

Spring 2026



STORIES *of* CHANGE

• CELEBRATING THE STORIES OF GRACE PLACE •



WHAT'S INSIDE



Stephany:
From Starting Over
to Standing Strong

The Clark Family
Foundation's
Lasting Legacy

Literacy Comes Alive
for Young Authors

The Next Generation
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with Gissel:
"That Could Be Me!"

DRIVEN BY DETERMINATION:

STEPHANY'S JOURNEY

When Stephany arrived in Naples two years ago, she brought more than hope. She brought ambition, discipline, and an unshakeable belief in what was possible for her family.

With degrees in industrial engineering and telecom, she and her husband Benjamin had built professional lives in Bolivia. ***But starting over meant beginning again in a language she was still learning.*** She spent hours at the library teaching her children and herself English, one page and one phrase at a time.

Then she found Grace Place.

Education Changes Everything

Through Bright Beginnings, her youngest daughter, Violeta, gained the early literacy skills and confidence she'll carry into kindergarten. Her older children found stability and academic support in our after-school programs. They were successful in school, made new friends quickly and found a second home at Grace Place.

Investing in Herself

Grace Place didn't just support her children. We invested in Stephany's future. Through Adult Education, she strengthened her English literacy skills in reading, writing, and conversation. Evening after evening, she showed up for class, determined and committed.

In 2025, Stephany earned her real estate credential, a milestone reflecting her relentless drive and the opportunities Grace Place helped unlock. Today she's building a client base serving Latino investors exploring Florida's real estate market.

A Future Built on Strength

Stephany is moving forward with confidence and purpose, building a future that reflects both where she's been and where she's going. Her journey shows what's possible when determination is met with real opportunity... and with Grace Place. ❤️

You can make a difference in the lives of Golden Gate families as a volunteer.

Go to graceplacenaples.org/volunteer for more information about volunteer opportunities this summer or when you return in the fall.



“

Grace Place changed my life and my family's. It's something marvelous to be here.

– STEPHANY



PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

THE CLARK FAMILY FOUNDATION

Investing in Learning, Wellness, and Whole-Family Success



Some partnerships go beyond funding, they reflect a shared belief that every child deserves the chance to thrive. ***The Clark Family Foundation is that kind of partner.***

The Foundation has made a deep and lasting commitment to children, families, and the Golden Gate community. Their support of Grace Place is not simply philanthropy; it is a purposeful investment in opportunity, resilience, and generational change.

A Whole-Family Vision

The Clark Family Foundation believes that when families have access to quality education and supportive resources, entire communities grow stronger and more resilient. That belief drives their support of ***our multi-generation model, where children receive individualized academic instruction and parents gain the confidence, English literacy and tools to champion learning at home. The result is lasting change that ripples across entire families and the broader community.***

Impact Beyond Academics

The Clark Family Foundation believes that strong literacy skills build confidence, critical thinking, and communication—tools children will carry with them into future education, careers, and leadership roles. It's the moment a child discovers curiosity, finds their confidence or feels they truly belong. Grace Place nurtures it all, helping families build pathways toward opportunity and long-term stability.

Spaces That Inspire Learning

Thanks to the thoughtful investments of The Foundation, our students also have a place to spread out, dig in, and discover in a nature-rich outdoor classroom that has quickly become a favorite among students and teachers alike. It's a beautiful space where learning feels joyful and alive!

And, every child on campus now has something simple but essential: clean, cold, safe water at every fountain, every day. It is a straightforward investment with profound impact: healthy, hydrated children are ready to learn.

