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Charting A New Course



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Sarasota, Manatee, Charlotte & Lee Counties

Children First receives grant to expand and enhance programs

SARASOTA, FL – Children First received a \$150,000 grant from the Charles & Margery Barancik Foundation to help stabilize families and provide children with high-quality early childhood education. The support of the Barancik Foundation will ensure that children and families in need will receive additional high-quality services to support their emotional and behavioral well-being.

This gift is part of Children First's "Raise Your Hand" campaign to enhance and expand current programs. To date, more than 75 percent of the campaign's \$3.8 million goal has been pledged by generous philanthropists. The Barancik Foundation's transformative three-year grant will leverage additional support from the community to achieve the campaign goal.

"We are deeply grateful for the Barancik Foundation's support of the children and families we serve," said Philip Tavill, Children First president & CEO. "By providing more comprehensive services, Children First is stepping up to meet the changing needs of children and families in Sarasota County. This generous grant will have a lasting impact."

An important aspect of the "Raise Your Hand" campaign is addressing the emotional and behavioral well-being of the low-income, high-risk children and families served by Children First. This is being accomplished by the addition of a mental health professional to provide on-site mental health services. The organization will also utilize masters-level interns, in the fields of social work and mental health counseling, from USF and Argosy.

In addition to assisting families with emotional and behavioral health needs, the campaign aims to reduce the waiting list of over 400 children, intensify the role of family advocates who support families served by Children First, and offer more individualized attention for children in preschool classrooms.

"It is incredible to see the impact the program enhancements we've already implemented have on our children and families," said Tavill. "There is more work to be done but the Barancik Foundation's confidence in the work we are doing to best serve our community's most at-risk children is certain to inspire others to give. Everyone, regardless of income level, deserves the opportunity to succeed."

To learn more about Children First's "Raise Your Hand" campaign, visit childrenfirst.net or contact Carol Butera at (941) 953-3877, ext. 115.

About Children First

Founded in 1961 and designated as one of the top 10 Head Start programs in the country, out of 1,800 similar programs nationwide, Children First strengthens children and families by improving the quality of their lives through a comprehensive approach to development, education, health and well-being. At 13 sites throughout Sarasota County, Children First offers full-day preschool, infant and toddler care, as well as nutrition and health care assistance, to children ages birth to 5 years old from low-income families. Through Children First, the children receive the social and cognitive skills needed to enter kindergarten and elementary school on track. Additionally, the agency provides more than 50% of the children's weekly nutritional needs. Children First also helps families with parenting skills and literacy classes, career training, and referrals for housing, food, clothing and employment assistance. For more information on Children First, please contact Kristen Theisen at 941-953-3877, ext. 124 or ktheisen@childrenfirst.net.

About Charles & Margery Barancik Foundation

The Charles and Margery Barancik family has long believed in the power of philanthropy to shape our world and enrich the lives of all people. It was the expression of this belief that led them in 2014 to establish the Charles & Margery Barancik Foundation—a private, family foundation located in Sarasota, Florida. The Barancik Foundation creates initiatives and awards grants in Sarasota and beyond in the areas of education, humanitarian causes, arts and culture, the environment, and medical (research/resources). For further information, please contact Kelly Romanoff at KRomanoff@BarancikFoundation.org.

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