

RCMA SENDS HANDS TO TALLAHASSEE

In celebration of Children's Week, several of the Child Development Centers at RCMA participated in the 2024 Celebration of the Hands in Tallahassee. With the help of children, teachers, families, and legislators across the state, a magnificent display of more than 21,000 pieces of custom hand artwork was displayed in the Florida State Capitol Rotunda. The beautiful works of art served as a daily reminder to legislators and visitors that the future of our children rests in their hands.

RCMA centers have been involved in the project for many years. The many submissions are connected together, and then those long strands of hands are hung from the ceiling of the Florida Capitol. **More photos on page 9.**



EMBRACING SPRING: GROWING TOGETHER WITH RCMA



Dear RCMA Family,

As spring unfurls around us, I'm filled with an overwhelming sense of gratitude for the journey we've shared and the growth we've experienced together. For nearly six decades, RCMA has been a beacon of hope and opportunity for migrant farmworker families, and it's in this season of renewal that we see our collective efforts bloom more vibrantly than ever before.

I'm thrilled to share exciting news about the growth and expansion happening at RCMA. We are embarking on construction projects at several of our centers, symbolizing our commitment to nurturing the minds and futures of children and families.

At each of these centers, the spirit of growth and progress have and will provide spaces where our children can learn, play, and thrive. These projects represent RCMA's dedication to its mission of opening doors to opportunities through quality child care and education from crib to high school and beyond.

This spring is also special because it ushers in another election season. Make sure you are registered to vote. Every vote cast carries the potential to influence policies that impact our communities, our rights, and our daily lives. Whether it's advocating for better education, healthcare, environmental protection, or social justice, your vote matters. Let's make our voices heard by registering to vote and ensuring that our shared values and aspirations are reflected in the decisions that shape our society.

Thank you for your unwavering dedication and support. Together, we will continue to grow, thrive, and make a difference in the lives of those we serve.

Isabel Garcia
Executive Director

STAY INVOLVED!

Share our Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn pages with your friends. Watch "how to" videos on our YouTube channel.



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BLANCA FLORES: A JOURNEY OF RESILIENCE AND EMPOWERMENT

In the sun-drenched fields of Hillsborough County, Florida, a young girl named Blanca Flores learned the rhythm of life. Her parents, tireless farmworkers, followed the seasons, migrating between Florida and Ohio. Their hands, calloused and weathered, sowed seeds of hope for their daughter's future.

Blanca's educational journey began early on as a child attending RCMA's Dover Child Development Center. The center provided not only a safe place to play and learn, but it also offered a lifeline. During her days at RCMA, she found that dreams could sprout even in the toughest soil.



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BLANCA SPRINKLES HOPE LIKE SEEDS
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IS THE HARVEST OF POSSIBILITY.**

Like most of the kids at RCMA, Blanca's parents wanted the best for their little girl, so they continued to work hard and help support the goal of finishing her education. Eventually, she would move onto college, and has recently earned a master's degree in School Counseling from the University of South Florida.

Today, Blanca finds herself working at RCMA, and as a farmworker's child, she brings her unique perspective to the children she works with. Imparting more than lessons, Blanca sprinkles hope like seeds in a field, knowing that education is the harvest of possibility. Working with the next generation of dreamers, Blanca knows and instills in each child that they can be whatever they put their minds to. With a college degree and a heart full of love and compassion for her students, Blanca is the compass that guides the next generation toward brighter tomorrows.



RCMA CONTINUES TO PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

The signs of spring are all around, but plants and trees are not the only things that are blossoming. While RCMA continues its mission to provide educational opportunities and resources for the children and families it serves, exciting plans are underway across the state, strengthening RCMA's infrastructure for the future. In response to a variety of opportunities, four RCMA sites are expanding or constructing new facilities, significantly increasing their capacity to serve these communities for years to come. These projects provide more space for educating children in the future, and enhance the range of services available to support their families.



MULBERRY CAMPUS

Thanks to a Migrant and Seasonal Head Start grant, nestled amidst the blossoming oak trees, sit six new classrooms housed in brand new modular buildings. This additional space strengthens the overall mission of RCMA's Mulberry Campus, as this fall, our existing Pre-K's will graduate and become the new Kindergarten class at Mulberry Community Academy.

Additionally, one of the modulares also includes a much-needed kitchen. The cooks are ecstatic as they've been providing excellent nutritious meals to all the children on campus with only ovens to use due to the lack of space for stoves. The new kitchen will make cooking more efficient and expand the menu possibilities that the children will love.

