



INCREDIBLE GENEROSITY HELPS RCMA CHILDREN AND FAMILIES DURING PANDEMIC

While many people were fortunate enough to hunker down at home and stay safe as the world learned how to cope with COVID-19, many RCMA migrant families were still at work in the fields, because the virus came through Florida at the height of harvest season.

Some family members had to stay home once our schools and child development centers closed, often crowding a parent, children and extended family into small apartments or single room trailers for weeks.

Most RCMA families experienced a loss of income, and for many, this will continue as uncertainty surrounding opportunities for work further north keeps some families in Florida.

The majority of RCMA families are ineligible for stimulus checks, unemployment benefits and are even left out of other types of assistance provided through the CARES Act, which further impacts their ability to pay for basic needs.

They also live in rural areas with limited stores for supplies, and many lack transportation to shop elsewhere.

Children who attend our child development centers or schools have lost or reduced access to meals that we typically provide daily but now do once or twice a week.

The pandemic has truly created a crisis for our families, who live in poverty and are challenged to make ends meet on a regular basis.

We immediately began writing emergency response grants, contacting our long-time donors, and reaching out to media to tell the general public about what the farmworker families in our state needed.

The response has been heartwarming, gratifying, impactful, and lifesaving.

On behalf of the 6,500 children and their families who we serve, THANK YOU for giving with such generosity and compassion!

EMERGENCY RESPONSE FOR RCMA FAMILIES

Thanks to these donors, the following support was provided directly to RCMA families in the form of food, baby formula, diapers, cleaning supplies, rent and utility assistance, masks, and related support. The need for this support continues.

100 overall individual donations

71 new individual donors since March 20

\$46,000 contributed by individual donors as of May 20

25 emergency response grants

1 new grantmakers to RCMA

\$415,000 contributed by grantmakers as of May 20

\$461,000 raised for COVID-19 Emergency Response, not including the value of in-kind support

SPECIAL THANKS

The anonymous donation of **\$117,034** made through a donor-advised fund at the Community Foundation of Tampa Bay



The Miami Foundation in partnership with The PepsiCo Foundation for their gift of **\$100,000**



COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF COLLIER COUNTY
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The Bridge Fund



ONLINE COMMENTS FROM FIRST-TIME DONORS

For Immokalee families struggling during this pandemic, I'm grateful for the hard work they do to give us fruit and vegetables. - *Kathy L.*

Please help a family or families in dire need due to unemployment as a result of COVID-19.

Inspired by the May 14 Naples Daily News article about Chris and Kara Resop. - *Joseph K.*

We would like to help the farmers in Immokalee who are and will be struggling to pay their rent, utilities, and food during the Coronavirus pandemic. - *Maritza S.*

Thank you for your great work helping the most vulnerable. - *Eric D.*

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Isabel Garcia

Even though I have spent my career in education with RCMA, the pandemic reminded me that we never stop learning and that life lessons can come at any time.

Here are some things the crisis has taught or reminded me of.

RCMA staff is forward-thinking. Even before state orders closed our centers and schools, our staff had prepared take-home lesson plans and arranged for computers and WiFi for each and every student in our schools. And, they started to train themselves to conduct distance learning.

RCMA staff is compassionate. Regardless of their official job title, RCMA staff has helped distribute food and supplies at our centers and schools or at homes of RCMA families without transportation. And, they call each family weekly to assess their needs and reassure them that RCMA is here to help them beyond our traditional roles.

RCMA families inspire donors to open their hearts and wallets. The generosity of long-time donors, board members, and volunteers was not surprising. The response from first-time grantmakers to RCMA and first-time individual donors has literally brought tears to my eyes. You will never know how many people's lives you've impacted, and I can never thank you enough for all you have done.

RCMA is strong. While transitioning in so many ways this spring, we continue to plan for the future. The ways we help children and families – education, health care, nutrition, immigration, citizenship, parenting, literacy – are ongoing issues. We are moving forward with plans to expand our charter schools, connect with our 40,000+ alumni and help them throughout their lives, and ensure that the voices and concerns of migrants and immigrants are heard at the state and national levels.

