

Culture of Collaboration

The League Club inspires nonprofits to work together

Southwest Florida is a sanctuary for charitable causes, with organizations such as Beds for Kids, Laces of Love and Youth Haven working together to serve underprivileged families in the community.

Recently, these organizations have taken it to the next level, combining efforts and collaborating to not only serve more people but to serve them to their best abilities.

This culture of collaboration is made possible by groups such as The League Club, who support charitable causes in the area and host events to bring nonprofits together. Sponsored by *eBella*, The League Club's Briefcase Breakfast, for instance, celebrates nonprofits that benefit from the organization's grants and presents a multitude of opportunities for these nonprofits to form cooperative working relationships for their mutual benefit.

Comprised of more than 600 women in Southwest Florida who have been members of a Junior League affiliated with The Association of Junior Leagues International, The League Club raises funds to be awarded

via grants to nonprofit organizations throughout Lee and Collier counties. These are organizations concerned with educational, environmental and family issues — and there are many that fit the bill. Since 1986, the all-volunteer organization has awarded more than \$4.5 million in grants, supporting countless organizations and encouraging them to work together.

"It's amazing what we do in our community — collaboratively, alone and even anonymously," says Cynthia Shafer, founder of Beds for Kids. "To be a part of it is both heart-wrenching and heartwarming at the same time."

Shafer founded Beds for Kids with her husband in 2001 to provide beds and bedding to foster children in Southwest Florida. Throughout the years, she has worked with fellow organizations such as Friends of Foster Children Forever, providing beds for kids in the programs.

She has also joined forces with Jeanne Nealon, who runs Laces of Love, which provides shoes to needy children. When Nealon receives footwear (such as

The League Club awarded \$343,743 in grants to 35 area agencies at its 2019 Briefcase Breakfast.

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slippers and sandals) that don't match her organization's footwear needs, she passes them along to Beds for Kids. Shafer especially loves having the slippers to place on the children's beds when she delivers them.

"Sometimes we serve the same children, but in different aspects," Shafer says. "When we collaborate, we can do more."

The League Club's VP Community Susan Harris echoes Shafer's sentiments, recalling the slippers-and-beds collaboration.

"The beauty of it is that Laces of Love and Beds for Kids met each other at a previous Briefcase Breakfast. It just all unfolded, impromptu, at the meeting, and it was a great reminder to everyone sitting in the room that this is what it's all about."

Jinx Liggett, executive director of Youth Haven, Southwest Florida's only emergency and residential shelter for kids between 6 and 18 years old, agrees wholeheartedly.

Liggett has created multiple relationships with local nonprofits through networking and her association with the The League Club. By introducing her to credible organizations, she has found ways to better serve the kids at Youth Haven, having made connections with Legal Aid Service of Collier County, Healthcare Network of Southwest Florida, Naples Therapeutic Riding Center and others.

"It's a wonderful way to bring the community together." "We know we aren't duplicating services, but rather working with each other's strengths," Liggett says, adding that this community collaboration is a great teaching tool for the kids at Youth Haven, too. By exposing them to the many volunteers and charities, they see firsthand the success that comes from bringing the community together — inspiring them to pay it forward.

"It's a teaching moment that will hopefully inspire our Youth Haven kids to give back and serve their community."

The League Club's next annual fundraiser is "Naples Tables, Celebrate 2020 with Panache!" on March 2, at The Ritz-Carlton Golf Resort. There, more than 50 elegantly styled and whimsical tables will be on display, designed by experts in gracious living and entertaining. These include internationally recognized designer Alex Papachristidis (of 2019 AD100 acclaim, plus Saloniere 100; and Elle Décor A List) who will engage with best-selling author and lifestyle commentator Susanna Salk in a lively exchange on the art of entertaining with style. Salk is host of the Quintessence lifestyle blog, "At Home With."

Proceeds from last year's table event will be granted to deserving organizations at the next Briefcase Breakfast on Thursday, April 9, 2020, offering opportunities for League Club partner agencies to exchange ideas and join forces for the greater good.

"When nonprofit organizations collaborate," Harris says, "those dollars multiply." ❁



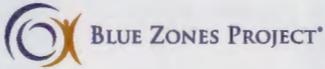
If You Go

What: The League Club's annual fundraiser, Naples Tables, Celebrate 2020 with Panache!

When: Monday, March 2, 2020

Where: The Ritz-Carlton Golf Resort

Go to leagueclub.org for more information and tickets.



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To learn how you can get involved visit bluezonesproject.com or call 239.624.2312

