



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

June 7, 2023

CONTACT:

Rebecca Abrahamson
Senior Manager, Communications
941-556-7122 | rabrahamson@cfsarasota.org

**Community Foundation of Sarasota County Awards nearly \$1 million
for Hurricane Recovery Efforts**

An additional \$720,000 has been earmarked for future funding

SARASOTA, FL – Just as a new hurricane season gains steam, the Community Foundation of Sarasota County has awarded nearly \$1 million to local nonprofits to address ongoing impacts of Hurricane Ian, with another \$720,000 reserved for multi-year grants for long-term recovery efforts that will take several years to take root. Programs supported through this grant include hurricane survivor advocacy and case management, mental and behavioral health treatment, youth services, and still-lingering home repairs.

Grants were announced for nonprofit organizations helping rebuild their communities in Sarasota, Manatee, DeSoto, and Charlotte counties with emphasis placed on the areas hardest hit by the storm, namely south Sarasota County, Charlotte County and DeSoto County.

The Suncoast Disaster Recovery Fund (SDRF) was activated in the days just before Ian made landfall at the end of September 2022 to be prepared to later address long term recovery for problems that persist after structure repairs and clean-up conclude. It was created in partnership with The Patterson Foundation, which seeded the fund with a \$500,000 and offered matching gifts up to \$750,000, which was quickly fulfilled and inspired other matching gifts. The fund's overall purpose is to allow the community to heal holistically and rebuild in ways that increase the resiliency of our area.

"The toll of a storm like Ian is extensive," said Community Foundation president and CEO Roxie Jerde. "We all know that Ian's damage cost more than \$100 billion in repairs. Still, that number, as staggering as it is, doesn't tell the story of how people's lives were turned upside down. The trauma and disruptions, these are issues that don't get resolved instantly. Healing takes time."

Unlike relief, which is immediate reparation of damage to get society moving again, recovery focuses on the long view and helping people restore their lives on several fronts—economically, emotionally, and spiritually. To determine funding priorities for the nearly \$5 million raised, a task force was convened that included Community Foundation staff and board members, along with key stakeholders in hard-hit communities. Through several listening sessions, the task force developed the scope of funding priorities.

This initial grant cycle supports organizations in their efforts to bring stability to people's lives in a few key ways that emerged as best practices through listening sessions and consultation from the Center for Disaster Philanthropy, and with guidance from community foundations in places like New Orleans and Jacksonville, Fla., where hurricanes drastically changed the community makeup, as well as other places hit hard by natural disasters. The list of priorities that emerged includes areas of existing challenges that were exacerbated by Hurricane Ian. Here's what was funded:

Mental and Behavioral Health

The mental health crisis initiated by the pandemic was reinvigorated by Ian, as uncertainty, instability, and trauma overtook many people's lives. Grants to support mental and behavioral health efforts focused on providing access to services for those with income-related barriers and vulnerable populations.

- Funding was given to [Samaritan Counseling Services of the Gulf Coast](#), which provides affordable counseling services to people with limited access or insurance.
- [Operation Warrior Resolution](#), which provides veterans with critical mental health interventions, was awarded a grant, as was the [Child Protection Center](#), to expand the organization's ability to respond to victims of child abuse. Upsurges in domestic violence tend to occur during and after crises.

Services to Children, Youth, and other Dependent People

A major focus of recovery is children's welfare. Mental, behavioral, and developmental disorders are prevalent among youth, and ongoing crises have only exacerbated this trend. Many services that families and children rely upon to support wellbeing have been disrupted because of Ian-related damage to structures.

- Riding therapy provides effective treatment for children (and adults) with disabilities, promoting independence and social/emotional wellbeing. Local nonprofit providers of riding therapy, including [Prospect Riding Center](#), [Sarasota Manatee Association for Riding Therapy \(SMART\)](#), and [Easterseals Southwest Florida](#) all received funding to repair damage that hindered their ability to provide riding therapeutic services.
- [The Florida Center for Early Childhood](#) also received a grant to support services to children's mental health through repair of an outdoor play space.
- Other support for youth came from a grant to the [Boys & Girls Clubs of Sarasota and DeSoto Counties](#) to support a portion of their capital campaign of rebuilding the North Port site after existing buildings sustained storm damage. This will help enable continuity of services to youth.
- Finally, to support the services to vision-impaired people that [Lighthouse Vision Loss Education Center](#) provides, a grant was awarded to the nonprofit to repair its building so it can open its doors for business.

Home Repair and Housing Needs

The scale of damage to people's residences brought on by Hurricane Ian was enormous—according to CoStar, impacts from Ian destroyed 5,000 homes and severely damaged another 30,000.

The need for repairs is still critical now, nearly a year after the storm, and local nonprofits are stepping in to assist so that people can regain stability.

- Three organizations funded to facilitate response to limited-asset people living in the hardest-hit communities: [Wintergarden Presbyterian Church](#) in Port Charlotte, [Catholic Charities Diocese of Venice](#), and [Arcadia-DeSoto County Habitat for Humanity](#).

Survivor Advocacy

Insurance funds are typically the most important resource for disaster survivors, but these funds are not always available to those who need them. A storm the scale of Hurricane Ian inundates insurance companies, and the backlog of claims and complexity of legal matters has further slowed the flow of funds.

- The United Policyholders' Roadmap to Recovery helps empower survivors to navigate the insurance system and expedite payment. Funding was granted to [United Policyholders](#) to provide legal services, tools, and resources to those still awaiting insurance compensation.
- Funding was also provided to [United Way of Charlotte County](#), [Laurel Civic Association](#), and [Gulf Coast Partnership, Inc.](#), to support case management for people in need. These groups focus on connecting vulnerable populations to community resources and services, which have been strained through an uptick in demand post-Ian.
- Funding was provided to support a case manager for [CenterPlace Health](#), which provides behavioral health services to people regardless of economic circumstances.

Long Term Recovery Group Support

Long term recovery groups (LTRG) are cooperative bodies of representatives from many aspects of a community, including faith-based, government, business and nonprofit entities. Their goal is to provide coordinated service that allows everyone in the community to recover. Activities include overseeing construction, spiritual recovery, coordination of volunteers, government, and more.

- [Hope DeSoto Long Term Recovery Group, Inc.](#) has been established to coordinate DeSoto County's recovery from Ian, as well as to prepare for future disasters. It was awarded a kick-start grant and a promise for future funding.

Future Funding

Additional grant cycles will be announced to continue to support long-term recovery efforts, which are expected to evolve over time, and differently in each community. Fund updates, including stories of those helped through this important fund, will be available at www.cfsarasota.org For more than 40 years, the Community Foundation of Sarasota County has been key to unlocking possibilities for everyone who calls our area home. With the trust of the community, the Community Foundation has awarded more than \$396 million in grants to support causes addressing education, health and human services, the arts, and the environment, animal welfare, and other needs that enhance quality of life. To learn more about available grant opportunities, visit www.cfsarasota.org/nonprofits/grants.

###

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 \$460 million in more than 1,570 charitable funds, the

Community Foundation awarded grants and scholarships totaling \$45.3 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 \$396 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.