I am proud of our RCMA staff and volunteers. And, I am proud of you - our donors and supporters. From the bottom of my heart, thank you for being there for our RCMA families when they've needed you the most.

SUPPORT US WHEN YOU SHOP



We bet you're ordering online a lot these days! You can contribute to RCMA every time you shop on Amazon, and it won't cost you a penny! Visit [Smile.Amazon.com](https://www.smile.amazon.com) and select Redlands Christian Migrant Association as your charity beneficiary. Amazon donates a percentage of each purchase to us. It's an easy way to make a difference.

STAYING CONNECTED DURING DISTANCE LEARNING



Juana Brown, Director of Charter Schools, discusses RCMA's immediate response and ongoing support to our students and their families.

Q. How did RCMA prepare for distance learning?

A. Before the schools were closed, we knew what was coming and knew it would have a profound effect on our communities. We had learning packets ready to distribute before we closed. We gave each child an iPad or Chromebook, rather than sharing with a sibling. We knew that was critical, because that impacts the amount of learning time a child has at home. Our teachers were flexible, holding one-on-one classes in the evenings for students who cared for siblings during the day.

Q. Were there barriers to using this technology?

A. We had to train our staff, students and their families to use Zoom and other platforms. We're proud to say more than 90 percent of our students attended at least one scheduled Zoom class each week and completed distance learning assignments. Historically, our communities have not had access to WiFi the way more affluent communities have, an example of the equity gap. We bought WiFi hot spots and subscriptions for hundreds of families. For families who are migrating to northern states for work, we are letting them keep all

the technology so the students can continue to learn and stay in touch with us.

Q. Were special services still offered?

A. All services were provided, from speech and language instruction to physical education and special education. Social-emotional learning has been important. Our children internalize everything. When they came to school, they entered a different, enriched world that was fun and allowed them to be children. At home, many of them function as adults, caring for siblings, and dealing with stress and trauma most children will never see. It has been important for our students to stay connected with teachers who have almost become a part of their families. They require a lot of affirmation.

Q. What is RCMA doing for summer education?

A. We are treading carefully as we plan for summer with the primary consideration being the safety and wellbeing of students and staff. That second piece - wellbeing - is what is informing the type of programs we will offer. After much deliberation, we will have a mix of continued online learning and a very small and carefully monitored on-campus program. This last program will have

an 8:2 student-teacher ratio and will have a series of safety precautions implemented in keeping with the CDC guidelines.

Q. What unbudgeted expenses has RCMA incurred due to distance learning?

A. We spent \$17,000 on WiFi hot spot subscriptions for our families. Since March, we have been spending \$5,000 per month for Zoom and other distance learning platform subscriptions. We gave away all our school supplies (such as pencils, crayons, glue, paper, and scissors) because children would not have those at home. We're expecting that we're going to have problems with many of the devices when they come back to us, so we will have to buy more technology. We've paid staff - everyone has been kept on the payroll - including cooks and other support staff - even while isolating. We don't get funding for meals when the schools are closed, but we have made sure our students have food and we've also distributed fresh produce along with non-perishables. We are helping families with rent and utility assistance. Our budget has taken a real hit. We have spent and spent and spent, but to carry out our mission, we had to, so we'll figure it out.

RCMA ALUM SHARES HER POWERFUL IMMIGRATION STORY



It was summer, and like many other migrant children, my family was preparing for our long journey to the next state. I remember all eight of us in this tiny green van my dad made into a makeshift motorhome with boards and blankets. We would stop at rest areas and shower in the woods with water my mom collected.

When we arrived at the farm, we lived in connected rooms, each the size of a large shed and falling apart. My mother would immediately start using two things: bleach and Pine-Sol, which I can still smell to this day! She would make all the spiders, cockroaches, and leftover alcohol bottles from the previous tenants disappear.

