

Achievement Centers gets \$200K for programs

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With a mission to solve critical health care issues, Palm Healthcare Foundation recently awarded \$200,000 to Achievement Centers for Children and Families in Delray Beach with a focus on behavioral health.

The grant money is part of a nearly \$2 million commitment from the nonprofit organization, which is also donating money to nonprofits in Boca Raton, Lake Worth, **Boynton Beach**, West Palm Beach, Riviera Beach, Jupiter and Wellington.

"Delray was one of the first communities we awarded grant money to," said Pat McNamara, president and CEO of Palm Healthcare. "We give \$200,000 each year for five years. We've already been awarding the grant dollars for three years."

When selecting where funds will be allocated, he said there is a great deal of preparation work and data collected to determine where there are health disparities.

"As we work with communities, we want to make progress on health issues and advance the culture of health," McNamara said. "Each community chooses a focus area. Delray Beach chose to focus on behavioral health."



Feline Mesidort, Delray Beach's neighborhood services administrator, participated in C.O.P.E. (Cost of Poverty Experience), a poverty simulation put together by Palm Beach County Services Department and Palm Healthcare Foundation's Healthier Delray Beach at the Achievement Centers for Children & Families in Delray Beach earlier this year. The foundation recently awarded \$200,000 to the center. (File photo)

Project managers are then hired for each community. Lauren Zuchman, project director for Healthier Delray Beach, is making sure the money allocated to Achievement Centers for Children and Families is going to the right places.

"Some of the money was used in Delray for mental health training," she said. "We want to be able to help those in a mental health crisis. And where Palm Healthcare Foundation could have just been a fiscal agent, they've really been a backbone."

Achievement Centers serves about 800 families throughout Delray Beach,

Zuchman said. "While behavioral health is our focus, there's also a need to dig deeper," she added. "We've done poverty simulations and racial equity workshops. We're having those hard conversations and working with youth in the community."

Zuchman has been collecting feedback from community meetings and is planning another meeting sometime in November.

"We really want feedback from the community so we can see if we're on the right path," she said. "We want residents 100 percent running the show."

In addition to working with residents on everything from mental illness to wellness to how it intertwines with overall physical health, Zuchman wants to encourage more connectedness by also organizing events such as block parties and barbecues.

"Resiliency is also a factor in mental health," she said. "We want our Delray residents to feel more connected to their community. People also seem like they want to do more. We're putting this in the residents' hands so they can make it what they want it to be."