

A quarterly publication of the Foundation for Orange County Public Schools

Local Banks Kick Off School Year With Major Investment in Education



Foundation, Colonial Bank & A Gift For Teaching Deliver Hundreds of Backpacks for Kids. Through money raised at **Colonial Bank** branches and a direct contribution from the bank itself, Colonial Bank contributed \$15,000 for this 'backpacks for kids' drive in Orange County. Five hundred backpacks filled with school supplies were delivered to elementary schools in high needs neighborhoods. The Foundation and Colonial Bank joined forces with A Gift For Teaching to organize the drive.

Wachovia Foundation Gives \$20,000 to Help Struggling Readers.



Thanks to a generous \$20,000 gift to the Foundation, second graders struggling with reading proficiency will get some significant assistance and resources. This is being made possible by the **Wachovia** Foundation. The gift will enhance and expand the Foundation's Read2Succeed reading mentoring program and contribute to the recruitment and training of volunteers, as well as put more books and resources in the classroom. Read2Succeed is a signature program of the Foundation and involves more than 500 volunteer reading mentors and 55 elementary schools in the district.

WaMu Invests in Teachers. Bank of America Invests in Classroom Engagement. Longtime education supporter **WaMu** made a gift of \$15,000 to the Foundation to support teacher professional development in science at lower performing high schools. In addition, **Bank of America** has shown its support for students by being a sponsor of the annual Teach-In Day held in November - this year, contributing \$15,000 plus in-kind support. Teach-In is also sponsored by The Orlando Sentinel, which annually contributes \$25,000 of in-kind support. The event is part of National American Education Week and brings thousands of local business people and citizens into classrooms to talk with students about careers, academics and the future. **Mark your calendar now for this year's Teach-In on November 19.**



Representatives from Colonial Bank, A Gift For Teaching and the Foundation delivered backpacks to Union Park Elementary School. At the far right is Joe Losch, president, Colonial Bank Central Florida Region.

What YOU can do!

- **With recent budget cuts, schools need our help now more than ever.** Consider volunteering, adopting a school, becoming a Partner in Education, or contributing resources and supplies.
- **Encourage your company to be creative for our kids** like sponsoring a day at the library or museum for a particular class or school.
- **Help our children be safe...** remind them about the buddy system when hanging out with friends and when walking to and from school.
- **Visit schools, attend school functions and stay involved in your child's education.**



UPDATES

on our Work to Engage the Community and Drive Student Achievement

Profile: Ronald Vierling - Inspiring our Children to Read & Succeed



A husband and father. A teacher for more than 40 years. A published poet, a prize-winning playwright and a published novelist. What came next in the life of Ronald Vierling was a chance to give back. Two years ago, at 68 years old, Vierling found himself missing the classroom. And that's when he found Read2Succeed, becoming a reading mentor to second graders at Lake George Elementary.

Known to students as 'Mr. Ronald,' Vierling has quickly become part of the school and students' lives. Often showered with 'high-fives' and animated greetings by students on campus, Mr. Ronald says he admires the children's desire to read, eagerness to grow, and their excitement when they take tests and do well. "It's an absolute joy to play a role in student achievement, to experience first-hand the personal and educational growth of our children, and to help extend the work of our great teachers," he says. "There's nothing quite like it."

Breaking down words, sounding out consonants and vowels, reviewing sentence structure, and practicing inflection are all part of a day's work. And so are the bigger picture things like building confidence and self-esteem.

Mr. Ronald is gearing up for Year 3 and plans to double up on his volunteer reading mentoring time to help even more students. He's a big fan of the program and encourages others to get involved. "Anyone who believes in the dreams of our children -- that they will succeed if we all do our part - should become a Read2Succeed mentor," he adds. "Second grade is a critical time in a child's intellectual development, and it's the perfect time to get involved."



We're recruiting!

Here's what's involved and how you can become a Read2Succeed mentor:

- Volunteer mentors participate in an orientation / training session, are paired with a second-grader(s), and commit to meeting with the student(s) each week for up to one hour on school campus during regular school hours. Volunteers are encouraged to participate for the entire school year.

- Sign up now and join more than 500 others who are having fun making a difference in the lives of our students.