We picked cucumbers from before sunrise until sometimes after dark, seven days a week. The temperatures were scorching hot to a dangerous point at times. The locals would not allow us to come in from the fields to their stores because we were dirty from head to toe. So, our crew would take us into the next town where we could buy food - but we couldn't stay past dark. Not being able to spend money became a blessing helping us save \$500 in two months of work for a down payment on land in Texas. That was our proudest summer.



Photos from Rocha family archive.



MY WORK ETHIC

My mother would start cooking her wonderful tacos early in the morning and could concoct a fire made of branches in the middle of a field like nobody's business. She even turned socks into mittens for picking on cold days. My father would gather all the furnaces from the orange groves and put them at our side so we could be warm.

My mother is a beautiful and strong woman whose hands would hurt from picking, but she never complained. She taught us to have a strong work ethic and integrity.

She always put cans in the cupboards all the way to the front, and I never understood why until after I returned from college and asked her, "Was it to believe you had plenty to eat and your children would have no worries of going hungry?" Tears running down from her hazel eyes, weathered by years of working in the fields, voice broken, she said, "Yes, you are right." She recalled growing up in Mexico and eating rats. That was what she and my father had left in Mexico for the pursuit of "The American Dream."

RCMA

There were so many tragedies in every state we went to. Children that could not reach the fruit were left in cars and suffocated. Others were raped by farmers or died from pesticides. I lost my best friend, who was found in an abandoned refrigerator after she had gotten out of her car to play hide-and-seek.

Most families had no education and some had no documentation to legally be in the U.S., which contributed to our having no rights and no voice. But my family did have one guardian angel, a man named Wendell N. Rollason. He was on a mission to not see any child working in the fields and to protect them from the harsh labor and dangerous conditions. He opened a small daycare that became RCMA, and I am an "RCMA baby."



CYCLE WAS BROKEN

My father and I were working the strawberry fields and I remember him looking at me with an intense proudness in his eyes, for the day prior, I had received my acceptance letter to the University of Tampa with a full scholarship. I was going to break the cycle of being a migrant worker.

My passion for inclusion and volunteerism stems from my upbringing. At work, I help customers succeed financially and also make our community a little brighter, including giving back to the same RCMA center that helped my family and friends.

And my mother – with no education and just the will to make a better life for her children – has been a caretaker with RCMA for over 40 years.

These life experiences are just some of what has made me stronger as a person and an advocate for people.



Rocio Smith,

Daughter of Jose and Gloria Rocha

*Branch Manager and Assistant Vice-President
BMO Harris Bank*

THE SPIRIT OF GIVING

Motivated by a newspaper article about RCMA families in need, new RCMA donors Chris and Kara Resop of Naples rallied their family, friends, and the community. They have donated more than \$25,000 in cash and supplies to help dozens of families in Immokalee.

"My wife and I believe that Immokalee is the backbone of our community that is overlooked," says Chris.

"They are some of the hardest working folks we have around. We're in a position to help, and you should help if you can."

Our families were grateful for the help. "I was really surprised and happy that I was selected for this donation," says Mynor Gabriel y Gabriel, father of three and former president of RCMA Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Policy Council.

He received \$1,100 for rent (which is \$800/month) and utilities and two baskets filled with food, diapers, toilet paper, and other hygiene products. "I wasn't sure how I was going to pay my rent. The community is going to need rental assistance. A lot of people are afraid to travel up north and they won't have work here in the summer. The next couple of months are going to be tough for them. Alma Rivas, a single mother of six, had an emotional reaction; "I was super excited that I got the donation (\$1,000 for rent and utilities plus food, diapers and other supplies). I was one month behind on rent. For someone to have such a big heart who doesn't know me made me cry." Alma's work was reduced to three days per week. She plans to travel north to work this summer to work on a farm she usually goes to. She must pay rent there but also pay the rent in Immokalee to keep her apartment for when she and her kids return this fall.

