

Making a Difference—the Ocean Reef Community Foundation



by Gertrude Mann

Although this designation usually recognizes an individual who serves above and beyond, our focus changes to look at the profound way the Ocean Reef Community Foundation touches lives in the wider world outside of our gate. It's been almost ten years since the original idea of an All Charities event emerged-



Janie Sims, Ocean Reef Community Foundation Grants Committee Co-Chair.

one that would offer desirables to our enthusiastic community in an atmosphere of celebration and fun. The money accrued would be distributed to partners within Ocean Reef and to worthy causes in the Upper Keys, Homestead and Florida City, where many of our associates reside.

Janie Sims, the current co-chair of the Ocean Reef Community Foundation Grants committee (with **Stevie Wishnack**) and member of the

Executive Board, is enthusiastic about the grant process. She says, "It is transparent every step of the way. Yuri Mikolay, executive director of the Foundation, receives proposals in early fall. By December, she provides us with a spread sheet of proposals to consider. All have been submitted following required guidelines. In 2015 we had 70 proposals. Our committee studies each one carefully and gives it an A, B, or C designation. Of

course, we cannot count on how much money we'll be working with until after the All Charities Auction in February, but we have a protocol to follow. Last season we had close to **\$800,000** to give away; and we're anticipating a larger sum this year.

"We meet with representatives of the Keys Children's Foundation to make sure we are not duplicating efforts. Charity tours take us to visit many of the facilities asking for help so we have a clear picture of needs. Recommendations of the Grants committee are presented to the Foundation Board for approval, and In April, all grant applicants will be notified if they have been granted their award. If not, we have conversations about how they can do better next time." This is just an overview of a process that takes months of analysis and discussion. Janie says, "I am thrilled to work with wonderful members whose charge

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ADDS A LOT '01	46' SEA RAY SUNDANCER, LOW HOUR CUMMINS POWER, BOW THRUSTER, SUPER CLEAN	\$209,000
TABOO '70	54" RYBOVICH, MAN ENGINES, TOWER, NEW INTERIOR, ONE OF A KIND	\$425,000
OLLIE G '01	55' HATTERAS SPORTFISH, FULL TOWER, CAT 3412 POWER LOW HOURS, SUPER CLEAN	\$495,000
HOORAH '84	56' JIM SMITH SF 1992 T/ MAN 12 CYL (1100 HP)	\$495,000
ISLAND GYPSY '08	63' HAMPTON PILOTHOUSE MOTORYACHT, CUMMINS POWER, BOW & STERN THRUSTERS	\$1,295,000
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is to make a difference in the lives of others. In addition, the Foundation thinks creatively and initiates new projects."

For example: Because of the recession in 2008, hunger programs became a big issue. The ORCF examined all aspects of donating surplus food and presented a plan to the Club that verified no liability issues exist when regulations are followed. Ocean Reef then agreed to send food to the Burton Food Pantry in the Upper Keys and to the Chapman Partnership for the Homeless in Homestead. The Foundation has paid for safety training and equipment such as coolers and cooling blankets for safe transport, and the Ocean Reef Club provides employees and supplies to package the surplus food. Extra food is frozen and taken to the commissary on Monday to be picked up on Tuesday. To date, over **70,000 pounds** of food have been donated. Executive Chef Phillippe Reynaud reports that Wynn's Market is participating in the effort, also.

For example: The Foundation asks questions and pursues answers. Why are food lines serving the same people year after year and still growing? Where are the programs that could help break the cycle of dependence? The programs do

not exist. The Foundation asked Branches, a non-profit serving children, youth, adults and families in Florida City, to come up with a program to help those who consistently rely on food assistance. Branches, working with its Center for Financial Stability planned a pilot program to help people address the issues that plague them. Food line regulars could freely choose to come for ten weeks of sessions offering in depth help. Sessions would include getting to know participants and winning trust, helping with money management, language and employment problems, and offering educational opportunities for children accompanying parents. The first graduation was an emotional experience for participants who had acquired new skills and for their children who watched with pride. Numerous participants found jobs. The sessions will continue to be offered in three languages and monitored for results.

For example: The Grants Committee noted that large numbers of children in Key Largo School are from families that require subsidized food and must rely on help from food pantries. Although lunches are available during the week through federal funding, there is no assurance that children will have enough to eat over the weekend. The **Back Pack** program provides young students from pre-school to third

grade with supplemental food to be placed in their backpacks on Friday. ORCF is responsible for the program that brings food to preschool children in the Upper Keys, where there is no federal assistance at the preschool level. The Foundation worked with the Early Learning Coalition's standards for poverty to determine which children to subsidize. Feeding South Florida prepares packets of food at their warehouse, brings them down to distribution centers, and Early Childhood coordinates delivery. Through combined efforts, approximately **150 preschool children** now receive food. Private donors help the Key Largo School Back Pack initiative, also.

For example: Because of the serious and productive work of the Foundation's director, Yuri Mikolay, an overview of needs for an array of non-profits can be identified. This gives the Foundation a wide perspective for creative partnerships and exchange of ideas.

For example: The Club's Human Resources department and the Foundation are looking at ways to have a direct impact on those who work here. More information about the Club's and ORCA's hiring needs could lead to programs designed to prepare applicants in the surrounding areas for employment within Ocean Reef

Looking forward to what's next is the mission of the Ocean Reef Community Foundation, its accomplishments a source of pride for every member. Looking backward to August 1994 when the Foundation was officially founded and incorporated, an article in the Free Press asked. "Why an ORC Foundation?" One of its founders, **Jim Dicke II**, answered, "... We can have a proper vehicle to endow worthwhile activities, support new ventures and provide centralized fundraising support for important initiatives that will make Ocean Reef even better."

Onward!

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