maintain continuity of care. Dr. Sara Rivero-Conil, pediatric psychologist and associate director of the Department of Psychology at Nicklaus Children's, emphasized the importance of community collaboration.

Nicklaus Children's joins five other community organizations in support of NCEF's Mental Health Strategic Initiative with a goal to address the critical issues surrounding children's mental health and work towards creating a brighter future for young minds. Through the integration of primary care and behavioral health services, this strategic initiative creates a system of care that works to identify and prevent children's mental health issues.

"Mental Health Awareness Month reminds us why this work matters," said Dr. Rivero-Conil. "We're proud to already be reaching families through this program and grateful to partner with NCEF, Lighthouse Pediatrics, and NCH to make behavioral health services more accessible than ever. This collaboration is an essential step in building a stronger, healthier community for our children."

"NCEF is proud to expand our mental health initiative by integrating care within local pediatric practices, ensuring more children have access to vital, life-saving mental health services. It truly takes a village, and we are committed to continuing a comprehensive approach to supporting children's well-being," expressed Maria Jimenez-Lara, CEO of Naples Children & Education Foundation.

With services now fully operational, the expansion continues to deepen partnerships with local providers, reducing wait times and closing care gaps. Early intervention and continuity of care—delivered close to home—help increase positive outcomes for children and adolescents.

Services are being offered at two new locations including Nicklaus Children's at Naples Northeast located at 15420 Collier Boulevard and Nicklaus Children's at Naples Health Park located at 11181 Health Park Boulevard.

This Mental Health Awareness Month, we celebrate the meaningful impact already being made through this collaborative effort. The community's ongoing involvement remains vital in addressing the mental health needs of children across Collier County.

**About Nicklaus Children's Health System, *Where Your Child Matters Most*™**

Nicklaus Children's Health System (NCHS) is the parent organization of Nicklaus Children's Hospital, South Florida's #1 nonprofit, freestanding specialty licensed hospital exclusively for children. Serving close to 70 percent of children in the Miami market, the hospital and its network of outpatient and urgent care centers offer life-saving care to children in not only Miami-Dade but also Broward, Palm Beach and Martin County. Nicklaus Children's is home to centers of excellence including the Helen & Jacob Shaham Cancer & Blood Disorders Institute, the Nicklaus Children's Orthopedics, Sports Health and Spine Institute, Nicklaus Children's Brain Institute and Nicklaus Children's Heart Institute. Standing as a beacon of hope for close to 75 years, the 325-bed hospital is renowned for excellence in all aspects of pediatric medicine, with many programs routinely ranked among the nation's best by U.S. News & World Report since 2008. The health system also includes Nicklaus Children's Hospital Foundation, the organization's 501c3 fundraising arm; a nonprofit physician practice subsidiary; and an ambulatory surgery center. For more information visit, <https://www.nicklaushealth.org>.

**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 350,000 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.

**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 more than \$336 million, making a profound difference in the lives of hundreds of thousands of children in Collier County.

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