GOLF TOURNAMENT CANCELED

Our major annual fundraiser – the 21st annual Lipman Family Farms Golf Classic – was scheduled for May 9 but has been canceled due to the pandemic. We appreciate the sponsors and golfers who recognized this important income source for RCMA and allowed us to keep their donations.

Many thanks to:

Food and Supply Source
Lipman Family Farms
Publix Supermarket Charities
Florida Tomato Exchange
Tropicana Manufacturing Co.

Bill Ferrari
West Coast Tomatoes
Baldwin, Krystyn, Sherman Partners
National Educational Systems
McGriff Insurance
M.E. Wilson Company Inc.



NEWS STORIES

RCMA EDUCATORS HELP LAUNCH RADIO PROGRAM

Teachers and education professionals from RCMA were the first guests on the new “Nuestros Niños” (“Our Kids”), a Spanish-language program heard on Solmart Media’s radio stations throughout southwest Florida.

The new half-hour weekly program covers educational topics focusing on the needs of Spanish-speaking parents.

Many thanks to Mercedes Soler, President of Solmart Media, and Geri Chaffee, founder of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) Sarasota and a longtime advocate for education equity within Florida’s Hispanic student population, for inviting us to participate. We plan to stay involved and help develop the program.

NEW GRANT SUPPORTS IMMIGRATION OUTREACH

We are excited to announce that we received a \$125,000 grant from the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative to

expand outreach regarding our immigration program. We are training staff, board members, alumni, students, and their parents as community ambassadors to tell their immigration stories and discuss how RCMA, by helping families, improves educational outcomes for children of immigrants. This is a wonderful opportunity to show how RCMA supports the whole family and makes a bigger impact on communities.

MAKING THE CENSUS COUNT FOR RCMA FAMILIES

We are working with our RCMA parents to make sure everyone is counted in the 2020 Census.

Many of those RCMA serves – including children, rural residents, individuals of color, immigrants, and migrant laborers – are often undercounted. These people are directly impacted by the federal dollars allocated based on Census data for social services such as Head Start (which funds most of RCMA’s early childhood education programs) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps) benefits.

Learn more at rcma.org, and make sure you have filled out the Census at mycensus2020.gov.

PLANNING FOR CHARTER SCHOOL EXPANSION

We are in the final stages of completing our RCMA Community Charters’ Strategic Plan. Helping to guide this work have been three consultants from Abacus Ed Partners, a group recommended by Charter School Growth Fund. The process has been comprehensive as well as inclusive, with a six-month deep-dive into all of our functional areas. This dynamic process began with a reflection on our RCMA mission, vision, and philosophy to ensure we could successfully build the next five years on our organization’s 55-year foundation. The blueprint builds on our successes while simultaneously addressing some of the gaps in our academic, fiscal, and operational systems. Careful consideration was given to preserving the quality of academic and wraparound services that will be provided to a growing number of students and families. The finished draft will serve as a road map for our charter school expansion as well as our organization’s continued growth.



NEWS BRIEFS

Congratulations to Lipman Family Farms for winning two awards based on nominations from RCMA. Our long-time ag partner was recognized as Outstanding Philanthropic Organization from the Association of Fundraising Professionals of Collier/Lee and won the Plate of Bounty Award from the National Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Association. See our tribute video at [youtube.com/user/RCMA2012](https://www.youtube.com/user/RCMA2012) that showcases just some of the ways they give back.



No Kid Hungry has donated \$33,200 to help RCMA families. Our Miami-area child development centers in Homestead and Florida City distributed 650 packages of food (rice, dry beans, pasta, vegetables, fruit cups, juice, and cereal) and gave 12 families baby formula. No Kid Hungry's commitment to children and families helped make distributions like these statewide.

