

Giving Thanks This Season

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Photo courtesy Gulf Coast Community Foundation, YMCA Southwest Florida.

As the Thanksgiving holiday approaches, I'm reflecting on where I feel the most gratitude this season. I am grateful for the philanthropic community and our generous donors who provide hope to so many. I am thankful that our region is recovering and beginning to

rebuild after Hurricane Ian and its tumultuous wrath. Experiencing our resilient nonprofit partners come together for the greater good has truly warmed my heart.

As we know, the Gulf Coast of Florida, as well as inland counties, experienced severe flooding and wind from Hurricane Ian on Sept. 28 and 29. It may become the costliest storm in Florida's history. The Gulf Coast Board of Directors launched the Hurricane Ian Recovery Initiative immediately after the storm. Over 40 grants have been awarded to our community's nonprofits from Gulf Coast Community Foundation's Hurricane Ian Disaster Relief Fund. In just three weeks, together with our generous donors, Gulf Coast Community Foundation has provided over \$1 million for immediate humanitarian relief to area nonprofits devastated by Hurricane Ian. These nonprofits serve our community in myriad ways – from at-risk children and families, to our environment, seniors and more. Here are a few highlights of the grantees.

Barrier Island Parks Society in Boca Grande received \$20,000 from our Hurricane Ian Recovery Initiative to assist employees impacted by Hurricane Ian. Executive Director Sharon R. McKenzie shared, "It means so much to us to have your support especially during this time. We share in your deep care for our community and with your support we will continue to meet our important mission to protect our beautiful local beaches, wildlife, historical structures and maritime history. We are working daily to recover from this catastrophic event and we will remain resilient as we work towards our current goals to keep our beaches clean and safe, repair our damaged historic structures and offer educational programs in 2023."

DeSoto County Habitat for Humanity received \$25,000 from the initiative for the Disaster Recovery Critical Home Repair program fund, while Epilepsy Services of Southwest Florida received \$5,000 for transportation and gift cards for medicine. Epilepsy Services of Southwest Florida serves clients with epilepsy who have no health insurance and are at or below the poverty level. Laurel Civic Association, Inc. received \$10,000 for emergency assistance to families in need. The association, established in 1969, helps children and families get closer to the goal of self-sufficiency each day with the help of grants, donations, volunteers and collaborations.

I am honored to share that our leadership model has provided help and hope to those most affected by Hurricane Ian, especially in the areas of affordable housing, mental health, and the environment. *That* makes me grateful this season.

It's said that thankfulness is the quickest path to joy. May your Thanksgiving holiday be filled with joy and gratitude.

Mark Pritchett is President and CEO of Gulf Coast Community Foundation.

Photo courtesy Gulf Coast Community Foundation, YMCA Southwest Florida.

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Manatee County			
Voted	Turnout	Mail	Total
46,820	58.83%	27,420	
89,687	72.31%	32,022	
22,846	29.68%	15,667	
159,353	56.79%	75,109	
Sarasota County			
Voted	Turnout	Mail	Total
64,739	63.78%	41,994	
107,975	70.14%	33,979	
30,690	31.30%	18,914	
203,404	57.54%	94,887	

