

NEWS RELEASE

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Florida Education Foundations Critical to Hurricane Recovery *Local foundations bolster recovery efforts, prepare for Caribbean student influx*

Florida – Florida’s network of local education foundations proved critical to the response before, during and after Hurricane Irma swept the state in September. Known for funding programs that focus on student support and classroom innovation, the Consortium of Florida Education Foundations (CFEF) acknowledged today how critical these “second responders” were during recent natural disasters. They also released information on their members’ ongoing efforts to help the more than 6,300 Caribbean students displaced by Hurricane Maria expected to enroll in Florida school districts. In the last two months of recovery, foundations from Broward, Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties collectively raised \$412,000 for students, teachers and residents.

“Our foundations provide critical support for students and teachers, filling in the gap when budgets are tight,” said Mary Chance, President of the CFEF. “As a trusted local resource, these dedicated nonprofits efficiently target community needs. This was further confirmed after Hurricane Irma when this network supported more than a dozen school districts directly and indirectly impacted by the storm.”

Examples of ‘Second Responder’ Efforts Statewide

- Brevard County - The Brevard Schools Foundation rallied community partners for donations of socks, underwear, school supplies and hygiene products for hurricane evacuees from Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, South Florida and Texas. They also provided gas cards for students unable to access bus routes (due to displaced living conditions) so they could continue to attend school. Currently, the foundation is helping new students settle in as the school district has enrolled 150 evacuees with the number growing daily.
- Broward County - Broward Education Foundation established an Emergency Relief Fund for families in need. As the state prepares for displaced students, school districts must cover the per-pupil funding while evacuees face language barriers and try to rebuild their lives. Given that some Broward County Public Schools require uniforms, the local foundation is raising \$60 for each new student to receive a uniform, backpack and basic school supplies to help them feel welcomed. Since starting the fund, and working collaboratively with the district’s

Welcome Center, they've helped more than 500 displaced and homeless students acclimate. The recent influx has increased Broward's homeless student population to more than 2,500.

- Collier County - As Hurricane Irma approached Naples, many high school seniors ready to apply for financial aid worried they would miss the application window. If not submitted on time, many of these eligible students would not have much-needed funding to start college in 2018. Applicants who fail to meet a college's initial deadline could lose the opportunity for grant funds during their entire college career. Champions for Learning opened their offices so high school seniors could complete their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) in their College and Career Resource Lab as well as work on college essays and applications.
- Miami-Dade County - The Education Fund surveyed teachers immediately following the storm to determine how to best meet their immediate needs. Many of the educators reported having to meet basic needs for students such as food and clean water. Several of their "Food Forests" outdoor learning laboratories that provide healthy food options for inner-city students and their families, were damaged as a result of the high winds and rain. Fortunately, The Education Fund secured \$20,000 from the Ford Motor Company to help with both their supply efforts for students and teachers and restorations at schools.
- Monroe County - The Monroe County Education Foundation garnered more than \$350,000, largely from new out-of-state contributors who recognized the opportunity to give where needs can be met quickly and transparently. This is helping ease the burden of approximately 100 teachers who have relocation costs and other unanticipated expenses. Through this effort, these teachers are returning to the classroom where they can focus on getting students back to learning.
- Orange County – Before Hurricane Irma even threatened Florida, the Foundation for Orange County Public Schools raised \$2,290 for students in Houston schools recovering from Hurricane Harvey and sent hundreds of new, packaged socks, underwear and school supplies. Irma caused major flooding in the Orlando Vista community, so attention turned to assisting that school community with recovery. Now the focus has shifted to meeting the needs of Hurricane Maria evacuees enrolling in local schools – more than 2,200 so far. Students receive backpacks filled with school supplies, families receive gift cards for groceries and household goods, and new initiatives will focus on medical needs, mentoring and mental health support.

- Osceola County - The Education Foundation of Osceola County expanded operation of their “A Gift for Teaching” free store for teachers to help evacuees enrolling in local schools. The devastating hurricane season has brought 1,514 displaced students to register in Osceola County Public Schools as of last week. (Includes Hurricane Harvey, Irma and Maria).

As lawmakers prepare for the 2018 Legislative Session, they are closely evaluating the cost of the season’s natural disasters as well as where to dedicate funding for recovery programs. The CFEF oversees the School District Education Foundation Matching Grant Program which has been reduced to \$4 million during the last budget cycle. Given increased statewide participation in the match opportunity and greater local needs, the CFEF is asking for \$5 million. Each dollar allocated will be matched by community and business contributions.

These hurricane relief efforts are an indication that this investment by the state meets immediate needs without developing new infrastructure or burdensome bureaucratic processes. Use is determined at the local level by business and community volunteer board members working in partnership with school district leaders on their annual priorities.

“As the demand for support increases with more students and continued recovery efforts, fully funding these dependable volunteer-led programs is a smart investment for Florida,” said Chance. “Dedicating \$5 million to fund this matching grant program means we can attract more national corporate and philanthropic dollars to Florida, further leverage the match and fund critical priority programs.”

The Consortium of Florida Education Foundations advances public education through their network of local education foundations that collectively serve 99 percent of the state’s 2.7 million K-12 students in 64 of the state’s 67 county-wide school districts. Many local education foundations have been serving their communities for more than 25 years with the School District Education Foundation Matching Grant Program established in 2001. To learn more visit www.educationfoundationsfl.org or view our YouTube video [*What is the Consortium of Florida Education Foundations?*](#)

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