

# PROGRESS & POTENTIAL



IMPACT  
REPORT  
2023





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## MISSION

Grace Place puts faith into action, providing pathways out of poverty by educating children and families.

## VISION

That all families in Golden Gate have access to education to break the cycle of poverty.

## MOTTO

Education Changes Everything.

## VALUES

**GRACE** invites respect, encouragement, and forgiveness. We extend grace freely, without expecting its return. It is at the heart of all we do.

**COMMUNITY** provides a sense of belonging. We embrace diversity, support equity, and practice inclusion. We bond through shared work and values.

**EXCELLENCE** challenges our students and ourselves. We seek to set ambitious goals that are measurable and achievable. Our commitment to continuous improvement makes us a vibrant learning community.

**GRATITUDE** guides our daily work. We acknowledge that we are blessed to serve. Faith brings us a sense of joy and hope to our work.



### OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL AT GRACE PLACE

We embrace diversity, equity, and inclusiveness, knowing that amazing ideas come from everyone. Modeling these values makes us better educators. We listen to all voices, we welcome all opinions, and we learn from our differences. That is the Grace Place way.

# FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

Dear Friends,

Let us begin by thanking you for your partnership. Grace Place thrives through partnerships with so many – donors, parents, volunteers, community organizations, Collier County Public Schools and, of course, our student learners.

Potential is unlimited, with an education. But, that opportunity is not universal for underrepresented youth. Many of our students who experienced acute learning loss during the pandemic were already behind grade level, living in households faced with choosing essentials over academic support, tutoring, test prep, arts, athletics, and even high school graduation.

**By investing in education and educators, and providing powerful, collaborative opportunities, we vastly increase the number of students who graduate, find their career and enjoy a life they deem a success.**

Our programs continue to perform very well. We accomplish this through several elements that make us the best at what we do:

- Hiring and retaining phenomenal team members who have a passion for changing lives, and see students and their families as their highest priority every day.
- Building organizational capacity around staffing, strengthening our balance sheet and ensuring that we can deliver quality.
- Expanding our data collection to make informed decisions on program development better measure the impact our programs have on each learner.

With each new year, we work to inspire and empower learners to pursue their passions and potential with zeal. Introducing our youngest learners to an academic setting and helping them feel ready to start. Introducing our parents to how best to support students. And introducing our high school students to what life after graduation can look like. All of our students have great potential and great expectations of themselves. We believe their full potential is in reach.

Our 2023 Impact Report highlights how we work to sustain existing programs while providing more individualized opportunities for learners to gain exposure, skills, and preparation for what life will bring. Their potential is key to our prosperity and to our learners developing into the talented and diverse workforce that Naples needs.

Long-term viability through financial partnerships with donors is required for students to reach their potential. Some people would say we are in the Potential Business. Thank you for helping our students reach their potential.



Michael McGrath  
Chair, Board of Directors



Lära Fisher  
CEO





# A New and Brighter Beginning for Eba, Alexa & Alesandra



**EBA'S STORY** Eba Loyola credits the Bright Beginnings Family Literacy Program® with changing her mindset about what it means for her and husband, Trinidad, to be good parents to their 4-year-old twin daughters, Alexa and Alesandra.

She was hesitant to join a class last fall. Their daughters had been enrolled in another program, but the girls were unable to overcome their separation anxiety and the program did not meet the needs of the English learning twins.

Eba remembers the first day at Grace Place vividly. "The girls were just three years old, and my heart

was breaking as they were crying so hard when I dropped them off in Miss Shaga's classroom. Within an hour, Eba was able to rest a bit easier as a Grace Place teacher showed her their daughters were happily interacting in their classroom. **"All of the teachers were so positive, it made the transition easy. Today, when there is a day off, my daughters cry because they want to be on campus."**

In her first year at Grace Place, Eba was in a Bright Beginnings 101 class. She credits Miss Michelle with giving her more confidence and teaching the class that it is all right to ask questions. Prior to their daughter's birth, Eba attended Florida Gulf Coast University to pursue a degree in psychology.

