

## **Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance Waterways on Wheels**

At a local library in Freeport, FL, young children are mesmerized by the visiting Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance (CBA) education team. Slowly, carefully, the education coordinators lower a shallow bin full of brackish water from the Choctawhatchee Bay. Eyes and smiles widen, kids hopping from foot to foot as they wait impatiently for the touch tank to be placed on the ground. Crowding around, they are finally allowed to reach into the cool waters, drawing their small fingers across the backs of crabs, squealing when a slippery minnow scoots past, and learning first-hand about the native creatures that call our waters home. With this grant, CBA will bring hands-on experiences like this one to underserved students across Okaloosa and Walton Counties through our brand new Waterways on Wheels program.

Waterways on Wheels will increase our outreach geographically and numerically, bringing our most popular nature experiences to a greater number of students in all corners of the two counties. Children from Crestview to Mary Esther, from South Walton to Defuniak Springs, can become stewards of the environment through hands-on, place-based learning. Schools, libraries, Boys and Girls Clubs, special needs providers, community museums, and more will host the Waterways on Wheels program.

We expect Waterways on Wheels to increase environmental literacy across schoolage groups in Walton and Okaloosa Counties, creating advocates for better stewardship of the Choctawhatchee watershed. In a 2006 report for Environmental Education Resources, author Susanne Bogeholz writes that nature experience, like hands-on environmental field trips and workshops, “has frequently been shown to influence environmental action in everyday situations.” By captivating young hearts and minds with the wonders found in our local waters, Waterways on Wheels will create future environmental advocates in our students, promoting sustainability, restoration, conservation, and more.

CBA has extensive experience developing and specializing nature-based curriculum for students across grade and age levels. However, we are lacking a reliable mechanism for actually bringing these tools and materials to the students. To solve this problem, we are requesting funding for a specially-outfitted enclosed trailer, with features like a built-in touch tank and an interactive television screen for live videos and instruction; a truck to haul the trailer and carry plants and soil; and a passenger van to transport the CBA education team to sites around Okaloosa and Walton Counties.

With these tools, we can reach more students like Kayley, a 6th grader at Freeport Middle School. She says: “Thank you for all the effort you put forth to teach us. I really am thankful that you gave me a good learning experience and how well you did it!! My absolute favorite part was planting sea oats because it made me feel like I was really helping the environment. I had so much fun and I learned a lot!”

## **Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center Child Abuse Prevention Program**

Over the past seventeen years, the Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center's primary mission has been helping child victims in the aftermath of abuse. Since opening our doors in October of 2000, we have provided services to more than 11,000 children experiencing the most horrendous abuse in our communities – sexual, physical, drug endangerment, and severe neglect. These numbers are alarming. Even more alarming is statistically we are only seeing about a third of the child abuse victims who desperately need our services. Twenty two thousand (22,000) more children needed us. We weren't there.

As an organization, we ask ourselves these questions? What can we do to reduce the number of children being abused and reach those who are? What would have the highest impact, reach the masses, transform a communities' approach to addressing child abuse, bullying, and online dangers? What could fundamentally change our organizational focus while enhancing our existing mission to accomplish this. We strive for a community of healthy, happy children of all ages living lives free of abuse and neglect. What is the best approach? The answer lies in developing a community minded comprehensive child abuse prevention program.

The Center is committed to preventing child victimization, increasing the number of disclosures by child abuse victims, and increasing adult reporting of suspected abuse. This would be fundamentally shift our mission to one of intervention plus prevention. We are requesting Impact 100 funds to assist in developing and delivering a comprehensive child abuse prevention program to the community. Ninety-five (95) percent of child abuse is preventable.

The Center's proposed "Child Abuse Prevention Program" would include an array of prevention curriculum targeting adults and children of all ages. It will include "Child Safety Matters" curriculum, a research-based program that teaches Safety Rules, Safety Choices, strategies for recognizing and responding to safe vs. unsafe situations, preventing and reacting to bullying, cyberbullying, online dangers and all forms of child abuse and exploitation. It is used statewide EXCEPT in three counties. Unfortunately, OKALOOSA and WALTON are two of those areas. We will also incorporate our Riley (therapy dog) prevention videos. We could potentially impact a minimum of 20,000 students a year. The Darkness to Light curriculum will be used to impact adults to help them identify and react responsibly to children who may have been sexually abused. Research shows child abuse is under-reported by adults in large part because of a lack of knowledge.

