

Giving Back



We are only as strong as our collective commitment to doing good. Here, a group of local businesses are leading the way in giving back to people, causes and organizations that make the region a supportive network of givers. Learn how notable businesses maintain their commitment to paying it forward in this special section, with programs that span from at-risk kids to veterans in need.

BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF SARASOTA COUNTY



BGCSC members with Club Alumnus and President/CEO Bill Sadlo, holding their Club Membership Cards."

THIS YEAR, MORE THAN 5,000 CHILDREN IN THE COMMUNITY will walk through the doors at the Boys & Girls Clubs of Sarasota County and have their lives transformed. Inside, there's a place where all children, no matter their circumstances, can learn, play and reach their full potential; inside, youth development professionals and mentors provide support for every kid and teen served in an enriching and safe environment; inside, children have access to high-quality programs designed to enhance their academic success, develop character and leadership skills while living a healthy lifestyle. The hope and opportunity inside the Boys & Girls Clubs' doors ensures success is within reach of every young person who enters. From homework help to culinary arts classes and hands-on career exploration, area youth have endless opportunities available to chart their pathway to a great future. Each year, the Boys & Girls Clubs of Sarasota County hosts holiday parties for hundreds of the community's most needy children who would not otherwise have the chance to celebrate the season. Last year, 11-year-old club member, Jenny, was the first child to enter the Gift Room; after much thought, Jenny selected a box of Legos and a teddy bear. When a volunteer asked her why she chose those two items out of the hundreds of toys she could have picked, Jenny said that the box of Legos would make a perfect gift for her younger brother, and the teddy bear will help her classroom fill their donation box for Toys for Tots. Jenny is a fantastic example of the kind of children the Boys & Girls Clubs serve. And with the opening of the Tom & Debbie Shapiro Career Resource Center, teen club members can take classes and training programs, ultimately preparing them for and encouraging them to secure competitive community employment in Sarasota County or continue their academic career at the collegiate level after high school graduation. Much can be found inside the doors of the five club locations from Newtown to North Port, ensuring young people find their passions, reach for their dreams and achieve their full potential. The Boys & Girls Clubs of Sarasota County has opportunities for all youth, and our doors are open. Great futures start here.

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Sarasota County have played an integral role in the Sarasota County community for more than 46 years, providing daily programs and services to more than 5,000 youth. The mission is to enable all young people, especially those who need it most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring and responsible citizens. The vision is to provide a world-class Club experience that assures success is within reach of every young person who walks through the doors, with all members on track to graduate from high school with a plan for the future, demonstrating good character and citizenship and living a healthy lifestyle.

CS&L CPAS



CS&L CPAs supports numerous nonprofit organizations throughout the year through volunteer hours, fundraising efforts, sponsorship support, donations and more. Annually, the firm is a corporate sponsor for more than 20 charitable events and activities for charitable organizations across the region. The firm also coordinates frequent employee volunteer projects and donation drives with local organizations that need extra hands. CS&L hosts a philanthropic program called CS&L CAREs, which provides a platform for employees to get involved in the community. This initiative was launched as part of the 60th anniversary celebration in 2014 and has become a cornerstone of the firm's culture. Building on the momentum of this initiative, more than 30 percent of CS&L employees now serve on a board or committee in a leadership capacity and many more volunteer their time and energy all year round. For these engaged individuals, CS&L provides support through event sponsorship dollars, in-kind donations and time off so employees can perform their board leadership responsibilities. CS&L promotes positive impact through leadership. Enthusiasm and dedication are characteristics that all CS&L employees exhibit, whether working to solve a complex client challenge or volunteering their time and talent to assist local organizations. Through generosity of time, money and the passion to serve, CS&L employees are making the region a great place to live and thrive.

Serving the Southwest Florida region since 1954, CS&L CPAs is a full-service certified public accounting firm with offices in Bradenton, Sarasota and Tampa. The firm provides accounting, taxation, auditing and consulting services to individuals, businesses and organizations. Their mission is to understand your unique needs and create exceptional solutions. To learn more, visit www.cslcpa.com.

