

Editorial: The Foundation of giving in the Naples-Marco area

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(Photo left: NosUA, Getty Images/iStockphoto)

Christmas is a time for giving, yet throughout the year there is a philanthropic spirit that sets the Naples-Marco Island area apart from other communities in Florida.

One of the studies recently released by financial technology company SmartAsset analyzed data for 200 of the nation's largest metropolitan areas. It examined the number of 2015 tax returns listing charitable donations if the filer reported income, and calculated the percentage donated out of that

income.

The Naples-Marco Island metro area was the only one in Florida in the nation's top 25 — and tied for No. 14 in the U.S. The metro area gave 3.5 percent of its income to charity; 27.2 percent of tax returns had charitable contributions that year, the SmartAsset study showed.

The giving season in the Naples-Marco Island area truly is year-round. It's exemplified by the many foundations serving the area.

Today we offer special Christmas kudos to some recognizable foundations:

Christmas kudos to:

- The Community Foundation of Collier County, which has served the area since 1986. The foundation reports overseeing more than 700 funds and managing some \$170 million of assets

provided by donors to meet current and future community needs. Its website notes it's distributed more than \$130 million in grants so far. Of special note this year was creating, in conjunction with local government agencies and the Greater Naples Chamber of Commerce, the Care for Collier Fund that assisted small water-based businesses damaged economically by red tide. The foundation reports granting more than \$82,500 of red tide relief so far to 47 small businesses.

- **Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation.** If there's a charitable initiative in Southwest Florida with the words "50 percent match" included, it's likely the Schulze foundation is involved. Created in 2004 by the Best Buy retail chain founder, the Schulze foundation focuses its philanthropy where the family has resided, here and the Twin Cities area of Minnesota. It focuses on helping middle-class and working families with philanthropy directed toward human services, education and health.

- **Naples Children & Education Foundation.** Known to adults in the community as sponsors of the annual Naples Winter Wine Festival that's raised more than \$176 million since 2001, the kids from lower-income families in Collier County probably know about it for other reasons. It's why they've been able to eat, get dental care, see at school through donated glasses, had medical and emotional needs addressed, received preschool education and after-school mentoring, had special places and programs for recreation, and more. The foundation reports that it's touched 275,000 children's lives so far.

- **Champions For Learning.** The name for the education foundation in Collier, the nonprofit created in 1990 supports students, families and educators' success financially and through supportive programs aimed at college and career readiness. Its multifaceted approach includes mentoring, scholarship assistance, grants to help classroom innovation, the Golden Apple recognition program for teachers and much more.

- **The Immokalee Foundation.** Since 1991, the foundation through its mentors, donors and volunteers helps children reach their potential if they come from a challenging background, such as those whose first language isn't English. The foundation assists students with their education, career aspirations and life skills needed to achieve their dreams.

- **Collier Harvest Foundation.** An organization that's helped feed Collier's hungry residents since 1992, the foundation reports providing more than 19 million pounds of food to aid in hunger relief. Relying almost exclusively on volunteers, it collects surplus food and works with Collier postal carriers each May on the signature Stamp Out Hunger food drive.

Allen Bartlett wrote this on behalf of the Daily News editorial board.