

Foundations team up to provide scholarships

The Southwest Florida Community Foundation, in partnership with The Foundation for Lee County Public Schools, Inc., provides four-year, full-tuition scholarships to Lee County students in need.

The Community Foundation's Olmsted-Hotchkiss Scholarship Program was established two years ago to identify students in middle school and to provide a mentoring program for them.

These students must get good grades and stay crime- and drug-free throughout middle school and high school. When they complete the program upon graduation from high school, they receive a full-tuition scholarship to any accredited, public Florida college or university.

"We are so excited to be able to work with The Foundation for Lee Public Schools," said Carol McLaughlin, Chief Program Officer at the Southwest Florida Community Foundation.

"The Community Foundation needed someone who could administer the scholarships that we fund with this program. Marshall Bower and the Foundation for Lee County Public Schools has really stepped up to the plate even agreeing to change the parameters of their existing program which started at the ninth grade level to meet our donor's wishes of reaching sixth graders."

The Foundation for Lee County Public Schools administers the scholarships and acts as a liaison with the Florida Gulf Coast University College Reach Out Program (CROP) which facilitates the mentoring program.

"This partnership is a win-win for everyone but especially for the sixth graders accepted into the scholarship program," said Marshall Bower, executive director of The Foundation for Lee County Public Schools.



The 14 sixth graders chosen for the Olmsted-Hotchkiss Scholarship Program were announced by Southwest Florida Community Foundation Chief Program Officer Carol McLaughlin and Theresa Riska-Hall, assistant executive director for The Foundation for Lee County Public Schools, at a recent College Reach Out Program Banquet.

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"These students are the future of our community. To help assure the success of these students, we will bolster the mentoring part of the program by linking these students to additional mentors through our Take Stock in Children program," said Bower.

Fourteen students will receive scholarships this year. They will be honored at a banquet held by The Foundation for Lee County Public Schools on Saturday, May 12. In addition to the sixth graders selected for the Olmsted-Hotchkiss program, there will be 32 ninth graders recognized who have been accepted into the Foundation's Take Stock in Children Scholarship Program. The banquet is sponsored by the Foundation's business partner Outback Steakhouse who continues to be a local and statewide spon-

sor of Take Stock in Children.

To date, the Southwest Florida Community Foundation has provided 45 scholarships totaling more than \$550,000 through the Olmsted-Hotchkiss Scholarship Program. ■

The Southwest Florida Community Foundation has been supporting the communities of Lee, Charlotte, Collier, Glades and Hendry through endowed funds for 30 years. With assets of more than \$54 million and 310 endowed funds, the community foundation has provided more than \$24.5 million in grants and scholarships to the communities it serves.

For more information on the scholarship program or the foundations, please contact the Southwest Florida Community Foundation at 274-5900 or The Foundation for Lee County Public Schools at 337-7077.

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