

The Education Fund launches COVID-19 relief, distributes thousands in school supplies and fresh produce, and provides teachers tech support

Nonprofit partners serve as a pipeline to families in need.

MIAMI (May 5, 2020) – The Education Fund, a nonprofit that enhances public education in Miami-Dade County, retooled its programs to supply teachers, students, and their families with materials to make distance learning easier and keep pantries stocked with food and household products in response to the COVID-19 crisis.

The organization gifted Camillus House \$40,000 in supplies from its Ocean Bank Center for Educational Materials. In the past three weeks, the center distributed \$120,000 in materials and 2,000 backpacks full of school supplies. During a typical school year, the 11,000-square-foot center serves as a school supply warehouse for public school teachers and their students.

As the COVID-19 designated response partner with the Kids in Need Foundation in Minnesota, The Education Fund receives regular shipments of school and household goods at the warehouse. The nonprofit now works to provide hundreds of thousands of dollars in supplies to groups, including:

- Branches
- Mothers Fighting Justice
- Overtown Youth Center
- Lotus House
- Camillus House
- His House Children’s Home
- Miami Bridge
- St. Alban’s Child Enrichment Child Enrichment Center, Coconut Grove
- Cuban American Council Nurturing Hispanic Communities
- Empowered Youth USA
- Neighbors 4 Neighbors
- Steps in the Right Direction
- The Children’s Trust
- Steps in the Right Direction

“We’re grateful to be able to work with community organizations to provide families what they need. The COVID-19 crisis has forced many into difficult economic situations, and we know our supplies are filling a fast-growing need,” said Linda Lecht, president of The Education Fund.

The organization teamed up with Miami-Dade County Public Schools Department of Food and Nutrition and groups like Empowered Youth USA to keep people fed. The Education Fund staff and teachers harvest produce weekly from the organization’s 51 edible gardens and food forests in public elementary schools.

During the school year, the food forests—some an acre in size—provide organic produce to school cafeterias for lunches and for students to take home. Since public schools and businesses closed in mid-March, harvest bags with fresh produce now feed families from Homestead to Miami Gardens.

The nonprofit’s teacher outreach program now conducts regular webinars to help educators make the successful switch to distance learning. A special grant program funded by the P.L. Dodge Foundation helps teachers pay for technology to enhance the remote-learning experience. The organization received 375 grant applications in two hours from local teachers.

“The Education Fund is in a marathon race. We’re working tirelessly to give our students, their families, and teachers the support they require. We’ve retooled all of our programs in the face of this adversity,” Lecht said.

Supporting The Education Fund in its COVID-19 relief efforts are Wells Fargo, Ford Motor Company/Ford Global Fund, PNC Bank, Florida Blue, Assurant, The Kirk Foundation, Anthony R. Abraham Foundation, P.L. Dodge Foundation, Ziff Family Foundation, Regions Bank and many individuals.

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About The Education Fund

The Education Fund brings innovative methods to local public schools, informs the community about public education, and encourages private sector investment in public education. The organization improved student outcomes, including improving science scores by 84 percent, eating habits by 52 percent, and college enrollment by 34 percent. The Education Fund has won numerous awards, including the Greater Miami Chamber's NOVO Award for Non-Profit Excellence and the Blue Foundation's Sapphire Award. Visit EducationFund.org.

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