



COVID Education Innovation in Florida

Citrus Cares Community (Citrus County)

To address gaps due to distance learning for the most at-risk students in their community, the Citrus County Education Foundation created a Community of Care to ensure learning continued and necessary tools and resources were provided to families. Serving alongside the Citrus County School District, the Foundation assisted in preparing food and loading busses every day, a boots-on-the-ground approach to meeting the needs of families. Families that had immune compromised members and positive cases took a top priority, along with any family who did not have access to the internet. They reached out to local companies looking for additional resources for families and were able to receive assistance on state and national levels for quality internet service.

As the pandemic continued, 100 board members and “friends of the foundation” began sectioning off neighborhoods with groups adopting each one to make sure outreach was to as many families as possible. Relationships were built with many families who had never needed assistance before and did not know how to obtain it.

This Community of Care model will be applied as a pilot program to combat generational poverty in the community through a partnership with the local Chamber of Commerce. Through this boots-on-the-ground approach, trust with families has developed, impacting not only families in need, but bringing awareness to community partners and elected officials. A life coach/mentor mentality has been established by introducing neighborhoods to organizations that provided support for them during the pandemic.

“The most valuable lesson we learned is that it’s OK to think differently; it’s OK to adapt to new ways and learn from those new ways, because, quite frankly, some of those new ways are better than we’ve ever done it before.” Shaunda Burdette, Executive Director for Citrus County Education Foundation

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The Consortium elevates the impact of Florida’s local education foundations through advocacy and providing a collegial community for ongoing learning, shared resources and support. These nonprofit organizations are aligned with nearly every school district in our state and collectively they raise more than \$80 million annually to innovate learning, power potential and celebrate success.

We believe strong collaboration is essential to ensure school success. Our effort to capture, elevate and share education innovations discovered amid the disruption of the pandemic is offered in that spirit.

Our **Top 10 Takeaways: COVID Education Innovation** report can be accessed at educationinnovationspotlight.com