Morgan Garcia, a 7th grade English Language Arts teacher at RCMA Leadership Academy in Wimauma, used a promotion from Pizza Hut to purchase a free book for all of her scholars for just \$25 in shipping. We delivered the books as a fun surprise to students during their twice-weekly food distribution bag. "With no classroom library at their fingertips, I knew that I wanted to provide something for scholars to enjoy at home," said Mrs. Garcia.



Creative and crafty staff at our Zellwood Child Development Center started a sewing circle and sewed up a storm! They made masks for their center and others nearby. What a colorful way to support their co-workers.

Michelle Saucedo, an RCMA alumna at our Zellwood Child Development Center and recipient of a Krome Scholarship administered by RCMA, prepared a wonderful video about RCMA for her Speech Communications class at Seminole State College in Altamonte Springs, FL. The video beautifully outlines RCMA's impact on migrant and immigrant families. It's posted at [youtube.com/user/RCMA2012](https://www.youtube.com/user/RCMA2012). Michelle, who plans to become a social worker, thanks RCMA "for all the support that you have given me that has helped me to be closer to accomplishing my dreams."

Thanks to the Tampa Museum of Art for conducting a distance learning art lesson with our Wimauma scholars, who had been scheduled to visit the museum in person.



Miami-based Amigos for Kids has generously supported 73 children and families in our South Dade Child Development Center for the past year. They provide parenting workshops, book bags, school supplies, essential items, and even hosted them for Thanksgiving lunch. Most recently, they donated crayons, chalk, and coloring books to help children pass the time while staying at home. They are a great partner!



The garden at our Wimauma charter schools "grew" this year with the addition of a chicken coop that scholars in our Grange program built as a way to learn about animal husbandry. Roosters Big Red and Snowball, along with chickens Rica and Snowflake, are feeling right at home. We started finding eggs in early May.



OPENING DOORS TO OPPORTUNITIES

402 West Main Street
Immokalee, FL 34142

STAY IN TOUCH

Sign up for our NEW e-newsletter at rcma.org.

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800.282.6540
cr@rcma.org
rcma.org

A NEW LOOK FOR A BRIGHT FUTURE

Just like our kids and families at RCMA are growing and evolving each day, so are we. And after 55 years, we've grown from 2 centers to 71 centers strong. With more centers come more voices and life-experience, and that means more ways we are connecting with communities. This evolution has deepened the richness of help we at RCMA can provide - all stemming from a mission that has remained the same.

In a world that is ever-changing, it's crucial to keep the look and feel of our brand fresh and relevant so we can continue resonating with parents, kids, donors, and alumni. We felt our old branding resembled our smaller days too much, rather than the larger collective of passionate, empathy-driven staff and donors we've become.

As a community of dreamers and doers, we are making a difference and making things happen every day. We are full of love, laughter, and longevity. We are a family. And we wanted our brand identity to communicate these truths clearly. We felt brighter colors and lots of happy photos would more appropriately capture the brightness in all of our children, parents, and staff that make up the RCMA family.

We wanted a brand that illustrates how RCMA has grown through strengthening communities and helping those in need of a guiding light. Our message is one of strength, positivity, and happiness, and our mission will never waiver! We're excited to update our branding to clearly express this both aesthetically and emotionally.



Branding Agency: Sulzer Inc | sulzerinc.com

HOW TO HELP

As RCMA prepares to reopen centers, we find ourselves feeling grateful that we are in a strong financial position with relatively minor expenses in each county that our major funding sources won't cover but are critical to ensure a safe environment in which our teachers can help our children and families thrive.

Items like masks for parents and children who don't have them, thermometers, hand washing stations and costs of installation, additional custodial staff, additional staff to cover in case a teacher gets sick, the cost of deep cleaning, and more technology to help bridge the technology gap our families experience.

We appreciate you giving as generously as you can to support the children and families RCMA serves as we move to open our centers safely.

DONATE NOW

Please donate at
rcma.org/donate

-OR-

Mail a check to:
RCMA
402 West Main Street
Immokalee, FL 34142