Email Read2Succeed@foundationforocps.org or call Debbie Betourne at 407.317.3261.



Meet Rosina McVicker, New Chair of Count Me In! Steering Committee

COUNT ME IN!

Rosina McVicker, a long-time public education advocate and active public school volunteer, has become the new chair of Count Me In!, a grassroots citizen engagement initiative that is mobilizing people in Orange County to get engaged and take positive action for our children, teachers and schools.



1. Tell us about yourself and how you got involved in the Count Me In! initiative.

I came to the United States from Great Britain over 40 years ago with my family. I've been involved with the PTA for 17 years and have served in leadership roles at the district level. Currently, I work with Marriott Vacation Club as a marketing executive. I got engaged with Count Me In! from the get-go. I was involved in the first phase by attending a neighborhood conversation to talk about values and common goals for our community and public schools, and then was a member of the citizen's panel that shaped those sentiments into a Community Agreement

2. What's the biggest value and benefit of Count Me In?

Count Me In! is all about one thing ...facilitating the engagement of the entire community in the business of our children's public education. Every one of us has a role to play.

3. Tell us what's been happening.

We've been very busy over the past couple of years, facilitating discussions between the community and the school district with regard to safety, teaching quality and community involvement. We've provided 'mini' grants to citizens that are helping to meet the needs of students, schools and communities. More detailed work has been done with an in-depth parent involvement survey. And we've convened citizens to help develop a community vision for the future of Robert Hungerford Prep.

4. How can people get involved?

I encourage all citizens to become involved with Count Me In!, regardless of whether or not they have children in school in Orange County. Everyone has a responsibility to support our children and their public education. There are so many un-met needs and so many resources in this community. To find out what you can do or just to stay informed, contact Heath Wells at the Foundation at 407.317.3261 or countmein@foundationforocps.org.

Foundation, Lockheed Martin Award Laptops to Top Science Teachers

Long-time education supporter Lockheed Martin and the Foundation joined forces to recognize the OCPs Science Teachers of the Year. Lockheed made a gift to the Foundation to purchase laptops for these honored teachers, who were named PRISM finalists. The PRISM Project (which stands for Promoting Regional Improvement In Science and Math) is an organization of community partners which strives to engage the business, civic and educational communities throughout Central Florida to enhance K-12 science and math education. The group annually recognizes outstanding science teachers in Central Florida.



(From left to right) Tobi Allen of Lockheed Martin gives laptops to: Beth Wile (Union Park Middle School), Melissa Cross-Juergens (University High School), and Patricia LaChance (Sunrise Elementary School). Allen was joined by Melanie Fernandez (far right), immediate past chair of the Foundation. The three honored teachers will be opening up their classrooms to other teachers in the district for professional development and training.

School Board Candidates Talk About Issues, Goals at Foundation-Sponsored Forum

With three new Orange County School Board members taking office this year and a host of education-related issues and questions on the public's mind, there wasn't a better time to collectively hear from those running for the School Board.

The Foundation for Orange County Public Schools, Inc., in partnership with the League of Women Voters and the Orange County Arts Education Center, sponsored an open-to-the-public Orange County School Board Candidate Forum on July 28 with the goal of educating voters on the candidates and their positions and perspectives so the public can make informed voter decisions. Speaking to an audience of 100 people, the candidates responded to questions about the school time change, elected chair, the future of Evans High School, arts education, teacher retention and more.

"Our work and that of our forum partners centers on public engagement. The Foundation brings people together to educate and inform, but also to interact and exchange ideas and points of view, to dig deeper to talk about values and shared goals and visions, and of course, to inspire people to get involved and make a difference," said Craig Evans, executive director of the Foundation for Orange County Public Schools, Inc.



Candidates running for the Orange County School Board discuss goals and issues at a Foundation-sponsored forum.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Our Vision

Every day, every child in Orange County benefits from a quality public education.

Our Mission

Focus community resources to ensure a quality public school education for every student.

Why Support the Foundation?

We've got three good reasons:

1. We're all about children and driving student achievement in Orange County. And we're known for making a real difference.
2. We help teachers help students. We put more resources in the classroom and fund creative learning initiatives.
3. We engage the community in our work and help identify needs and opportunities. When it comes to educating our children, everyone has a role to play.

