



## RCMA RECEIVES \$1.275 MILLION FOR MORE CHARTER SCHOOLS



Photo by Joe Bucherer

Thanks to our success with Immokalee Community Academy and Wimauma Community Academy, the national Charter School Growth Fund is investing \$1.275 million over four years to help us expand.

First up: we plan to open Mulberry Community Academy in Polk County (near Orlando) for the 2023-2024 school year. Other schools will follow.

“Since our founding 56 years ago, our focus has been on helping children from rural, low-income and migrant families achieve academic parity,” says Isabel Garcia, Executive Director. “This commitment from The Charter School Growth Fund means that our impact on students, families and communities will be felt for additional generations to come.”

The Charter School Growth Fund is the largest funder of high performing charter schools in the country and currently has approximately 180 organizations in its portfolio.

“RCMA’s work within its communities is impressive, inspiring, and a model for others,” says CSGF President Darryl Cobb. “We are excited to support RCMA as it embarks upon a new chapter in its growth. We are humbled by their leadership, their outstanding commitment to families and students and look forward to being partners as they expand their presence and impact.”

## FIRST RCMA ALUMS GRADUATING FROM BERKELEY ACADEMY



Neftali Gomez, left, and Ivan Edgar Murillo encourage students in our Girls Outside program to attend Berkeley Academy and plan to attend college.

Ivan Edgar Murillo came to our Wimauma Community Academy for 6th grade soon after his family moved to Florida from Mexico.

Ivan didn't speak English, so classmate Neftali Gomez helped him acclimate to his new school and community. The two became fast friends, and Ivan's scholastic achievement was soon evident. Ivan holds several school records in math.

The two boys are among 14 RCMA students who are part of the first graduating class from Berkeley Academy in Tampa this spring. The academy is offered by Berkeley Preparatory School for three summers to high-achieving, low-income middle school students and includes assistance during high school. RCMA currently has 80 students participating in the Berkeley Academy.

RCMA Board member Linda Miles-Adams credits Berkeley Academy Director Kim Lawless for inviting RCMA scholars to apply if RCMA would provide transportation to Berkeley Preparatory School, which we do.

"This is an example of how we help our scholars launch into the world with friends, support systems and resources," Linda says. "At Berkeley, the students receive a mentor, college counseling and help looking for scholarships, in addition to many enrichments."

Ivan applied early decision to Tufts University and received a full scholarship. Neftali and other RCMA students who are graduating high school this spring have applied to colleges.

"Berkeley can be really scary and overwhelming as the scholars meet new friends and participate in a plethora of activities on the Berkeley campus," Linda says. "Our scholars took the risk to go there, and that's a huge success. I tell others to step out of their comfort zone."



Isabel Garcia  
Executive Director

## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I could not be more proud of RCMA staff, especially our teachers, whose jobs and lives have been impacted the most by the pandemic.

Like many businesses, RCMA has had to pivot often throughout the past two years. Needing to adhere to changing guidelines and mandates was unsettling. Discovering different points of view among close coworkers required patience. Working longer hours or doing different tasks because of staff absenteeism due to illness was tiring.

But through it all, our organization remained true to our four core values: Quality, Opportunity, Respect, Compassion.

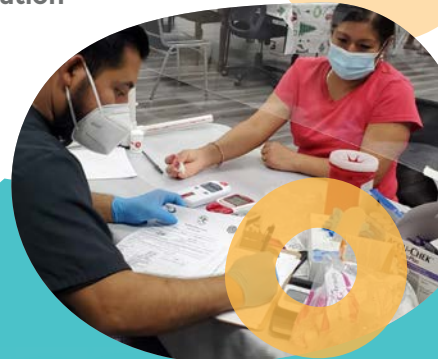
I want to thank all our incredible staff for being open and understanding. At the end of the day, we have all done our part to maintain a strong, healthy and safe environment for our children and each other.

## HEALTH FAIRS PROVIDE BOOST FOR KIDS & FAMILIES

Our holistic approach to education and child care means we take care of the whole family. In 2021, that included offering not just our health fairs with screenings for conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure but vaccine clinics for COVID and the flu. We even go into the fields, so migrant workers do not need to take time off from their jobs and lose pay.

Many thanks to these partners, who provided critical funding to help keep our families healthy:

- Alianza
- Community Foundation of Collier County
- Florida Specialty Crop Foundation and Reiter Affiliated Companies
- Frederick A. DeLuca Foundation
- Hispanic Federation
- The League Club
- The Miami Foundation
- UnidosUS



### THANK YOU HISPANIC FEDERATION FOR \$85,000 IN GRANTS!



1,600+  
PEOPLE HELPED

600 Adults  
MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

\$3,619  
UTILITIES ASSISTANCE

500  
HEALTH SCREENINGS FOR ADULTS

500 Adults  
MEDICAL SUPPLIES

\$3,965  
FOOD & HOUSEHOLD SUPPLIES

450 Adults 40 Children  
VACCINATIONS

\$11,202  
RENT ASSISTANCE



## MAY 14 IS 'TEE TIME'

Golfers are invited to play in our 22nd Annual Lipman Family Farms Golf Classic on Saturday, May 14 at Naples Heritage Golf & Country Club.

