



The Learning Curve

BRINGING YOU CLOSER TO THE LIVES YOU'VE CHANGED



Fall/Winter 2019
www.graceplacenaples.org

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Grace Place Family Literacy Model[®]

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Lesley Cruz, FGCU Class of 2019

Thank you, Grace Place

Mark Your Calendar

PAYING IT FORWARD

Launching the Grace Place Family Literacy Model®

The Bright Beginnings family literacy program has been changing families' lives for over a decade at Grace Place. Together, we've celebrated countless milestones and watched whole-family transformations happen among our students. Now, it is with great pleasure we announce the launch of the Grace Place Family Literacy Model®.



≡ Bright Beginnings adult classroom, parent time

Chief program officer and architect of the Bright Beginnings program, Diane Ponton, has worked tirelessly with fellow Grace Place team members over the last year to secure intellectual property on the homegrown family literacy program. With the investment of the Bill & Julia Van Domelen Foundation, the Grace Place Family Literacy Model® has become a registered trademark and can be licensed to outside organizations to replicate.

"We've received interest in the model from national organizations. We're in conversations with one partner to bring the Grace Place Family Literacy Model® to communities across the United States," reports Marianne Lambertson, chief development officer, "but we're starting right here at home." Grace Place has partnered with Guadalupe Center to pilot the program with 50 families in Immokalee beginning October 2019.

"The Grace Place Family Literacy Model® has an evidenced ripple effect. By educating the parent and the child together, it impacts the entire family. When families grow and become stronger through education, the community reaps benefits. That is what is so attractive about this model to me as a funder. It has the potential to make a global impact when replicated," remarks Julia Van Domelen, president, Bill & Julia Van Domelen Foundation.

Grace Place has published the first two books, *Learning Together* (available on Amazon) and *Launching a Grace Place Family Literacy Model®* and the curriculum for the Grace Place Family Literacy Model® (learn more at gpflm.org). The model will offer organizations across the world an opportunity to replicate Bright Beginnings, a Grace Place Family Literacy Model®.

You can learn more about the Grace Place Family Literacy Model® by visiting gpflm.org or graceplacenaples.org.



Family Literacy Model™

⏪ Cover Photo: Bright Beginnings students during parent and child together (PACT) time. Photo by Alexis Horn Photography.

JEPHE'S STORY:

The boy that found his way

When Jepthe's grandfather came to Grace Place asking about an afterschool program for his grandson last year, we were excited about the possibility of serving such a special family.

Jepthe was born with Cerebral Palsy. His mother died in childbirth, and his father died shortly after. Jepthe's grandfather is his sole caretaker. Like any devoted grandfather, he wanted the best life for Jepthe. He moved them to the U.S. from Haiti when Jepthe was a baby.

When he was old enough, Jepthe's grandfather enrolled him in a pre-k program at Golden Gate Elementary (GGE). Once he started kindergarten, his grandfather was encouraged by GGE staff to sign him up for Grace Place's afterschool program. Our program was an ideal opportunity in his grandfather's mind. It would not only mean that Jepthe would have a safe and stimulating place to go after school, but he could continue working as a pool attendant at The Ritz Carlton, his family's income could remain steady.

When Jepthe began the program, we experienced some challenges. He had trouble communicating with us at first. Once he discovered acting out as the "class clown" won him the attention of his classmates, we had some behavior issues. But we all believed in Jepthe's potential. Our program team worked closely with Jepthe's grandfather and the team at GGE. We came up with a plan and made accommodations that worked well for everyone, most of all Jepthe.



After that, Jepthe thrived! His fine and gross motor skills further developed. He made significant gains in his communication and interpersonal skills. His physical abilities greatly improved. One of Grace Place's team members who worked closely with Jepthe recalls one of her favorite moments of the last year, "Jepthe and a group of his buddies were climbing up the rock wall on the playground. It was Jepthe's turn to climb. All the kids were cheering him on as he made it to the top. He had the biggest smile on his face! It's been amazing to watch him find his way."

We are thrilled that Jepthe and his grandfather discovered Grace Place, and happy to report that he is enrolled again this year. We can't wait to watch him continue to grow and learn.

« Pictured: Jepthe (orange shirt) at the top of the rock wall with his best buddies

YOUTH TO WATCH:

*Grace Place AP Leader, Jonathan Oliva-Infante,
Named Outstanding Philanthropic Youth*



Grace Place AP Leader, Jonathan Oliva-Infante, is the 2019 recipient of the Outstanding Philanthropic Youth award. This award recognizes service by a young person who demonstrates a commitment to the community through volunteering and leadership in philanthropy. Jonathan embodies the meaning of the word philanthropy in his many ventures to make a difference in his community.

Jonathan, currently a senior at Golden Gate High School (GGHS), is the president of the GGHS Model United Nations (Model UN) club. As president, Jonathan fundraised with local businesses to secure sponsorships to offset the cost for his club to attend a Model UN conference. His tireless efforts will ensure his classmates can attend the out-of-state Model UN conference for the first time in the GGHS history.