Consider the Foundation for your corporate or individual giving. With your support, we can do much more for our children.



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Patti White, Darden Restaurants

R. Bruce Young, EMBARQ

The State of Getting Engaged in our Community

A Look at Financial & Volunteer Support and Focus Areas

In May, the Heart of Florida United Way announced that, through business and community support, it had raised more than \$17 million during their 2007-08 annual campaign, recording its third consecutive year of increases in annual fundraising campaigns. And, in the next few months, the community learned about the organization's roadmap for the future - to focus on prevention and the conditions that form root causes of problems. Getting others engaged in this, they say, will be key to achieving this goal.

On the other end of the spectrum, Orlando has been experiencing a major decline in volunteerism since 2005 (when volunteerism was at its peak). During 2005-2007, the numbers went from 395,000 people volunteering to 252,000 people (remember we have a metropolitan population of about 2 million). Total volunteer hours declined from 55.9 million hours in 2006 to 29.2 million hours in 2007.

So what's happening? It seems there's a disconnect between giving dollars and giving of our time.

From an educational and youth mentoring standpoint, we need to turn this situation around. It's a proven fact that when parents and other caring adults are involved in a child's education, that child will experience higher achievement, a greater level of self-esteem and positive behavior, and will be less likely to drop out of school. While this is a proactive engagement strategy, it also (like United Way's focus) represents a preventative approach. The community can play a role in helping our students do everything from becoming proficient readers to boosting graduation rates - preventing them from being left behind.



We're getting there. According to the Corporation for National and Community Service (which produces an annual report on volunteering in America), educational volunteering was the second highest category for volunteering here (between 2005-2007). And while Orlando is pretty much on par with the national average when it comes to tutoring as a function of volunteering, the region is below the national average for mentoring youth - an area that represents a real window of opportunity for all of us.

In a parental involvement survey conducted by Count Me In! earlier this year (in which 500 parents responded), a majority indicated that time constraints, work-related issues, childcare and transportation issues were the biggest barriers to involvement. A smaller, but significant, percentage of respondents indicated that there are language /cultural /educational barriers that interfere with participation at school.



While most respondents felt that volunteering in the classroom and attending school events, in large part, defines involvement, dozens of respondents said they're not certain what the real needs are. In addition, some citizens said they'd like more help understanding how to help their child and recommended more school-to-parent outreach, such as parental/motivational seminars, more on-line tools, and 'dad days' at schools.

Count Me In! continues to share the results of the survey with the district and others in the community. In addition, Count Me In! plans to develop a parent-principal-teacher toolkit that will feature helpful and useful information, including a list of community and social service resources, data and informational websites dealing with ways parents can help their children, and best practices of local parent-school involvement programs.

How can we boost volunteerism in our community to support public education and other important areas?

Education has long been identified as a priority in this community, yet there's so much more the community can do to meet ever-growing needs ... how can we get there? Volunteering and a commitment to getting engaged to meet more long-term needs are perhaps on two different levels ... what can we do to achieve both? Does your company encourage volunteerism? What are the biggest barriers that prevent you from volunteering and getting engaged? How can those things be overcome? We want to get your feedback. Email those to us at: contact@foundationforocps.org.

Still time left to hit the links for student achievement!

Don't delay ... call the Foundation to make your sponsorship or reservation for the Foundation's Annual **"Fore Our Schools" Golf Tournament on September 19 at ChampionsGate Golf Club**. Join hundreds of community leaders who have raised more than \$700,000 over the past few years to support programs and work that drive student achievement. Call the Foundation at **407.317.3261**.



- Local Banks Partner with Foundation to Invest in Education
- Get in the New School Groove & Get Involved for Kids Sake!
- Profile: Ronald Vierling - Inspiring our Children to Read & Succeed
- Meet Rosina McVicker, New Chair of Count Me In! Steering Committee
- The State of Volunteerism & Getting Engaged - What's Happening
- Foundation, Lockheed Martin Award Laptops to Top Science Teachers
- School Board Candidates Talk About Issues, Goals at Foundation-Sponsored Forum



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