

## PHILANTHROPY MATTERS

# Changing Seasons, Needs



by Yurianna Mikolay  
Executive Director  
Ocean Reef Community Foundation

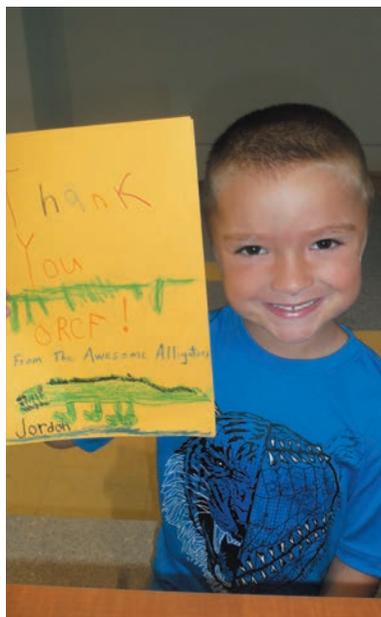
Summer is here and nonprofit programs helping families meet its challenges are underway. When seasonal business drops off and school lets out, struggling working parents face the prospects of additional childcare costs or leaving kids unsupervised, kids who benefit from regular nutrition programs during the school year go without and those who aren't engaged experience "Summer Learning Loss" and fall behind their peers. Thanks to your support, the Foundation's Community Grants program funds a number of summer-specific efforts to help address these issues.

The most ambitious of these is the Summer Rec program at Key Largo School. Recognizing the Upper Keys' dearth of affordable summer childcare options, the Foundation stepped up to collaborate with KLS to establish the month-long program (running concurrent with summer school to take advantage of bus transportation) for up to 250 students three years ago. It's a point of pride that KLS Summer Rec is staffed by professional educators whose training, expertise and access to school resources elevate ordinary camp activities to quality learning experiences. The fact that the program continues to offer nutrition to campers through the cafeteria is another important advantage. We're grateful that the program's strengths have attracted the support of several of our Donor Advised Funds and the Keys Children's Foundation.

Prior to the KLS camp, the



Key Largo School campers show off their red, white and blue art projects made for the big parade.



One camper's thank you to Ocean Reef for a fun summer of learning.

Foundation supported need-based scholarships at the YMCA Camp in Key Largo -- still the only sizable, summer-long option despite operating from a park with no air conditioned space. This year two of our Donor Advised Funds generously co-invested in the Y with us, fully funding the Key Largo Camp scholarship request. Campers attending on scholarships are also receiving "Backpack" meal packages through our grant to Feeding South Florida.

To the north, the Community Grants program also supports the YMCA "Learning Loss Prevention" Camp in Homestead with scholarships for 30 kids, field trips and equipment. Another favorite of past summers is "Dive into Reading" which links improved reading



The Independence Day Parade is a highlight of the KLS Summer Rec experience!

skills with swimming lessons. Unfortunately, Florida Impact finds that many children in the Homestead area face barriers to accessing nutritional programs because their parents aren't able to send them to summer care programs where meals are offered. We're helping them expand the innovative Summer BreakSpot Mobile Units effort which identifies areas of need and brings both nutrition and enrichment activities directly to the most vulnerable children.

Likewise, vulnerable teens confront many perils in high-crime, gang-plagued neighborhoods of Homestead and Florida City, including a lack of meaningful summer employment opportunities. It doesn't get more meaningful than the Summer Guides, Internship and

Indigenous Leadership programs at Branches, TML and GMYFC KIX (which we helped expand to a second site this summer). The programs mentor youth through a competitive hiring process followed by taking on the real responsibilities of employment, gaining valuable experience for their resumes and learning to manage a paycheck and bank account. All while serving as positive role models for younger kids from the neighborhood. It's been a real inspiration to meet the confident, independent, and determined kids who come out of these programs and watch them flourish.

So, please enjoy your summer knowing that hundreds of families are also enjoying a healthier, happier summer thanks to your generosity!