As an AP Leader at Grace Place, Jonathan works and mentors in the Academy of Leaders middle school after-school program. In addition to his participation in AP Leadership, Jonathan has volunteered over 150 hours at Grace Place. He is a Youth Leadership Collier graduate of the Class of 2019, and he recently completed an internship with the League of Women's Voters. During the internship, he researched the lack of active voters among minority populations, an issue of deep interest to Jonathan.

With all this, Jonathan still finds time to be involved in his school's Key Club. Outside of Grace Place, he has volunteered an additional 107 hours in his community. He participates in the National Honor Society and served as Student Class President both his junior and senior year. He is co-captain of the drumline and plays in the school jazz band. Over the last year, Jonathan has attended both the Emerson Academy and Georgetown International Relations programs and was awarded the Harvard Book Prize his junior year.



Jonathan with his mother and older brother, Bryan Oliva-Infante, Grace Place Alumnus, 2015 Grace Place Jubilee Scholarship Award Recipient, and newest member of the Grace Place Ambassadors program



Q & A

How does it feel to win the Outstanding Philanthropic Youth Award?

I'm excited. It feels good to know people are watching over you and recognizing your hard work. It's humbling, and I hope it inspires those around me to give back.

What does philanthropy mean to you?

To me, it means giving back to my community and being part of something bigger than myself.

In your mind, what does it mean to be a leader?

I think it means doing the right thing, even when no one is watching. It means leading by example, being willing and able to take charge, but also be flexible, adaptable, and able to delegate and inspire others.

Why did you join the AP Leadership program?

I saw how much it helped my brother. He told me how it helped him to be more informed and professional. And of course the help with navigating college, which I need help keeping straight. I knew I could learn a lot from the program and I knew it would help me become a leader.

Why do you think it's important to give back to the community?

Again, I think it's important to be part of something bigger than yourself. If we are going to build a better world, we have to think about each other and what contribution we can make to the community.

What accomplishment are you most proud of?

Winning the Harvard Book Prize. It's an award given out by the alumni of Harvard University to the top-performing students in 2,000 high schools across the world. Only one student wins it per year. I was completely surprised when I won. Again, it was very humbling.

What is the most valuable advice you've been given?

Not to let discrimination hold you back and create fear and hate in your heart, but to instead let it motivate you to be better and overcome other people's hateful ideas and prejudices.

What's one thing on your "bucket list?"

To serve as an elected official.

Who is your role model? Why?

My brother Bryan is my role model. He was the first in our family to go to college. He gave me a path to follow and he's always pushing me to do more. He motivates me to do better, to achieve more. He's always telling me how important it is to go to college and take the opportunities offered to me. He's the person I look up to.

If you had the power to change one thing about the world, what would it be?

I would take away the hate and judgment people feel towards one another.

STUDENT UPDATE:

Lesley Cruz, Florida Gulf Coast University Class of 2019

When Lesley was struggling in her fourth-grade language arts class, her teacher recommended to her mother that she get a tutor. With limited resources, her mother wasn't sure where to turn to find help for Lesley. That's when they discovered Grace Place.

Lesley fondly recalls her first day at Grace Place and meeting the founding executive director, Stephanie Campbell. Back then, Grace Place was a small homework club in her neighborhood church. "I didn't realize at the time what a big part of my life Grace Place would become."

Over the next few years, Lesley's literacy and language skills greatly improved, and she grew to become one of the brightest students in her class. She found a passion for learning and a commitment to her education. Attributes that remain with her to this day.

In high school, she enrolled in Grace Place's college-access program, AP Leadership. Lesley was paired with a mentor, participated in college knowledge workshops and campus tours, she was informed of scholarship opportunities and received guidance with applications. In 2016, Lesley won the life-changing Grace Place Jubilee Scholarship – a four-year, full-ride scholarship to Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU).

During her time at FGCU, she discovered a deep interest in psychology and sociology. She worked as a research assistant for the FGCU Psychology Department and served as the president and public relations officer of the psychology and sociology clubs respectively. During the summer months, she returned to Grace Place as a Lead Program Assistant in the Academy of Leaders program. She was awarded grant funding to present her research study at the Northeastern Evolutionary Psychology Conference in Boston, MA and to attend the American Sociological Association Conference in New York, NY. She's interned locally with O'Connell Behavioral Services

and the Greater Naples Chamber of Commerce. Now in her senior year of college, Lesley remains a steadfast and impressive young woman.

"I didn't realize at the time what a big part of my life Grace Place would become."

In December 2019, Lesley will graduate FGCU with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology with a concentration in neuroscience and cognition. "As I prepare to walk the stage on December 15, I cannot help but reflect on my college experience. I have been able to revolutionize my life because of the financial support provided by the Grace Place Jubilee Scholarship. This prestigious scholarship has fully funded my dreams of a college education."

