

LOCAL

Charles & Margery Barancik Foundation invests nearly \$12 million in community

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The Charles & Margery Barancik Foundation recently awarded \$11.8 million in grants aimed at further improving education in Sarasota County's public schools and preschools, expanding access to health care and the arts for underserved communities, supporting environmental education, and more.

The grants were approved on Feb. 9 at the board of directors' first meeting of 2024.

Education access and quality

The Barancik Foundation awarded a total of \$4.8 million to improve educational access and quality, including new funding for the Foundation's three education initiatives.

The Foundation directed \$981,519 to its **Teacher Recruitment, Retention, and Recognition initiative**, which supports the Sarasota County School District. Funds primarily will pay for internships and mentoring for prospective new teachers, scholarships for residents pursuing a teaching degree, and other recruitment and retention activities. Additionally, \$310,000 was approved for the Foundation's **TIME Fellowship program**, which offers Sarasota County public school teachers the opportunity to complete a personal project.

The board also allocated \$1,126,500 for the **Early Learning Initiative** to recruit and retain more qualified preschool teachers, provide behavioral health supports in classrooms and to families, and offer professional development for teachers and preschool directors. The funding is aligned with a three-year grant of \$2,379,965 to the **YMCA of Southwest Florida** to improve quality and expand access at Sarasota County's largest childcare provider.

Community well-being

The **FSU/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training** will receive \$50,000 to construct a sustainable Elizabethan-style set for all of its Shakespearean productions, which include educational performances for local students. **Embracing Our Differences** will use a \$102,786 grant to purchase equipment needed to display and store its annual international outdoor exhibition. The board also approved a \$550,000, two-year grant to **Ringling College of Art and Design** to support access and programming at Sarasota Art Museum (SAM) for community members who have been historically underrepresented.

Jewish Family & Children's Service of the Suncoast was awarded \$563,744 to assist families with youth who are at risk or already involved with the juvenile justice system. The board also directed nearly \$3 million to sustain the **Community News Collaborative** over three years. An initiative of Barancik Foundation, the nonpartisan, nonprofit news operation will become an independent nonprofit as it establishes itself as a content partner for local news outlets.

Environment and health care

The Foundation awarded \$25,000 to the **Longboat Key Foundation** to help fund improvements at the 34-acre **Quick Point Preserve**, a coastal-restoration site at the southern end of Longboat Key. A \$165,000 grant to **Florida Institute of Saltwater Heritage** will enhance public access at the FISH Preserve adjacent to the historic fishing village of Cortez.

With a grant of \$250,000, **Rebuilding Together Tampa Bay** will repair and rehabilitate homes in Sarasota's Newtown neighborhood and in DeSoto County for residents who otherwise couldn't afford to pay for the work. The grant will be used toward project costs like weatherization, plumbing and electrical, and roof replacements, as well as to support a staff position in Sarasota.

A grant to **SunCoast Blood Centers** for \$46,000 will enable the organization to convert one of its bloodmobile buses from using gas-powered generators to operate equipment and air conditioning to using solar and battery power. The board also earmarked \$250,000 for Barancik Foundation's Health Equity initiative for marginalized communities.

The Barancik Foundation board also approved \$2,040,000 in grants to benefit more than 30 organizations that the Foundation supports annually, as well as \$25,000 to support the charitable efforts of the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office.

Submitted by Greg Luberecki



