

Non-profit founder sees need for support, collaboration

By ANITA TODD
Contributing Writer

HAINES CITY – When the pandemic began, it became even more clear to local businesswoman Marielys Camacho-Reyes the many needs of members of the community.

It didn't take much thought or convincing for her to take a leap of faith and reorganize and rename the Northeast Polk Gazette, which is a monthly newspaper, to The Compassionate Hearts United Foundation, Inc.

As a non-profit organization, Camacho-Reyes is able to use the foundation to fulfill at least one of her lifelong goals of helping to provide support to those who need it. Camacho-Reyes is the founder of both organizations and sat down for a question-and-answer session.

Sun: Please tell me about the new non-profit you recently formed, The Compassionate Hearts Foundation.

The Compassionate Hearts UNITED Foundation, Inc. (formerly known as PR Media, Inc. DBA: The Northeast Polk Gazette) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to providing support to other nonprofit organizations and charitable causes in our community.

As part of our commitment to our community, the Compassionate Hearts United Foundation has launched the "Compassionate Hearts" Project. This project is dedicated to providing monetary donations to other non-profit organizations around the Polk County area to help them cover some of the costs associated with the operations of their organizations and/or to help them achieve their missions.

We also provide donations to organizations based on their individual needs. We work on a "by-invitation" only when it comes to our donations – meaning we select who we donate to. As part of our commitment to our community, and in partnership with EEC Solutions, we also launched the "Door to Success" Project. It is dedicated to providing financial support to students around the Polk County area to help them cover some of the costs associated with college attendance.

You partner with EEC Solutions. Do you partner with others, as well, to achieve your mission?

Yes, EEC Solutions is a veteran-owned small business that has partnered with us, as donors, to help us do our mission. Their president recently donated, through us, \$4,100 worth of hand sanitizers to various non-profits in Polk County. They partner with us in most of our transactions and without them we wouldn't have been able to achieve what we have so far. We also received a monetary donation from the City of Haines City in support of our "Meals for Our Friends" initiative.

How did you decide to change the mission and name of your organization?

After a year of running The Northeast Polk Gazette, we realized that, yes, the newspaper was getting popular and people were liking it, but there was something missing. When COVID-19 hit, we realized that what was missing was the charitable part of the equation, and that's when we decided to change the name and change the mission, and to be honest, that was the best decision we have ever made since we started the newspaper.

Why is an organization like this one needed so much right now?

There is so much our community is in need of, especially during challenging times like the ones we are experiencing now, and organizations like CHUF, whose mission is to help our community, are always there to provide support in any way we can to lessen the burden that our community may be experiencing.

On your website there is the phrase "if you aren't a giver, you are a taker." What made you use that particular phrase?

The simple answer for that is ... it is more blessed to give than to receive. When you give, you steer good karma into the universe. When you only take, that action benefits only one person. As a (military) veteran, it is my belief that you never leave your people behind and, for me, giving back to my community is the equivalent of not leaving my people behind.

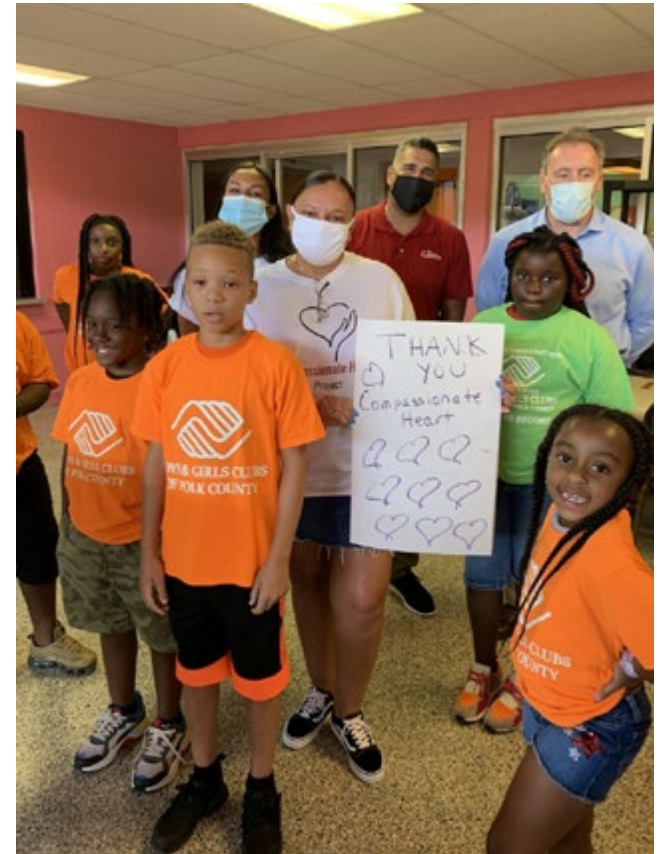


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What are your short and long term goals?

My short term goals are to continue recruiting donors so that we can continue helping our community throughout the different charitable programs that we have right now. At the same time, to continue working in our newspaper so that more people get to know us and other nonprofit organizations around the Polk County area better. My long term goals are to get more funding from the government so that we can help more people, not only in the Polk County area but also in other areas that need our support.

For more information or assistance from CHUF, email Camacho-Reyes at marielscr@chufinc.org or visit the website compassionateheartsunited.org.

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