GREENZONE HERO



GREENZONE HERO (GZH) IS ALL ABOUT MAKING AMERICA STRONGER by creating more commerce for the companies that honor veterans and by generating residual funding streams for the nonprofit organizations that help those who have served their country. GZH both employs and is owned by veterans, making the cause even more near and dear to their hearts—Collective Director John Krotec says that the organization is a for-profit company with “our own social mission on the side.” GZH brands companies for “doing the right thing,” in this case, those companies that help veterans in one of five ways: special pricing, employment, ownership, management and/or support of veteran initiatives. By rewarding businesses with cyber-medals identifying them as companies that help veterans in need, GZH builds commerce for their members through direct marketing, social media, blogging, video, social media and search engine optimization. “Our search engine optimization strategy has already moved our website to the first page of Google in many different business sectors,” says Krotec. “This gives our members an edge on their competition.” GZH also has big plans moving into the future. They recently partnered with Sarasota’s own Big Top Brewery and the Brian Bill Foundation, a local nonprofit supporting special operations personnel who suffer adjusting from active duty—Big Top brewed a special GZH Black Ops Dark Ale, a significant portion of the profits from which were donated (with matching Big Top funds) to the foundation. Plans are in the works for more such events, along with building out commerce strategies for current and new clients. In an effort to create more residual funding and donations, GZH plans to create even more beneficial partnerships with national “veteran-focused” nonprofit organizations. GZH believes that appreciation and recognition and commerce matters—the veterans who selflessly served our country deserve it and the businesses that provide veteran-friendly goods and services deserve it, too!

GreenZone Hero was developed to increase the revenues of American businesses that honor our veterans. GZH also gives partnering nonprofit organizations an opportunity to create sustainable, residual funding streams that will support their veteran-focused initiatives. Additionally, any business association that partners with GZH receives a discounted enlistment fee for their members. GZH provides recognition for their association-partners by donating a portion of the enlistment fees to a veteran-focused nonprofit organization. By doing so, GZH is able to expand the effectiveness of their efforts to support veterans. GZH serves those who serve by providing a platform for them to connect with one another. GZH provides tangible recognition and appreciation and commerce for both businesses and veterans; it’s a place where veterans in particular—and all Americans in general—can find, select and show their support by patronizing businesses that openly and proudly “do the right thing.”

GULF COAST KETAMINE CENTER



KETAMINE HAS RECENTLY BEEN BILLED AS THE SINGLE GREATEST ADVANCEMENT in the treatment of depression in decades. Under the leadership of Founder and President Dr. Steven Reichbach, the Gulf Coast Ketamine Center strives to make the community aware of this very valuable and potentially life-saving treatment, as well as offer it in a comfortable, compassionate setting where safety of the patient always comes first. Ketamine infusion therapy for appropriate patients will be part of a comprehensive treatment plan that will include the patient's primary care physician as well as other specialists involved with the patient's care. Ketamine is an anesthetic drug that works in the spine and brain through a different set of nerve receptors known as NMDA receptors. It is thought that patients with chronic neuropathic pain have increased intensity with the firing of these specific receptors. Ketamine acts as an antagonist to the continuous firing of these nerves, allowing a break in the cycle of pain transmission. Essentially, ketamine allows the nervous system to relax, during which time it can restructure and reboot so that pain is oftentimes relieved completely for months at a time. After treatment with ketamine, many patients are able to decrease their doses of pain meds dramatically, and some have been able to stop them altogether. Over the past 10 years, more and more information is coming to light about the incredible, almost instantaneous effects that low-dose ketamine has in depressed patients, manic depressed patients and patients with PTSD who have had little or no success with conventional treatment modalities. Low-dose ketamine infusions are reported to have up to a 90 percent success rate, and improved symptoms often occur after just one 50-minute infusion. At the Gulf Coast Ketamine Center, infuse your life with hope.

Gulf Coast Ketamine Center is the only ketamine center in Manatee County. Founder and President Dr. Steven Reichbach, a board-certified anesthesiologist who has been in practice for 26 years, directs the center. Lolita Borges, RN is the center's clinical director. Starting the Ketamine Center in Florida has always been Dr. Reichbach's passion and dream, relocating here from New York. Dr. Reichbach is extremely excited to offer this highly effective treatment to patients in Sarasota and the surrounding areas with the hope of improving people's lives and letting them live their lives to the fullest. The center's staff invites anyone who has questions pertaining to ketamine treatments for either themselves or a loved one to visit their website at FindPainRelief.com or to call their office at 941-213-4444. The staff at the Gulf Coast Ketamine Center feels very strongly in making a difference in people's lives.