The program will provide community minded child abuse prevention education through a comprehensive marketing campaign. The campaign would consist of both traditional, social media using radio, television advertising, community presentations, videos, town hall meetings to reach the masses, potentially impacting 100000 plus citizens.

## **Emerald Coast Science Center SMALLabs Make Large Changes: ECSC Technology Upgrade Project**

The Emerald Coast Science Center (ECSC) would like to request funding to renovate our two (2) existing classrooms into an immersive, interactive learning environment capable of running SMALLab Learning technologies. SMALLab is cutting-edge, transformational programming that utilizes motion-capture technology to track students' 3D movements as they learn various concepts like physics, chemistry, and even language. This innovative and advanced software would allow ECSC to completely transform how students learn by immersing them in a completely hands-on, hi-tech lab. Students can use SMALLab to experience science, mathematics, and language arts in an environment unlike any other available to them in Northwest Florida. This embodied learning blends knowledge with human-computer interaction and would revolutionize how the ECSC teaches its educational programming.

This Technology Upgrade Project will enable ECSC to improve our facility and our curricula radically. It will enhance learning through our Field Trip lessons, Lego League program, Home School Academy, Summer Camp, workshops, and Museum activities and stations. The Boys and Girls Club of the Emerald Coast, another nonprofit, has partnered with the ECSC in order to utilize the labs for their field-trip programming as well. The SMALLab would require upgrades to the existing classrooms that will include installation of new flooring, furniture, plumbing, HVAC, ceiling, lighting, and electrical improvements. An asbestos survey was completed on the property in June of 2016 in preparation of these improvements. Both classrooms will require asbestos abatement work prior to the start of renovations; however, each room can be completed independently of the rest of the Museum and shouldn't affect normal operations.

Additionally, this project heavily impacts students across the region. Currently, ECSC works within 5 local counties. In 2016/17, over 14,000 students were impacted by ECSC programming. Okaloosa County students make up the bulk of our constituents. Renovating our facilities to include SMALLab will allow us to make large changes in our educational programming to reach children of all ages and engage them in a completely unique experience with STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education. The mission of ECSC is to inspire and grow a scientifically engaged community, and our vision is to be the recognized leader for scientific exploration, encounters, and education in Northwest Florida. By including SMALLab technology, we can positively impact our students and continue to help improve Florida Standards Assessment test scores with participating schools and encourage students to pursue STEM careers.

## **Emerald Coast Theatre Company Theatre for Young Audiences Program**

Emerald Coast Theatre Company (ECTC) is dedicated to finding new and different ways to serve the children of our community. Larger cities offer children a richness of cultural educational opportunities that we have little of here on the Emerald Coast. We at ECTC want to change that and are dedicated to creating opportunities for our children to be engaged, educated, and inspired through the theatrical arts.

Since its inception, ECTC has offered a Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA) program through partnerships with Bay Elementary School Boosters, Grand Boulevard at Sandestin, the Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County, The Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation, The Village of Baytowne Wharf, and HarborWalk Village. TYA shows are theatre performances specifically designed for the children of our community, with professional actors performing shows designed to educate and inspire children. Our world is one of electronic distraction. Theatre provides our children with an unplugged experience where they are in the presence of artists creating relatable and inspiring art right in front of them. In a study by researchers in the University of Arkansas Department of Education Reform they found that "field trips to live theater enhance literary knowledge, tolerance, and empathy among students."

This Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA) program is vital to our community as ECTC strives to expand the educational and cultural offerings for our children through this program. With the recent move to 560 Grand Boulevard, Suite 200 we have found a new opportunity to serve our children. Specifically, this objective will be met with the launch of three Theatre for Young Audiences productions offered at ECTC's space at 560 Grand Boulevard with designated field trip days for students: "The Musical Adventures of Flat Stanley," "The Mark Twain Show," and "Aesop's Fables." Also included is a touring theatre group call Story Builders, and educational matinées offered for in school field trips to ECTC's professional productions of "A Wrinkle in Time" and "The Amish Project." ECTC consulted with Bay Elementary's Principal Meredith Spence this past May on choosing shows that have excellent educational benefits and can also be used as a catalyst for learning in a classroom environment.