While there, Eba felt uncomfortable with her English skills and embarrassed to ask questions. Though she still has a few years before she can go back to finish her degree, she knows that she will be a different type of student thanks to Grace Place. A natural people person, Eba continues to work as a salesperson for a network marketing company that represents international nutritional brands. She believes that being bilingual in America will help her achieve greater success.

Now in their second year, she and the twins read together regularly in both English and Spanish. Eba wants her daughters to be bilingual so they can help others in the same ways Grace Place helps them. Though Alesandra excels more at

reading and pronunciation, Alexa has stronger reading comprehension skills. Eba has already seen improvement in her own English vocabulary, pronunciation, and writing skills since the start of the school year.

She credits Bright Beginning's 3-year-old class with improving her daughters' social skills and is excited for them to continue to learn English, and their numbers and enter kindergarten at the same level as students who are native speakers. Eba knows that Grace Place is helping to set that foundation.

**204** ▶ youth participants in Bright Beginnings.

**168** ▶ parent participants in Bright Beginnings.

**251** ▶ Bright Beginnings Program days.

**100%** ▶ of 4-year-olds at Grace Place were developmentally ready for kindergarten.



Bright Beginnings Students  
Alesandra and Alexa, age 4.



Eba Loyola with her twin daughters  
Alesandra and Alexa.



Eba Loyola with Hillary Thomas, Director  
of Family Literacy at Grace Place.



# With Aspiration Comes Success: The Choice Academies

The Grace Place Middle School Choice Academies are 10-week programs that allow students like 7th graders Tony and Gabby, to study subjects they are intrinsically interested in and have a desire to pursue as part of their future life goals. Students rotate to a new academy after completing the ten weeks and presenting their work to a panel of judges. Offerings include computer coding, water ecology, the environment, leadership, chess, photography, and fashion design to name a few.

**TONY'S STORY** Tony participates in our Art Choice Academy. Tony's family immigrated from Cuba where his father owned an art gallery, which he says inspired him to pursue this after-school elective. His favorite types of art include sketching, animation, and sculpture such as clay and paper mâché. In addition

to hands-on projects, he studied artists in different genres as well as the history of each genre, adding a reading and literacy component to the academy. He especially gravitates towards sculpting because the combination of the tactile and visual sensations allows him to mentally and physically "feel" his work.

He is an outgoing young man who said he appreciates when his work is acknowledged. Tony believes that if "you work hard, success will come" which he says he learned firsthand when he and his parents first moved here and lived with his grandfather. "After eight months my parents saved enough for us to move into a small one-bedroom motor home, and now my parents own their own home."

After beginning at Grace Place in our elementary after-school program from grades K-2, Tony switched schools, moving him out of Golden Gate for a period. He was thrilled when he got to 6th



Gabby, age 12, grade 7 at Golden Gate Middle School.

grade at Golden Gate Middle School and was able to return to Grace Place. Tony hopes to improve his presentation skills and excel in math as well as his art skills. His dream is to become a professional architect and to make enough money so his parents can retire early.

**GABBY'S STORY** Gabby is new to the Grace Place after-school program and chose the Culinary Choice Academy to be her first, because she loves cooking. She is extremely proud of her Haitian heritage which can often be found in her cooking. Her favorite go-to dish, Soup Joumou, is a Haitian/Caribbean comfort food made from beef, squash, root vegetables, cabbage, and pasta.

During the summer program, Gabby expanded her cooking abilities and learned how to make sugar sliders, lasagna, and pancakes with blueberry syrup. She finds cooking to be calming, except for cleaning chicken and once admitted



to badly burning a tray of cookies and her hand, but that was just once! Gabby wants to open her own catering business but plans to also study to be a nurse.

The importance of choice in teenage education cannot be overstated. Teenagers are at a critical stage of their development, both academically and personally, and giving them the ability to make choices about their education can have numerous positive effects including fostering independence, diverse skill development, preparing for their future academics and ultimately keeping them engaged in their learning.

