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Community Foundation of Sarasota County’s Regional 2Gen Summit Underscores Importance of Supporting Families

The event convened practitioners, parents, and policymakers to continue existing enthusiasm and galvanize new support for empowering families and communities

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE—The Community Foundation of Sarasota County’s regional [2Gen Summit](#) on Feb. 6 drew 250 attendees in support of a “whole family” approach to disrupting intergenerational poverty.

Held at Florida Studio Theatre in Sarasota, the Summit convened practitioners, parents, and policymakers to examine current local and nationwide programs that support a [2Gen approach](#). National experts from Ascend at the Aspen Institute and five of their Fellows shared strategies to propel existing human services, education, and cultural programs into an integrated and coordinated effort that puts families at the center of the work of our dynamic nonprofit community.

Rather than focusing on children or adults individually, 2Gen strategies consider the interdependency of children and parents and bolsters support for them simultaneously and intentionally.

“Parents are only as happy as their least happy child,” said Anne Mosle, Founder and Executive Director of Ascend at the Aspen Institute, an organization that catalyzes systems change through whole-family approaches. “Parent and child well-being are inextricably linked.”

Mosle, who returned to Sarasota for a third visit in eight years, commended the work of local nonprofits shaping the community, and encouraged further “radical and pragmatic” collaboration.

“This isn’t a time for tweaking,” she said. “It’s a time for transformation.”

During the Summit, the Community Foundation shared its newly developed [Community Indicators Dashboard](#), a free, comprehensive database pulled from reputable sources that practitioners, policymakers, and donors can use to pinpoint where needs exist and visualize the layers of poverty and its multifaceted influence on wellbeing. The tool, which is interactive and projects future trends in

health, housing, education and economic growth, provides a valuable resource in identifying current needs and bright spots, and anticipating future needs and opportunities.

“Today was about building up families, and one way to do that is to coalesce around datapoints that help us see our community with clarity,” said Community Foundation of Sarasota County President and CEO Roxie Jerde. “When the data tells us that more than a third of Sarasota’s population is employed but still struggling to meet basic needs, we realize that, as a community, we have work to do. These are hardworking families—recognizing how parental income and children’s well-being intersect can help us mobilize efforts to support children by empowering their parents, many who themselves come from long-term poverty over several generations.”

A [2Gen Report](#), developed to hone in on factors that affect families’ ability to pursue better lives, was publicized during the event to present relevant to the six components of 2Gen philosophy:

- Early Childhood Education
- K-12 Education
- Postsecondary Pathways
- Health, Including Mental Health
- Financial Security
- Social Capital

The Summit culminated in an announcement of a new grant cycle that encourages service-providing organizations to include parent input in their operations. The [Parent Leadership Grant Cycle](#), which opens March 1, will encourage centering parent voices and expertise in the design of programs and policies meant to support families seeking a better future.

“The best way to serve these families is to understand, from their perspective, what their needs are and how they are best met,” said Kirsten Russell, Vice President of Community Impact at the Community Foundation. “Empowering parents is key to empowering families, and when you empower families, you provide the opportunity to achieve their potential and create a foundation that can be built upon over generations.”

For more than a decade, the Community Foundation of Sarasota County has partnered with Ascend at the Aspen Institute, a catalyst of the 2Gen approach and a convener for diverse leaders working across systems to build intergenerational prosperity and wellbeing.

Since 2012, the Community Foundation has invested nearly \$90 million in 2Gen strategies, which intentionally support children and the adults in their lives together to disrupt intergenerational poverty and transform lives. Funding has supported human services and educational programs, as well as individual scholarships for youth and adults.

The notion of empowering families as a means of building strong communities is not new; the link between individual and collective success has been recognized around the globe for centuries. But a systemic approach to whole family development, along with the term “2Gen,” took root in the 1980s, and re-emerged in the early 2000s, building momentum as a solution to shifting economic, demographic, and social realities.

“It makes sense to focus on parents as an integral part of helping children reach their full potential, as research clearly illustrates that the two most reliable predictors of children’s success in school and beyond are their parents’ educational attainment and income,” Russell said. “Learnings from the Summit can guide our community to bring the great work already accomplished to the next level.”

The Community Foundation of Sarasota County collaboratively cultivates a community-informed approach so that everyone can thrive. In doing so, the foundation advances a multi-generation approach that centers the whole family to create a legacy of success and prosperity for individuals and the whole community.

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About the Community Foundation of Sarasota County: The Community Foundation of Sarasota County is a public charity founded in 1979 by the Southwest Florida Estate Planning Council as a resource for caring individuals and the causes they support, enabling them to make a charitable impact on the community. With assets of \$488 million in more than 1,580 charitable funds, the Community Foundation awarded grants and scholarships totaling \$40 million dollars last year in the areas of education, the arts, health and human services, civic engagement, animal welfare and the environment. Since its founding, the Community Foundation has been able to grant more than \$435.8 million to area nonprofit organizations in our community thanks to the generosity of charitable individuals, families, and businesses. For more information, visit www.CFSarasota.org or call (941) 955-3000.

About Ascend at the Aspen Institute: Ascend at the Aspen Institute is a catalyst and convener for diverse leaders working across systems and sectors to build intergenerational family prosperity and well-being by intentionally focusing on children and the adults in their lives together. We believe in the power of co-creation. We are a community of leaders — well-connected, well-prepared, and well-positioned — building political will that transforms hearts, minds, policies, and practices.