In order to meet this objective and provide a quality cultural educational experience for our children we are in need of additional seating, lighting, and sound equipment. With the purchase of this equipment, Emerald Coast Theatre Company can accommodate a larger audience and sustain this program through its current sponsor partners including the Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County, Silver Sands Premium Outlets, Isidro Dunbar Modern Interiors, and others.

## **Fresh Start for Children & Families**

### **Fresh Start Family Activity Center**

We are pleased to present the Fresh Start Family Activity Center. This shovel-ready project addresses a need for the Fresh Start program residents to have a supervised place where children can socialize and play while parents pursue their training and education goals.

Impact 100 funds will purchase a multi-purpose building, an ADA compliant playground, recreational play-pad, pavilion, sidewalks, fencing, lighting, and utilities for plant boxes and landscaping. Fresh Start will fund plants, art panels, environment features, furniture, and ongoing support (utilities, upkeep, etc).

Fresh Start has served homeless families in Okaloosa/Walton County for over 30 years by providing both temporary assistance and long-term relief via a Transitional Housing and Life Skills Program, leading to affordable "Step-up" housing. Fresh Start gives a pathway out of homelessness to 25-40 qualifying families each year. Our campus in Fort Walton Beach consists of two apartment buildings for residents enrolled in a nine-month transitional program and "step-up" housing for program graduates; an administrative building with learning center, food pantry and office; and the nearby "Repeat Street" thrift store.

A need exists for a dedicated children's activity place that frees their parents to focus on acquiring self-sufficiency by escaping the factors that led to homelessness. In the absence of a secure play area, some families have left the transition program early because of difficulties in providing childcare while parents attend to program training requirements. The new facility will be next to the existing buildings, providing a gated playground and multipurpose room for the transitional and step-up housing residents. Privacy fencing will insure a safe playground area in an environment free of the negative influences common in public parks. Most importantly, the new building will allow for supervised children's activities.

Program support comes from United Way, Combined Federal Campaign, thrift store revenue, fundraising events, and private donations. The activity center will not add significant burden once constructed since the land and facility resources are already in place.

Construction can be completed within 18 months. Volunteer help and donated materials will speed project development, and the land has already been partially cleared by volunteers. Design and permitting are simplified by purchase of a turn-key manufactured building, and a professionally installed playground designed for long-life and low maintenance. The Fort Walton Beach planning department has assisted in planning and sees no issues with zoning or permitting.

The Fresh Start staff and Board of Directors are eager to partner with Impact 100 to advance our families toward a stronger tomorrow.

## **Gulfarium C.A.R.E. Foundation Gulfarium C.A.R.E. Center, Phase 1**

Gulfarium Marine Adventure Park has been a thriving business along the Gulf Coast of Florida for 62 years. Over the years, Gulfarium has evolved to encompass such disciplines as education, conservation, advocacy, and community support. The Gulfarium has been the “go to” entity for injured or stranded sea turtles along the Emerald Coastline. Over its history, Gulfarium staff have cared for, and released, hundreds of these unique creatures. In recent decades, disease and injury from negative human interactions have significantly increased the number of sea turtles requiring care. Gulfarium has remained committed to the rescue, rehabilitation, and release of these threatened or endangered animals, but must make operational adjustments to meet the growing demand for medical care.

Given the above challenges, Gulfarium Marine Adventure Park chose to create a separate, nonprofit entity that could solicit capital funds for the creation of an improved facility for sea turtles. The Gulfarium C.A.R.E. Foundation (501-c3) is based on the principals of conservation, action, rehabilitation, and education. The long-term goal is to seek monetary gifts that will allow for the development of a hospital, expanded pool systems, and a designated education center where guests can not only see patients in our care, but can gain a better understanding of the natural history of the species. If these goals are achieved, the C.A.R.E. Center will be an internationally recognized conservation center that highlights the value members of Okaloosa and Walton Counties have for preserving the marine life that call the Gulf home. Now C.A.R.E. is requesting the grant of \$102,000.00 to construct the foundation that will support the assets mentioned above (emergency hospital, expanded pools, and education center).

In 2016, the rehabilitation program admitted (38) sea turtles, of which (22) were successfully released after long-term rehabilitation and care. That number represents an estimated one-third of what staff would have admitted for treatment, had the new facility been more than a rendering.