Both Gabby and Tony say the Grace Place Choice Academies give them more opportunities to learn while spending time with their friends. They view the programs Grace Place offers as a path to better grades and increased opportunities for college scholarships.

**122** middle school students were enrolled in our after school program.

**95%** of middle school students improved their math standardized test scores.



Tony, age 13, grade 7 at Golden Gate Middle School, excited to enter his Choice Academy program.



Tony, sketching during his art Choice Academy.



# High School LEAD Program prepares students for life

## CAROLINA'S STORY

For more than eight years, Carolina Hipolito has participated in programs at Grace Place.

"When I was little, I always wanted to be at Grace Place, to be with my friends and to learn from my teachers," said Carolina. "I feel like I grew up there. Grace Place is my family."

Carolina's mom, Isabel Martinez, was at Grace Place at the same time, learning English and ways she could support Carolina and her other children to learn and grow. As she reflected on those years, Isabel said, "It isn't easy when children stay home. They're not learning here. When my children were little,

they got to learn the basics, and they felt more well-equipped to be with other children. Because of Grace Place, I know that when Carolina started school, she was prepared for 1st grade."

Now in 10th grade, Carolina participates in the LEAD (Leaders Empowered to Achieve Dreams) program. The mission of LEAD is to provide high school student with targeted academic assistance, life and leadership skills, college and career readiness and volunteer/work-based learning opportunities, so students will have the necessary tools for success beyond high school.

"I like how much the teachers and volunteers care about the students, and offer many opportunities for us to grow," said Carolina. "They help me with

homework so I could do well in school, including succeeding in math and English. They also present ideas and provide support for exploring future career opportunities."

Isabel and Carolina have seen the campus grow. "Seeing the campus now is awesome because they had just one building when Carolina and I started participating. It is growing step by step with my family. Grace Place now has many activities and buildings. It shows how Grace Place grew as my children did. I no longer participate in the parent programs because my children are older. I miss the teachers, all of the children running around, the Halloween costumes and more. It was a special time."

**For Carolina, Grace Place remains an important part of her life. "The people are so kind and understanding. Everyone wants to help me and the other students succeed."**

**100%** of high school seniors graduated and were accepted to college.

**129** high school students in the Grace Place LEAD Program.



Isabel Martinez and her daughters, Isabella, Karina and Carolina – have been familiar faces at Grace Place for nearly a decade.



LEAD student on a college campus tour.



LEAD students in a writing lesson.





Delia Diaz, adult education student, proudly showing her school work.

# Meet Delia Diaz – A Lifelong Student

**DELIA'S STORY** Adult Education at Grace Place is designed to promote family literacy and serve the general education needs of adults in Golden Gate. Delia Diaz is one of those students. Nineteen years ago, Delia left Chapas, Mexico, with her infant son after her husband passed away. An uncle living in Golden Gate invited her to come to live with his family.

Delia found herself in a new country where she didn't speak the language, had no friends or job, and faced the challenges of being a single mom.

Soon after settling in Golden Gate, Delia heard about Grace Place. Though she still couldn't speak, read or write in English, she became a volunteer at Grace Place, serving snacks in Bright Beginnings classrooms with 3 and 4-year-old children. Delia enjoyed her time as a volunteer at Grace Place and was looking forward to enrolling in our Bright Beginnings program with her son, Brandon. As fate would have it, Brandon was diagnosed as having special needs and required services that were beyond what Grace Place was able to provide.

This was not a goodbye for Delia and Grace Place. When Delia's second child turned 4, they enrolled together in the Bright Beginnings Family Literacy Program. "I wanted my daughter to learn to speak English as well as other students in her kindergarten class would."

Delia's youngest son entered Grace Place at one year old and was proudly able to count from one to 10 in both English and Spanish. Her family has come a long way. He is currently in 5th grade and attends the Grace Place after-school program.

