



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – November 5, 2020

***Drug Free Charlotte County receives Gulf Coast Community Foundation funds for Kids Thrive! Collaborative Initiative***

Drug Free Charlotte County is pleased to announce the award of a \$44,700 grant from Gulf Coast Community Foundation. The funds will support the Kids Thrive! Collaborative, which helps pregnant women and new mothers of children born substance-exposed access necessary resources in the community. Drug Free Charlotte County is the lead in the collaborative, which includes Charlotte County Healthy Start Coalition, The Early Learning Coalition of Florida’s Heartland, the Florida Center’s Healthy Families Charlotte County, and new partnerships with The Boys and Girls Clubs of Charlotte County and the Charlotte County Imagination Library. The grant is made possible by the Miriam P. Raines Charitable Fund, an endowment at Gulf Coast created to help women in Charlotte County educate themselves to further their life skills.

Funds will advance work with pregnant women in medication assisted treatment before, during, and after delivery of the baby. A navigator helps mothers build parenting skills for healthy development of the child through literacy activities and to build her own self-esteem. The project nurtures empowerment through the expansion of the Circle of Parents, a peer support group led by moms. It also provides critical support resources like Chromebooks and hotspots to provide women with reliable access to resources, career development, education, and peer support. The project will include short videos to share among the women in the program on topics related to wellness, growth, and pursuit of goals. The collaborative’s new partners bring additional single moms able to access these resources, as well as new insights and skills to share. The project also will highlight skills and resources gained by women and mothers as examples of personal wellness and growth for others.

Helping build a supportive social network and empowering mothers with the skills and resources needed for their well-being, as well of that of their children, is at the heart of Kids Thrive Collaborative. According to one of the program participants, “Kids Thrive feels like my community.”

Drug Free Charlotte County was established in 2002 to address youth substance use. Focused on a foundation to “engage, equip and empower” the community, the organization works to promote healthy choices and support resiliency in children and youth. The work of the Kids Thrive! Collaborative provides the opportunity to support strong parent-child bonding, a key protective factor against later substance use. Learn more at [drugfreecharlottecounty.org](http://drugfreecharlottecounty.org).

For 25 years, together with its donors, Gulf Coast Community Foundation has transformed our region through bold and proactive philanthropy. Gulf Coast is a public charity that was created in 1995 through the sale of the Venice Hospital. Since then, the foundation has



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become the philanthropic home of nearly 1,000 families, individuals, businesses, and organizations that have established charitable funds there, and has invested over \$390 million in grants in the areas of health and human services, civic and economic development, education, arts and culture, and the environment. Learn more at [GulfCoastCF.org](http://GulfCoastCF.org).



*Figure 1: Moms gather at a recent Circle of Parents day at the park*



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