HOPEWELL

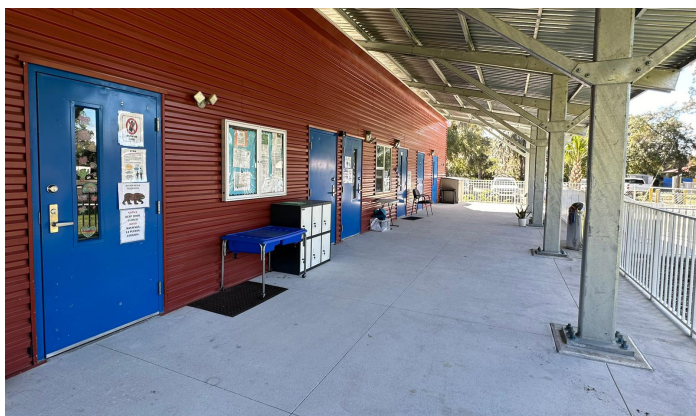
A new child care center, kitchen, playground, and offices are part of the new construction currently in progress at RCMA's Hopewell CDC. Currently, footings and foundations have been installed, with underground plumbing and electrical going in next. We are so excited for this project and for the community that it will benefit.



ZELLWOOD

RCMA's Zellwood Child Development Center had been having issues for a few years, but hurricane Idalia dealt the final blow and changes had to be made. With the support of Disaster Relief funds from the offices of Head Start, a new modular building has been erected to provide child development services for infants and toddlers in need.

The facility also boasts colorful classroom spaces as well as a kitchen area where nutritious meals are prepared for the children daily. Both the staff and the kids love their new facility, a place that demonstrates RCMA's enduring spirit of doing whatever it can to provide the services necessary to care for and educate the future leaders of tomorrow.



LIPMAN FAMILY CAMPUS FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Work is progressing at an amazing pace at the new Lipman Family Campus for Children and Families in Immokalee. Last year, Lipman Family Farms, long-time supporters of RCMA, made a \$3 million donation to the organization; the largest donation Lipman has ever made to any one organization. The gift was made in support of the expansion of RCMA's charter schools throughout the state of Florida, as well as the new Lipman Family Campus for Children and Families in Immokalee. Currently, the footings and foundations are being installed, some of the columns are formed, and some of the concrete walls are formed and completed. And, as now, the project is ahead of schedule!



LARRY SALUSTRO: A CHAMPION FOR MIGRANT FARMWORKER CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

In the heart of every child lies a world of untapped potential, waiting to be nurtured and unleashed. For RCMA, board members like Larry Salustro are fervent believers in this notion.

Larry's journey with RCMA began in 2008 when he volunteered at RCMA's Children's House Child Development Center in Vero Beach. He was deeply moved by the organization's commitment to empowering migrant farmworker families. Hailing from Detroit and armed with a law degree from the University of Michigan, Larry's own immigrant background instilled in him a profound sense of empathy and a drive to make a difference in the lives of others. Two years later, he joined the board.



"My family immigrated to the United States from Italy," says Larry. "During the turn of the 20th century, back when my family came to America, many immigrants were treated with disrespect, much as immigrants are treated today, and that's what drew me to doing something to help."

For Larry, the essence of RCMA's mission lies in recognizing the boundless potential inherent in every child, regardless of their socioeconomic background.

"I think about the potential that kids have, regardless of ethnicity," says Larry. "Kids in low-income communities don't really have a chance to shine, to grow, to reach any potential let alone their full potential. And when you see these kids, where people are trying to provide those opportunities, you see how they grow, you see how much potential they truly have when they're not discouraged."

One aspect of RCMA that particularly impresses Larry is the extraordinary commitment of its staff.

"I like how the staff will put aside everything when there is a child or family that is in a bad situation," he says. "It's their commitment to family and kids on a personal level that defines RCMA."

With Larry Salustro, RCMA has found a true champion for the rights and well-being of migrant farmworker children and their families. His unwavering dedication, coupled with his deep sense of compassion and empathy, has helped shape RCMA into the transformative force it is today. Thank you, Larry, for everything you do for RCMA!



ALLEGANY FRANCISCAN MINISTRIES GIVES \$300,000 FOR IMMIGRATION SERVICES

For migrant working families, a major obstacle to realizing their dreams is the often confusing technical process of immigration to the United States. Complicating things further, living in a foreign land with few contacts makes it hard to know who's looking out for their best interests. RCMA provides assistance with compassion and dignity to these hard-working parents and their children so they can live a safer, more secure life as they pursue their family goals.