Delia continues to be part of the Grace Place program, 14 years after her first volunteer experience. "I speak in English, but I want to learn to read and write in English. There is so much more to learn. Grace Place offers many different program options. Some people only come here for one or two things. I am committed to learning it all, everything you teach, I will learn."

Delia's long-term plan is to one day become a police detective. Her favorite subject at Grace Place is learning about nutrition, though she coyly admits that her favorite American snack is a Burger King cheeseburger and onion rings.

She recalls being embarrassed during school conferences, which she often skipped due to the language barrier and her inability to read notices that would come home from school.

She can clearly remember a conversation when her daughter looked her in the eye and said "Mommy you need to learn to speak English now. We live in America and that's what everyone speaks". Since that day Delia has been committed to speaking, reading, and writing in English.

When neighbors consider going to Grace Place, Delia always says "YES. Go to Grace Place. You will learn English. They will teach you how to use a computer. They teach you how to teach your children. You will learn about healthy eating and how to save your money. And you will make friends."

Delia is happy to report that her oldest son is now 16 and is returning to Grace Place this school year as a new Grace Place volunteer, following in his proud mother's footsteps.

Though a translator was in the room during this interview, Delia opted to be asked all the questions in English. The final question was the only question she asked to be translated.

"Is there anything else you would like to say about Grace Place. Is there something we did not cover in this story that you would like people to know?" She was silent for 10 seconds, sat up in her seat, and replied in English.

**"I don't pay for myself or my children to come to Grace Place. But I know Grace Place costs money. The food, the teachers, the buildings. Everything. All of it costs money. Every night in my prayers, I say prayers and tell God to look out for the special people who make donations to Grace Place."**

\*As Collier County recently cut its free English as a Second Language and Citizenship programs, Grace Place has experienced a surge in adult education applicants, and we now have a waitlist to attend our program.



## Adult Education Program

**28** students enrolled in the United States Citizenship Preparation course.

**95%** of adults improved their English reading assessments.

**110** adult education students returning from last year.



Adult education students in a literacy class.





# Harmony in Action: Food Pantry Volunteers and Donors

When it opened in 2008, the Food Pantry was a small but important addition to the programs offered for Grace Place families. Good nutrition helps students show up at school prepared to learn, so helping with groceries seemed like a good idea.

Fast forward through several hurricanes and the pandemic – and we find that supporting families facing food insecurity has become a key part of our mission, and our partnership with the Golden Gate community. We now serve more than 400 people each week.

Unlike some food distribution programs, **Grace Place operates as a choice food pantry.** Residents choose fresh fruit, veggies, meat, dairy and shelf-stable foods that they know their families will eat. There's no waste, which is so important as food prices seem to rise daily and obtaining fresh produce is increasingly difficult.

**Volunteers are the heart of the food pantry.** Some have been with us for years, like Karen, Pam and Debbie, who say they gain as much out of the volunteer experience as they give. This year, we welcomed teams of co-workers from businesses like **5/3 Bank, Charles Schwab** and **J.P.Morgan**, as well as staff from Naples Hotel Group and



JW Marriott Marco Island. It does take a village. Here's why.

Each Friday morning, staff and volunteers set up tents and tables near the back parking lot. They sort the shelf-stable items donated by the community and organize them on the tables. Staff will stage perishable items, which have been delivered by Midwest Food Bank and Harry Chapin Food Bank throughout the week. **The Grace Place food pantry is recognized as the largest permanent food distribution site in Collier County for Harry Chapin Food Bank.** We also receive supplies from Alliance for Period Supplies of SWFL, St. Matthew's House and the US Department of Agriculture.

During the afternoon shift (1 - 4pm) as many as 10 volunteers assist families who shop for foods, including items stored in a large freezer. Some

area residents walk to campus, but many drive. We register participants, but they are not required to be enrolled in a Grace Place program.