Annually, Gulfarium Adventure Park welcomes 200,000+ guests, of which nearly 55,000 are children. Daily presentations, interactions, and educational camps touch the hearts and minds of these future conservationists, and it is believed that the important work accomplished with marine life by the park’s team of professionals will inspire them to pursue actions that will benefit the environment. Currently guests observe the sea turtle rehabilitation efforts on a limited basis, however beachside releases are often heavily attended when announced. The C.A.R.E. program plans to share much more through web based programming, including tracking of released turtles via satellite telemetry. The C.A.R.E. Foundation will pursue its plans with vigor, and is optimistic that the Northwest Florida chapter of IMPACT 100 will be willing to support this humane conservation effort.

## **Okaloosa AIDS Support and Informational Services (OASIS) Project Know**

**PROJECT KNOW:** OASIS will implement a new strategy for reaching the most at-risk residents in Okaloosa and Walton Counties: HIV positive residents who are not currently served, and who face significant barriers to HIV testing, education, and prevention services. PROJECT KNOW is on a mission: to end AIDS in Okaloosa and Walton counties. With recent new treatments, it is entirely possible to end AIDS when access to testing and treatment is widely available, and where stigma and discrimination no longer hinder a person's road to healthy recovery.

**NEED ADDRESSED BY THE PROJECT:** While the Southern region accounts for only 37% of the US population, 44% of all HIV infections and nearly half (47%) of all deaths due to HIV/AIDS occur in the Southern states. Florida is one of the eight states with the highest rates of new infections. The Southern AIDS Coalition noted that the South "continues to face great challenges" fueled by social and economic determinants such as poverty, unemployment, lack of access to health insurance and healthcare, homophobia, stigma, and discrimination, which are exacerbated by rural geography. African American men and women in rural Northwest Florida have been under served due to a greater burden of poverty and more limited access to traditional HIV prevention services. Although African American men and women account for only 10.2% of Okaloosa County residents and 5.8% of Walton County residents in 2015, African Americans represent 38% and 13% of AIDS cases and 34% and 12% of HIV cases, respectively, as of March 2016.

**USE OF FUNDING:** Funding will be used to purchase an RV with sufficient room and utilities to support a mobile HIV testing and education unit. Tags, registration, and delivery of the vehicle, and a year's maintenance, fuel, and insurance provide funding to launch this strategic initiative. An awning, indoor/outdoor furniture, a laptop and projector, and an outdoor Smart Screen are additional equipment for general outreach education programs. A small percent of funding will support a part-time facilitator to train 3 teams of volunteers.

**TRANSFORMATIONAL STRATEGY AND PROJECTED IMPACT:** By targeting at risk populations where the greatest number of new infections occur, in rural areas and pockets of poverty in urban areas, the program is aimed at reducing new infections to zero. The van program then facilitates another successful program at OASIS: Peer Mentors. Besides testing and education, Peer Mentors will travel on the Project KNOW van to meet and stay in touch with identified persons living with HIV/AIDS. They will help assure that their peers are referred into treatment and remain until their "viral load" is reduced below transmission potential. The Peer Mentor program overcomes limitations at OASIS for Case Management services. The Okaloosa Impact 100 grant greatly increases many program objectives at OASIS while targeting new cases of infections as a transformative strategy to end AIDS in the region.

**OTHERS of Destin**  
**OTHERS of Destin Construction Project**

The project will meet the needs for essential office space without which we cannot continue our mission. This project fulfills the need for:

- Staff offices
- Client intake and needs assessment rooms
- Distribution center for essential items for clients
- Educational classrooms
- Meeting space for collaboration with our community partners

**Summary of Funds:**

Purchase of one mobile modular office building. This unit will include four offices, two restrooms, a waiting area and classroom space. Other costs covered include: cutting and patching the asphalt drive for sewer and water, concrete footings and block piers for one office; dumpster and portalet; equipment to pump concrete and excavate a plumbing trench; and building permits and power.

**Transformation and High Impact:**

The mission of OTHERS is to impact the lives of those experiencing hardship by conducting needs assessments, providing financial assistance and facilitating holistic support through resources and referrals, with the ultimate goal of self-sufficiency. By standing in the gap for those experiencing job loss, medical hardship, domestic violence, single parenting, poverty and homelessness, our services produce life-changing effects. We advocate for our clients, reducing harm both individually and collectively, which impacts the community at large. We also strive, through education and awareness, to involve community members to be part of the solution. This combination of providing education, raising awareness, and involving the community as a whole produces transformational effects for our clients.

With the funding for this project, OTHERS will meet the needs of the underserved in the community and expand our services to impact more lives.