While Lesley weighs her options for graduate studies, she hopes to work for a nonprofit until she begins a doctorate program. "I feel like things started for me at Grace Place. Now, I want to give back."

Maybe we'll see her around campus again soon.



Lesley (second from left) with friends in Washington while advocating for gun reform at the March for Our Lives

GRACE PLACE ALUMNA REFLECTION

Guest Contributor, Rachelle Majuste, Class of 2014

"Every single minute matters, every single child matters, every single childhood matters." Kailash Satyarthi

My name is Rachelle, a recent graduate of Florida Atlantic University. In the last few months, many people have congratulated me on my success. I get a lot of, 'You must've worked so hard' and 'You did it' affirmations, but truthfully, it was not on my own. I met some beautiful and dedicated people along the way who educated me on what it meant to take control of your life and ride the waves of life, triumphantly.

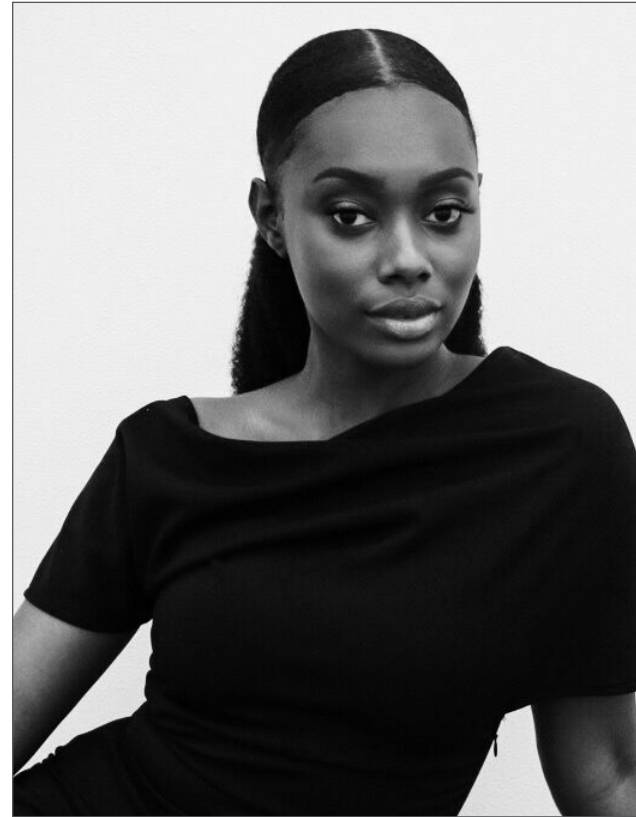
I was the young girl who always knew she wanted to be someone special, but I was also the young girl who had literacy difficulties. One day in 2004, my father came home and told me I'd be starting a new homework club at Grace Place. It was their first year of after-school care, and he signed me up to attend. From the first day I attended the homework club to the last day I attended the AP Leadership program my senior year of high school, Grace Place utilized every second they had with me to diligently provide a learning experience that would change my life.

God put Grace Place on my path to prepare me for the opportunities the world had with my name on them. I wholeheartedly believe that this organization pushed open doors for me so that I would be able to stand alongside my colleagues, as I accepted my degree. I am an alumna because of this organization. I am an educated Haitian- American woman, and I thank God for planting a seed of grace that has blossomed into this beautiful place.

Grace Place always reminded me of how special I was to God, and now I want to do that for others. I have made it my mission to give back to my community as a social worker. I always want to provide the same grace given to me, to others. I give all the children I encounter daily the same attention that I received from the volunteers and staff at Grace Place. I may have gained knowledge in school, but I had strong and empowering examples around me for a very long time.

Every minute there mattered to me because every child mattered to them. It started as a homework club for me. Looking back now, I see that with every day I attended I was making strides towards becoming a powerhouse for my family and my community. Those helpful hands have helped to change the course of a lot of lives, including mine. That is the legacy they have left in my heart and that is the promise that I will profess forever.

Thank you Grace Place, for everything.



 Rachelle Majuste, FAU Graduation Photo



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MARK YOUR CALENDARS

OCTOBER 2019

26 ◀ FAMILY LITERACY DAY

NOVEMBER 2019

7 ◀ BRING-A-FRIEND DAY

12 ◀ RIBBON CUTTING

DECEMBER 2019

3 ◀ GIVING TUESDAY

JANUARY 2020

16 ◀ OPEN HOUSE

FEBRUARY 2020

15 ◀ CELEBRATION OF GRACE

19 ◀ GIVE WHERE YOU LIVE

MARCH 2020

12 ◀ DEAN'S CIRCLE LUNCH

28 ◀ FAMILY LITERACY DAY

NOVEMBER 2020

A SWING OF GRACE

More Information at:

graceplacenaples.org/events