We've been fortunate to receive special donations for holidays, allowing us to buy items that might be out-of-reach for most families, such as frozen turkeys at Thanksgiving. Homeowner associations have generously hosted food drives for the non-perishable items on our website.

After Hurricane Ian, food supplies diminished, primarily because other areas, including Lee County, were hit hard by the storm and needed additional food resources. Recently, there has been a decline in fresh produce donations. New shortages and supply chain issues create challenges that we never anticipated 15 years. **Our volunteers and donors keep us ready to open every Friday.**

533K

total pounds of food distributed in the past year.

1,900

people who receive food each month.



Grace Place volunteer stacking foods in the food pantry.



Bright Beginnings students enjoying a healthy snack.



# Financials

August 1, 2022 – July 31, 2023



## ASSETS

### CURRENT ASSETS

Operating Funds .....	\$	286,233
Endowment .....	\$	428,285
Investments .....	\$	3,085,250
Total Other Current Assets .....	\$	1,386,911
<b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS .....</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>5,186,679</b>

### FIXED ASSETS

Fixed Assets .....	\$	13,984,620
Accumulated Depreciation.....	(\$)	3,484,751
Total Net Fixed Assets .....	\$	10,409,869
<b>TOTAL ASSETS .....</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>15,596,548</b>

## LIABILITIES AND EQUITY

### LIABILITIES

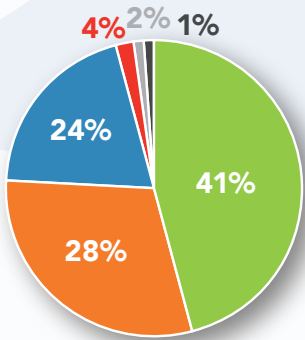
Total Current Liabilities .....	\$	523,777
Mortgage Payable .....	\$	459,529
<b>TOTAL EQUITY .....</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>14,613,242</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY .....</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>15,596,548</b>

## SOURCES

General Donations .....	\$	5,227,592
Events .....	\$	404,170
Grace Place Family Literacy Model®.....	\$	7,850
In-Kind Donations .....	\$	1,122,582
<b>TOTAL FUNDS RECEIVED .....</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>6,768,802</b>

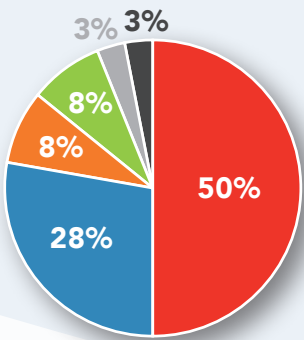
## USES

Operating Expenses .....	\$	5,208,582
In-Kind Donations .....	\$	1,122,582
<b>TOTAL FUNDS USED .....</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>6,331,164</b>



### GIVING BY SOURCE

- Government
- Individuals
- Foundations
- Organizations
- Corporations
- Faith Groups



### OPERATIONAL USAGE OF FUNDS

- School Age Programs
- Bright Beginnings
- Adult ELL
- Administration
- Food Pantry
- Fundraising

## Student Family Snapshot



## Fundraising Snapshot



Bright Beginnings students enjoying the playground.

Grace Place staff on campus.





## Volunteer Snapshot

**255** ▶ individual volunteers.

**80** ▶ new volunteers.

**189** ▶ 12 month volunteers.

**8,602** ▶ hours worked (regular volunteers).

**20,016** ▶ hours worked.

**\$588,670** ▶ saved from volunteer hours worked.

## Grace Place Campus Snapshot

**7** ▶ languages spoken on campus.

**118** ▶ families with more than one child in our programs.

**15** ▶ classrooms on campus.

**23** ▶ countries of origin represented in our students.

**86%** ▶ of students speak a language other than English at home.

**73%** ▶ of parents have less than a high school education.

**121** ▶ total staff members on campus.

**1,135** ▶ total students enrolled at Grace Place.



GRACE PLACE®



For Children & Families

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[www.graceplacenaples.org](http://www.graceplacenaples.org)