PINEAPPLE YOGA STUDIO



PINEAPPLE YOGA STUDIO is a project that arose from the heart. Owner Claudia Baeza and her partner Robert were both touched by yoga at different times in their lives years ago following circumstances that had broken them down emotionally and physically. They joined the yoga community not really knowing what to find or how they would feel. What they found was a compassionate place for healing and spirituality, which inspired them in ways they never imagined. Claudia realized that she wanted to share her love of yoga with a broader audience, along with serving at-risk communities in an authentic and meaningful way. She has spearheaded a monthly program highlighting local studios every first Saturday at Bayfront Park with a free yoga class, which is booked through December 2017. Claudia's vision is to offer a healing place for wellness and community as well as making yoga accessible to those that have not tried it or cannot afford it. Her studio offers a donation-based community class for men on Mondays and women on Wednesdays. Her goal is to offer yoga to those that are most fragile and in need. Anyone that is looking for a safe place to heal mental, emotional, spiritual or physical wounds is welcome, regardless of their ability to pay. Pineapple Yoga is a GreenZone Hero certified business and has hired a veteran who also is a yoga instructor. Quarterly, the studio offers its space to host fundraisers for Sarasota-based organizations that need support. This past November, Pineapple Yoga hosted a fundraiser for Southeastern Guide Dogs, giving 100 percent of the proceeds to support the training and placement of a guide dog to a visually impaired individual, free of cost to them. Sharing wellness and mindfulness with the community in a way that is accessible to all is a core mission for Claudia. She explains, "Yoga cannot fix everything, but it offers an additional modality which anyone can add to their toolkit to find stability, wellness and a better quality of life."

Pineapple Yoga Studio is a premier yoga studio located in historic Burns Court in Downtown Sarasota. Their mission is to provide a healing place for wellness, community and spirituality. Their passion is to bring awareness to good causes in the community using yoga and fitness as a platform. The studio provides a wide array of yoga classes, teacher trainings, workshops and events at their beautifully designed yoga studio and outdoor patio. Owner Claudia Baeza is certified yoga instructor and personal trainer specializing in finding and improving the asymmetries in the body. She weaves a strong knowledge of anatomy and alignment into her spiritual practice. She and all of her instructors are seasoned professionals who ensure that you find what you need in your yoga journey.

SARASOTA OPERA



OVER THE COMPANY'S 58-YEAR HISTORY, Sarasota Opera has garnered an international reputation for annually presenting high-quality productions with some of the most exciting operatic voices singing today. A significant part of the Sarasota Opera mission is to educate the community about the art form of opera. "The company believes that every child deserves to have an education in music," says Director of Audience Development Samuel Lowry. "We have designed several programs that offer unique opportunities for students to engage with all aspects of opera. Those programs include numerous community outreach concerts, working with teachers to create study guides on opera and annually welcoming students from all around Sarasota and Manatee counties to attend dress rehearsals at the Opera House." Of the many programs Sarasota Opera has developed to serve the Sarasota community, the Sarasota Youth Opera program has the longest proven track record of success. The Sarasota Youth Opera program was launched in 1984 and welcomes anyone between the ages of 8 and 18, giving countless young people the opportunity to experience the magic of opera through participation in choruses, Sarasota Opera's main stage productions and the Youth Opera's own productions. "A highlight each year is also our annual three-week summer camp called 360 Degrees of Opera," says Lowry. "Each year, several young people are identified through the English for Speakers of Other Languages program (ESOL) to receive the Brualdi Scholarship which allows them to attend our camp for only \$25." The Sarasota Opera's vision for the future is to continue its mission to educate, enrich and entertain the community of Sarasota by maintaining a commitment to excellence while looking for new ways to engage the community in the wonderful world of opera.

With its five-opera season and over 100 concerts and outreach events a year, Sarasota Opera continues to distinguish itself as one of the top opera companies in the United States by finding innovation through tradition. Sarasota Opera recently completed its 57th-consecutive season and the final season of the company's internationally acclaimed Verdi Cycle, making it the only company in the world to have performed every work of Giuseppe Verdi. Compelling stories partnered with great music and dazzling productions make a performance at Sarasota Opera an experience that will not be forgotten.