The event includes 18 holes of golf on the Gordon Lewis-designed championship private course, continental breakfast, hot lunch buffet, a Blood Mary bar, beer and soft drinks, door prizes, awards, and on-course tournament games, including a chance to win \$10,000 for a hole in one.

Non-golfers can still support the event by purchasing raffle tickets. First prize is a PS5. Second prize is \$1,000 cash. Third prize is a Nintendo Lite Switch Bundle.

Thanks to Board members Jaime Weisinger from Lipman Family Farms and Mike Foley from Food & Supply Source for serving as tournament chairs.

Register or buy raffle tickets at [rcma.org/golf](https://rcma.org/golf).



Linda Miles-Adams and Berkeley student volunteers at WCA's Fall Fair

### Board Profile

## LINDA MILES-ADAMS

Linda Miles-Adams spent her career as an operations management and direct marketing expert for Time Inc.'s portfolio of magazines, traveling the world before founding her own consulting company to offer those services to additional magazines such as National Geographic Society and TV Guide.

Part of her job involved training employees in new efficiency practices and helping them work seamlessly with people from different cultures.

She applies this passion for education and inclusion as a volunteer with several Tampa-area organizations, including RCMA.

"I value education as a way to change lives and as a ticket out of poverty," says Linda, who has been on our Board since 2009. She serves as Chair of the Charter School Committee and on the Nominating Committee.

Linda raised her three children to be bilingual (English/Spanish), enrolling them in a Montessori school that she connected to RCMA.

That was the springboard for Linda joining our Board and strengthening our connections with organizations such as Berkeley Prep, Moffitt Cancer Center, United Way and Tampa City Ballet. Students at our Wimauma Community Academy take part in field trips, summer education programs, a Girls Outside afterschool empowerment project, and mentoring programs that promote high school and college opportunities.

Most recently, Linda has been part of RCMA's three-year process to receive \$1.275 million in funding from The Charter School Growth Fund to expand our charter schools.

"It's been the most exciting work," Linda enthuses. "The Charter School Growth Fund is bringing innovative resources to the table. I'm very proud of RCMA because we're constantly trying to do even better things to benefit the kids and families we serve."

## DONORS HOLD CONCERT TO BENEFIT RCMA

John Schmieding, SVP and General Counsel for Arthrex, mentioned to his friend Blake Gable, CEO of Barron Collier Companies, that he wanted them to find a worthy charity to support together. They asked colleagues and friends for recommendations and one organization kept coming up: RCMA. They were interested in learning more, because their friend Jaime Weisinger is on our Board of Directors.

John contacted us, took a tour of our Immokalee school and centers, and was sold.

"Soup to nuts, I was extremely impressed with everyone I met, the organization and the work being done to help children," he says. "Without the opportunity to have a formal early childhood education, they get into a cycle they can never catch up on. The fruits of RCMA are self-evident. These children are prospering."

In the past two years, John and Blake have organized two private concerts for about 75 of their friends at a Naples restaurant. They brought bands from Nashville and Jacksonville, created concert t-shirts and posters, and gave away RCMA swag they purchased.

Friends came from as far as North Carolina and Detroit to support the fun event.

"The breadth of advocacy is now expanded," John says, noting that at least 90% of his friends have donated to RCMA, with total donations exceeding \$55,000.

"It's not just the money," he continues. "People need to be the voice for these kids."

The success of the concerts has inspired John to do more.

"I loved doing it, and it was really fulfilling, but it should always lead to more," he says. "I'm noodling around some even grander ideas."



Director of Development Gloria Moorman, Executive Director Isabel Garcia, and Community Relations Manager Gloria Padilla join John Schmieding at a concert that he and his friend Blake Gable held to benefit RCMA.



## Not to toot our own horn (pun intended!), but we have budding musicians in our new Immokalee Community Academy band.

The benefits extend beyond learning to play an instrument and band helps students with fine motor skills, teamwork, self-discipline, mathematics and language. Thanks to Arthrex, Cadence Music and Trinity-by-the-Cove Episcopal Church for donations that helped us strike up the band! If you have an instrument you can donate, let us know at [CR@rcma.org](mailto:CR@rcma.org).

## Alumni Profile

# LOUISA CANNAMELA

Louisa Cannamela's parents were migrant farmworkers, a physical job that takes its toll. When Louisa was as young as three years old, she tended to her father's scrapes and cuts.

"My dad would say, 'My little nurse is here' when I would take off his shoes, clean stuff up and add a bandage. To this day, I'm still doing nursing but at a much higher capacity."

Louisa is Vice President of Clinical Services at Cypress Living, a Lee County-based operator of the Cypress Cove life plan community and provider of Cypress at Home services.

An Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) and Nurse Practitioner-Certified (NP-C) with a Master of Science in Nursing (MSN), she leads the development of clinical policies, procedures and processes.

"The most fulfilling thing about my job is to be able to directly influence the quality of care that we're providing, I expect our clinicians to take care of people as if they were their family."

Family has been a big influence on Louisa. Her aunt, Gloria Padilla, has worked at RCMA for 40 years and encouraged Louisa's parents to enroll Louisa in RCMA's Rollason Infant Child Development Center in Immokalee for four years.

"The center helped my parents immensely because it allowed them to go to work to provide for our family and know I was in a good place."

Louisa remembers the cooks who provided nutritious meals, doing lots of painting and learning English.

"RCMA was such a good foundation at such a pivotal time."

Our early childhood education programs gave Louisa a strong basis for her further studies. She earned a full scholarship from DeVoe Cadillac and got a bachelor of science in nursing from FGCU.

Her career has included 10 years at the former Cleveland Clinic in Naples as an acute and critical care ICU nurse, work as a primary care provider at nursing homes, Director of Nursing at Cypress Cove, and her current position.

Louisa has been married for 13 years to her husband, Vincent, with whom she shares a five-year-old son. She is also stepmother to Vincent's 19-year-old daughter.

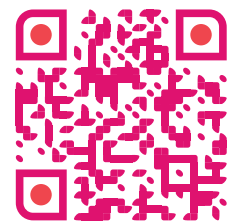
Louisa credits her Aunt Gloria with encouraging education, starting at RCMA.

"It was important to her that your life didn't have to be the farm if you didn't want it to be. She went to college and earned her four-year degree and was one of only two of her eight siblings who did that. She's truly been an inspiration."



Louisa Cannamela at RCMA as a child with her aunt and employee Velma Adame and former employee Oralia Leal

Our continuum of opening doors begins with the foundation of early childhood education (ECE) and continues through our nationally recognized charter schools.



## STAY INVOLVED

We encourage alums to stay involved by joining our Facebook page!

## NEWS ROUNDUP



Wimauma Community Academy's street hockey team was crowned champions of the Central Florida Charter Athletic League for the 3rd time in January. They also won during the inaugural year of the league in 2015-16 and again for 2019-20. Congratulations to our scholars and to Coach Joe Puente.



Teachers at our 65 child development centers and 2 charter schools are superheroes, inspiring our children every day! And we're looking for more as we expand our programming. Our website's career page ([rcma.org/jobs](http://rcma.org/jobs)) lists job opportunities in the 21 counties we serve. Every employee - accountants, bus drivers, caregivers, cooks, custodians, IT specialists, managers, social workers and more - puts our children and families first while supporting their coworkers. Come join us and change a child's world.



Thanks to the 99 donors who helped us raise \$128,760 during Give Where You Live Collier in February. The 24-hour giving challenge is run by the Community Foundation of Collier County and Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation for 40 nonprofits. It's a great way for us to connect with current and new supporters.



Our Zellwood Child Development Center in Orange County used Head Start funds to purchase a new modular building to serve 20 preschool children with high quality education programs. It will also feature a kitchen that will serve all 52 children at this rural location that supports seasonal families working in agriculture. The project also allows us to purchase new playground equipment to help with children's development. Completion is expected in the fall. We're thankful not only to Head Start but to Zellwin Farms, which has partnered with us by allowing us to lease their land since 1999.



Staff at our Rollason Child Development Center noticed that 2-year-old Isaiah was behind in his development, and his mom, Guerline, agreed. Based on our screenings, the center's Inclusion Specialist, Shawne Thomas, suggested that Isaiah be evaluated by a specialist. Guerline checked with Isaiah's pediatrician and a recommended psychologist, who confirmed an autism diagnosis and connected the family with Wellpath for one-on-one therapy sessions from Wellpath that Isaiah receives six hours a day in our center and his home. We are happy to report that Isaiah is learning to regulate his emotions, communicate better, and participate in classroom activities. Providing services to children like Isaiah early on prepares them not only for kindergarten but for life beyond RCMA. And, working with families reinforces our belief that parents are a child's most important and lifelong teacher and advocate.



Four-year-old twins Marcos and Mateo attend our Children's House Child Development Center in Indian River County. They are both having fun in our Head Start program, but Mateo gets extra attention from us because he has cerebral palsy. He cannot walk or sit up on his own, and he requires a special diet that includes having his food cut in small pieces. Mateo is silly and loves to make everyone laugh, especially Marcos.



Eight parents at our Krome Child Development Center in LaBelle graduated from our Abriendo Puertas (Opening Doors) program last fall. Marisela Rodriguez (pictured) wanted to learn about ways to help her children succeed and attend college. Several of the parents volunteer in our kitchen or classrooms. Most participate in our lending library, taking books home and reading to their children. All said they wanted their children to see that they were involved at RCMA and cared about their education.



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Spring 2022 newsletter

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