A strong supporter of RCMA's efforts is the Allegany Franciscan Ministries, an organization that works to create more equitable, just, and caring communities. Recently, Allegany awarded \$300,000 to support RCMA's immigration assistance program, focusing specifically on the Wimauma area.

This generous donation has allowed RCMA to hire an immigration attorney, an administrative assistant, and partially supported several family support workers. The team is committed to providing vital immigration related services to families who need it. As part of our goal to provide children and their families with support services, RCMA continues to offer a variety of immigration services, including family-based petitions, DACA renewals, citizenship, fee waivers, renewal of legal permanent residence (Green Card), and more.



THIS GENEROUS DONATION HAS ALLOWED RCMA TO HIRE AN IMMIGRATION ATTORNEY, AN ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT, AND PARTIALLY SUPPORTED SEVERAL FAMILY SUPPORT WORKERS.

Families seeking immigration assistance through RCMA often require additional support, such as health and mental health, and information about local resources, including food distributions and other essential services. The combination of immigration assistance, a network of partners providing mental health support, legal guidance and access to essential resources sets RCMA's services apart in the dedication to addressing multifaceted needs.

Thanks to generous partners like Allegany Franciscan Ministries, RCMA's Immigration Assistance Program is a lifeline for immigrant families in Wimauma and throughout the state of Florida, offering essential support, advocacy, and education to empower them on their journey toward improved legal status and a brighter future.

CELEBRATING TRADITION, UNITY, AND LOTS OF TAMALES



The holidays were festive and full of tamales! The Immokalee campus of RCMA recently celebrated cultural heritage and unity at their 8th Annual Tamalada. This amazing event not only honored the tradition of tamale making but also fosters a sense of togetherness among the diverse families within the RCMA community.

The tamalada traces its origins back generations to Mexico, where families would gather to prepare tamales, a symbolic dish synonymous with festivity and familial bonding during the holiday season. At RCMA, this tradition is passionately upheld by the dedicated mothers of the students who not only teach their children the art of making tamales, but crafted an impressive 3,200 tamales for the occasion.

This year's event featured an array of campus wide cultural experiences, with children from the CDC's and the academy performing holiday songs and dances to help bring the holiday spirit to all who attended. Following the performances, the evening culminated in delicious tamale dinners, where families, students, faculty, and the RCMA community came together to share not just a meal but stories, laughter, and the spirit of unity.

More than a culinary event, the Tamalada is a testament to the power of tradition, community, and cultural exchange. RCMA is extremely grateful to all of the moms who prepared the most amazing tamales. Thank you!







RCMA CENTERS SEE RED (FISH) AND BLUE (FISH)

The Child Development Centers at RCMA scheduled all kinds of fun events encouraging students to embrace reading during Seuss Day, an annual event that promotes the joy of reading, especially among children. Celebrated in honor of the birthday of Theodor Seuss Geisel, famously known as Dr. Seuss, the day was filled with reading events, character dress-ups, and a shared appreciation for the iconic stories that have charmed generations. The kids loved it, and so did their teachers!



THE 24TH ANNUAL LIPMAN FAMILY FARMS GOLF CLASSIC: A DAY OF GIVING

As the sun peeks over the emerald fairways of one of the most prestigious courses in all of southwest Florida, anticipation will fill the air for the 24th annual Lipman Family Farms Golf Classic. The event will be held on Saturday, May 18 at the exclusive Naples Heritage Golf and Country Club.

More than just birdies and bogeys, we invite golfers to swing in support of RCMA. Last year's event raised an impressive \$125,000, all earmarked for RCMA's child development centers and charter schools.

Following a continental breakfast, the shotgun start will kick off a day of golf, prizes and philanthropy, with a sumptuous lunch buffet awaiting at the end of the morning. It's an amazing day!

Registration opens at 7:30 a.m. with a shotgun start at 8:30 a.m. at the championship-caliber course with Celebration grass fairways, TifEagle Bermudagrass greens and GPS in every golf cart.

To register for the event, or for sponsorship info, log onto RCMA.org/golf.



SATURDAY
May 18th, 2024





Redlands Christian Migrant Association
402 West Main Street
Immokalee, FL 34142
(800) 282-6540 | cr@rcma.org | RCMA.org



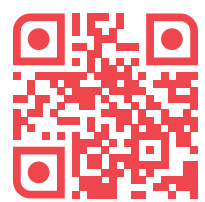
Spring 2024 Newsletter



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Immokalee, FL 34142



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