SELAH FREEDOM



SELAH FREEDOM closely partners with law enforcement, legislators and influential leaders to not only shed light on the staggering statistics, but also to work together to change those statistics by changing lives. Selah Freedom's teen prevention program, My Life, My Choice is a survivor-written, survivor- and clinician-led curriculum that has proven to lower the chances of girls being sexually and commercially exploited by over 90 percent. Building confidence and empowering girls is a huge component of Selah Freedom's work in helping teen girls learn the language and tactics of pimps and the red flags that could be putting them at risk. Selah Freedom is extremely grateful for the opportunity to partner with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Manatee County and Girls Inc. for the My Life, My Choice Teen Prevention Program. This six-week program ultimately provides teens with the tools they need to protect themselves against sex traffickers. It is only \$250 per teen girl in the My Life, My Choice program, and \$2,500 to sponsor an entire group. Selah Freedom has also led groups in North Port High School, Camp 4 Girls in Shriners Hospital and Pace Center for Girls, among others. "My true desire is to awaken people so that they speak up about the epidemic of sexual abuse that is happening to children right here in our own backyard," says Selah Freedom President and CEO Elizabeth Fisher. "Our prevention program is the tool being used to bring this awakening to teen girls—every time we have a little girl that comes forward and shares something that has happened to her, it is a victory that sets her on an entirely different path than she would be otherwise. This is the heart and core of who we are." As Selah Freedom brings light into the darkness of sex trafficking, victims start to transform into survivors!

Selah Freedom is a national organization providing education and training throughout the country, as well as teen prevention, outreach and safe housing in the Midwest and Southeast regions of the United States. Selah Freedom's national headquarters is located in Sarasota, FL. Selah Freedom actively confronts the issue of sex trafficking and is being upheld as the statewide model for how to effectively bring solutions to survivors of sex trafficking and exploitation. Selah is a Hebrew word which means to pause, rest and reflect. Selah gives survivors a chance to do just that. Women in their programs have an opportunity to dream again; to discover who it is they were created to be.

FRIENDSHIP CENTERS



WITH A MISSION TO PROMOTE HEALTH, dignity and quality of life throughout the journey of aging, the Friendship Centers has covered the spectrum of services to older adults along the Suncoast for more than four decades. Historically, if a need emerged, the Friendship Centers found a way to address it, from feeding those who are hungry to providing quality medical and dental care for folks who are low-income, socialization for people who are homebound or isolated to support for family caregivers. The Friendship Centers provides everything from loving care for frail loved ones to exercise and lifelong learning activities in its nationally accredited centers—places that bring together falls prevention, computer classes, dancing and everything in between. As 10,000+ baby boomers turn 65 every day, the numbers of dementia patients and the need for caregivers will only increase in the near future as this group lives longer than any cohort that preceded. To meet this demand, the Friendship Centers is putting particular emphasis on its licensed adult day programs in Sarasota and Venice. The organization was the first to offer these services to Sarasota County residents, starting in 1980 with the Living Room. For a very affordable fee, caregivers can sign up their loved ones for the day program, which provides respite while giving their loved ones a safe, happy and caring environment. Free caregiver support groups are offered at both locations. Given the impact of the challenges of caregiving, it's vital the Sarasota community is aware of the many benefits the adult day program offers to both caregivers and their loved ones. Since 1973, the Friendship Centers has been a leader in providing comprehensive programs and services for seniors and their families, helping them discover a new way to age. "Over the years, we have seen some incredible stories of dedication and love coming from the volunteers, participants and staff of the Friendship Centers," says Friendship Centers' President and CEO Erin McLeod. "This place has a certain magic about it. People often come through our doors worried or lonesome, weary or afraid. It doesn't take long for the effect of People Helping People to kick in—someone takes their hand, tells them 'We can help,' shares a cup of coffee, a story, a laugh. Pretty soon, they're standing a little taller, walking with more assurance and feeling encouraged that there is a new way to age."

The Friendship Centers serves older adults in Sarasota, Charlotte, DeSoto, Lee and Collier counties. Its mission is to promote health, dignity and quality of life throughout the journey of aging. For more than four decades the organization has served persons 50 and older with programs and services that include medical and dental clinics, activity centers, lifelong learning, meals at centers and delivered to the homebound, caregiver support, adult day services and case management. More than 1,000 volunteers give their time valued at more than \$3 million annually. For more information, visit friendshipcenters.org or call 941-955-2122.

