



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **YMCA of Southwest Florida Partners Receives a Second Year Grant of Continued Support for its Redefining Early Learning Initiative from Charles & Margery Barancik Foundation**

VENICE, Florida – YMCA of Southwest Florida was awarded \$668,332 from Charles & Margery Barancik Foundation to support a second year of its Redefining Early Learning Initiative. Funds will help allow the Y to continue to define an early learning model to address critical issues in child development.

In 2022, YMCA of Southwest Florida began implementing its early learning model to transform the early childhood education through an innovative approach that focuses on children's overall well-being, preparing children to excel academically, family engagement and support, staffing and community collaborations. Over the past year, these efforts have shown proven results and the organization will continue to build upon the foundation to strengthen its early learning model due to the continued investments of Barancik Foundation.

Last year, YMCA of Southwest Florida served 665 early learners at four Early Learning Academies. And since the launch of the initiative, the Y has seen significant increases in its quality indicators; including a 21.6% increase in its VPK literacy scores and increased STAR scores and CLASS Ratings. Curriculum enhancements and staff investments were also strategies within the model with the addition of research-based curriculums, increased staff wages, training opportunities and classroom enrichment. The organization was also recently named a Top Workplaces of 2022 with early learning professionals showing the highest satisfaction rating amongst their peers.

According to YMCA of Southwest Florida's President and CEO, Gene T. Jones, "We all understand the importance of the critical first five years in children's lives. Investments in early learning made today will have effects beyond education; this is the future of community. It's a necessity for lifelong success; both for children and professionals. To watch this transformation unfold has been phenomenal and the data speaks for itself. The need is greater than ever and we are beyond grateful for the support of Barancik Foundation and the dedication to addressing the childcare crisis in our community."

Brian Nason, SVP of Youth Development agrees, "The influence of Barancik Foundation has truly elevated early learning. These funds have allowed us to make quality improvements that impact children, families and our community. Our students' measurements, workplace satisfaction, along with classroom and center effectiveness ratings have raised significantly since the initiative began."

YMCA of Southwest Florida has also partnered with Barancik Foundation through

#### YMCA BRANCHES

Bonita Springs YMCA  
Bradenton YMCA  
Englewood YMCA  
Fort Myers YMCA  
Franz Ross YMCA  
Lakewood Ranch YMCA  
Punta Gorda YMCA  
Venice YMCA

#### SKY ACADEMIES

SKY Academy Englewood  
SKY Academy Venice

#### EARLY LEARNING ACADEMIES

Charlotte Harbor YMCA  
Early Learning Academy

The Suwyn Early Learning Academy  
at Bonita Springs YMCA

Venice YMCA  
Early Learning Academy

YMCA Early Learning Academy  
at PGT Innovations

#### OFFSITE LOCATIONS

Cooper Street Recreation Center  
YMCA Camp Estero

#### ALSO SERVING

Cape Coral  
Clewiston  
Estero  
Labelle  
Lehigh Acres  
Moore Haven  
North Port  
Sarasota

a preschool teacher recruitment campaign to support the growing need of early childhood educators to serve young learners and families in the community. In addition, the campaign was designed to create awareness about the profession of early learning as an impactful and fulfilling career option.

“We are grateful the Y has taken over as the backbone agency for early learning on behalf of the greater childcare community,” commented Barancik Foundation President | CEO Teri A Hansen. “Their leadership team is thinking broadly and intentionally about improving the entire childcare system in ways that will benefit children, families, and teachers across our region.”

For more information on YMCA of Southwest Florida, community members are encouraged to contact Jamie Browning, Vice President of Development, YMCA of Southwest Florida, at (941) 492-9622 or [JBrowning@ymcaswfl.org](mailto:JBrowning@ymcaswfl.org).

### **About YMCA of Southwest Florida**

YMCA of Southwest Florida is a leading non-profit strengthening southwest Florida communities through youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility. Driven by its founding mission, the Y has served as a leading non-profit committed to strengthening community for more than 175 years. The Y empowers everyone, no matter who they are or where they're YMCA OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA from, by ensuring access to resources, relationships, and opportunities for all to learn, grow and thrive. By bringing together people from different backgrounds, perspectives, and generations, the Y's goal is to improve overall health and well-being, ignite youth empowerment and demonstrate the importance of connections in and across Manatee, Sarasota, Charlotte, DeSoto, Lee, Hendry and Glades Counties. YMCA of Southwest Florida's 2020-2023 Strategic Plan charts a clear direction for the association and anchors the YMCA's efforts in three initiatives: sustainability, people, and community.

### **About Charles & Margery Barancik Foundation**

The Charles and Margery Barancik family has long believed in the power of philanthropy to shape our world and enrich the lives of all people. It was the expression of this belief that led them in 2014 to establish Charles & Margery Barancik Foundation—a private, family foundation located in Sarasota, Florida. Barancik Foundation creates initiatives and awards grants in Sarasota and beyond in the areas of education, humanitarian causes, arts and culture, the environment, and medical research. For more information, visit [www.barancikfoundation.org](http://www.barancikfoundation.org)