

PHILANTHROPY MATTERS

Beyond the Gates 'Beyond Grateful'



by Yurianna Mikolay
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One month ago today, we announced a \$500,000 match challenge to create the Ocean Reef Community Foundation Florida Keys Hurricane Recovery Fund and benefit Hurricane Irma-ravaged Monroe County beyond the Club's gates. Inside of three weeks the community donated \$1.25 million, a special committee was formed and informed of needs by authorities throughout the Keys and we were already presenting the first resulting grants to charities on your behalf last Friday.

The salient need for such an organized philanthropic response in the wake of Hurricane Andrew was, in fact, the impetus for the establishment of the Ocean Reef Community Foundation. While major efforts by the community to respond to an earthquake and hurricane in Haiti honed response time and efficiency in recent years, we've been fortunate not to be tested on responding to a disaster on a major scale in our own backyard until now. I'd like to think our effort has lived up to the vision of our founders 25 years ago, and particularly that of the late **Bob Gintel** who was the chief champion of the cause then.

While the original Community Relief Fund he initiated has already been providing assistance to employee-specific efforts and nearby charities, Members can now also direct any individuals you may know in Monroe County struggling in the aftermath of Hurricane Irma to www.gooddeedsinthekeys.org.



State Representative Holly Rachein's Aide Kate DeLoach, journalist Kristen Livengood, Monroe County Mayor George Neugent, ORCF Executive Director Yuri Mikolay, Coldwell Banker Schmitt Charitable Foundation Chair Nira Tocco and Jessica Borraccino and Greater Marathon Chamber of Commerce CEO Daniel Sameness celebrating Ocean Reef's \$250K gift to Coldwell Banker Schmitt Charitable Foundation at the second meeting of the new Florida Keys Hurricane Recovery Foundation Board of Directors last week. Mikolay represents the Ocean Reef Community Foundation on the board of the charity assembled to assess hurricane-related needs and address them with a coordinated, county-wide response.

[org](http://www.gooddeedsinthekeys.org). There they can apply for help thanks to a grant from our Florida Keys Hurricane Recovery Fund, which was necessitated by the devastation all throughout our hard-hit county.

As one of our advisors in the group photo seen here posted on social media last Friday night, "The sentiment is the same for all of us - honored to be asked to help disseminate more than a million dollars in relief money to local people who need it from Ocean Reef's gates to the Southernmost Point, and especially the hardest hit places in between. Today, we received a \$250,000 donation from the amazing people who live at Ocean Reef Club and the Ocean Reef Community Foundation to help those who need it most. Beyond grateful is an understatement."

The grant mentioned in the post is ours to the Coldwell Banker Schmitt Charitable Foundation, which has assisted over 800 individuals and organizations county-wide through five offices to bridge a financial gap caused by unfortunate, yet temporary, situations since 2002. One hundred percent of the contributions are distributed with no administrative costs. Gifting is based on need and each request for funds is care-



The same group identified, joined by County Commissioner David Rice (second from the right) and Marathon's Grace Jones Community Center volunteer C.J. Geotis and Board President Kathy Hunt (third and fourth from the right) accepting Ocean Reef's \$20,000 grant for their childcare center.

fully reviewed and researched. We're very grateful to have such an outstanding partner.

It was also heartening to see that first post about the gift was liked and shared hundreds of times, with each share inspiring a litany of comments thanking Ocean Reef and tagging friends in need to let them know about the opportunity. Check out the new Ocean Reef Community Foundation Facebook page to see more about our grants and reactions to them.

A second FKHRF gift for \$20,000 was also presented last week to the Grace Jones Community Center, which has been a cornerstone of life in Marathon for 50 years. The funds will enable their childcare center to accommodate more children from other centers forced to close after the storm,

expand their backpack food program to meet increased need and help parents of 100 children get back to work.

Again, the Membership's generous support of the separate effort to support hurricane relief specifically for employees of Ocean Reef and the communities they call home – Homestead, Florida City and the Upper Keys – has resulted in and continues to fund numerous meaningful grants (more on those soon).

To make a tax-deductible donation to the Florida Keys Hurricane Response Fund, please mail your check made payable to the Ocean Reef Community Foundation with Florida Keys Hurricane response in the memo line to: 35 Ocean Reef Drive, Suite 148, Key Largo, FL 33037.