THE SALVATION ARMY SARASOTA



WHEN MR. ARNOLD J. SIMONSEN RETIRED FROM CHICAGO TO LONGBOAT KEY several years ago, he recognized through integrating national best practices, The Salvation Army Sarasota courageously designs processes to maximize community investments. Mr. Simonsen understood that The Salvation Army is, to those who want to positively affect their world, the charity that maximizes contributions and exists for the benefit of others, to one another and to God. “The local leadership is more concerned with helping the homeless than getting a big paycheck for themselves,” says Simonsen, the twinkle in his eye apparent as he discusses the wonderful diversity of the children and staff he observed during a recent visit to the summer program at Camp Keystone. Mr. Simonsen decided to play a vital role in addressing the long-term goal of reducing chronic homelessness in Sarasota by becoming a benefactor for the Quality of Life By Choice initiative (QLife). His philanthropy to The Salvation Army Sarasota includes providing current operating funds for the QLife initiative, future capital support and a bequest. The QLife framework meets the person, not the population, serves the person, not the problem and focuses on moving people from homelessness to housing. QLife concentrates on allowing individuals to choose their future with community support. Connecting hope with a desire to change, a collaborative plan of action is created to increase the quality of life for each individual, reducing days and thus, years of homelessness. Sarasota Area Commander Major Ethan Frizzell says, “Reflecting the quality of community in the lives of others increases the quality of life for all.” Frizzell is truly thankful that Mr. Simonsen, through his current operational funding, future capital commitments and planned bequest, will ultimately invest \$2.5 million through The Salvation Army QLife initiative to address chronic homelessness in Sarasota.

The Salvation Army, founded in 1865, has a rich history of providing help to those in Sarasota County since 1927. Local services focus on meeting basic needs social mobility and opportunities for a desired quality of life. The Salvation Army, an international movement, is an evangelical part of the universal Christian Church. Its message is based on the Bible. Its ministry is motivated by the love of God. Its mission is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet human needs in His name without discrimination. Doing the most good: these four words sum up The Salvation Army's mission to feed, to clothe, to comfort and to care, to rebuild broken homes and broken lives. Eighty-two cents of every dollar goes to supporting local services and it is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization.

UNITED WAY SUNCOAST



The Cates Family

HOW IS UNITED WAY SUNCOAST FIGHTING FOR OUR COMMUNITY?

BUILDING ASSETS: United Way Individual Development Accounts provide a 2-to-1 match for dollars saved by participants toward the purchase of a home, small business or tuition for higher education. "I think that it just is so empowering to know that it's your home and that you'll have something to leave behind with your children," says Stefanie Cates, who, as a participant in United Way Suncoast's Individual Development Account program, was able to purchase a home and gain stability for her family (pictured above).

INCREASING FINANCIAL CAPABILITY: In partnership with Gulf Coast Community Foundation and The Salvation Army, more than 60 formerly homeless families participate in a Financial Stability initiative to build a financial plan. At Booker Middle School Resource Center we bring all of our financial stability programming (coaching, career planning, technical certification, tax preparation, financial workshops, etc.) together for students and families.

INCREASING INCOME: CareerEdge Funders Collaborative, new to United Way Suncoast, provides training and certifications that enable workers to increase their income and earning potential. Since 2010, CareerEdge has helped 2,049 low-income workers earn raises at their jobs and has infused \$23.4 million in new wages and raises into our local economy. Through United Way Suncoast's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program, Sarasota County families saved over \$358,600 in tax preparation fees and received over \$2.3 million in refunds last year, a needed boost for families' bottom lines and to our local economy.

United Way Suncoast fights for the education and financial stability of every person in the community. This year United Way Suncoast will invest approximately \$1.1 million in programs, services and United Way Suncoast led initiatives, all here in Sarasota and DeSoto Counties. More than 41 percent of Sarasota County households are unable to afford the high cost of living here. Roughly 30 percent of those households fall into what United Way calls the ALICE population (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed): hard-working, motivated residents who earn more than the US poverty level, yet struggle to afford basic living expenses, and have little or no savings and are one setback away from falling into poverty.