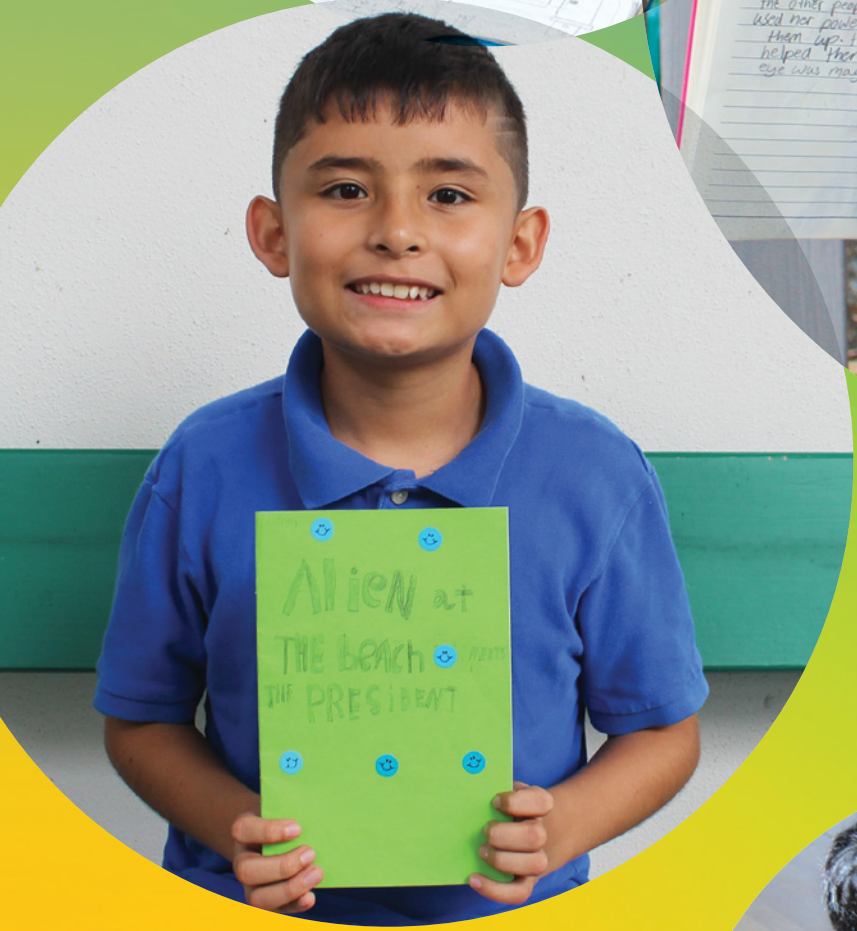
Their Message to the Community

The Clark Family Foundation leads with compassion, purpose, and humility, and their words reflect it. ***Together, we are building a community where every child has an opportunity to thrive.***

Because of their leadership and the support of donors like you, families in Golden Gate have access to the education, resources, and encouragement they need to build brighter futures. ❤️



Just then red lightning
shot through clear night
knocking down Gloria
instantly. She did it with
the other people she also
used her power to lick
them up. Then she
helped them her other
eye was magical.



“
I didn't know you could have a career as an illustrator, but I think it's something I'd love to do.
- NAHOUKA



As students strengthen their reading, writing, and communication skills, they begin to see how literacy opens doors to creative fields, professional paths, and futures they may not have imagined. They leave the festival knowing their voices have power and that every great story begins with the courage to start.



FROM BLANK PAGE TO PRINTED BOOK

INSIDE THE YOUNG AUTHORS' FESTIVAL

What starts as a blank page quickly becomes something much bigger at the Young Authors' Festival.

In just four weeks, our 3rd, 4th and 5th graders transform from hesitant writers into confident, published authors, discovering that their ideas, voices, and stories truly matter. In partnership with Room to Read, this program helps bring the full publishing experience to life for our students.

A Creative Journey Takes Shape

It begins with play. Story starter cubes spark imagination, helping students break through the fear of “What do I write?” With a single roll, characters, settings, and conflicts come to life. Using a plot mountain, students map their stories from beginning to climax to resolution, learning that strong storytelling is both creative and intentional.

As drafts develop, so does language. This is an essential skill for storytelling, as well as for success in school, careers, and life. Students edit their writing, swapping ordinary words for vivid, precise ones. What they proudly call “million-dollar words.”

For 4th grader Giancarlo, that meant describing an alien’s eyes as “obsidian” in his story, *Alien at the Beach Meets the President*. He wrote:

“The alien PausPea with its large, obsidian eyes scanned the horizon.”

His writing went on to capture both imagination and control:

“For twenty minutes, the most powerful man on earth and a traveler from the Andromeda galaxy simply watched the seagulls fight over a discarded fry.”

Discovering New Possibilities

In the final week, students refine both text and illustrations, turning manuscripts into finished books. For 4th grader Nahouka, author of *Journey for Amber*, this stage opened an unexpected door.

“I didn’t know you could have a career as an illustrator,” she said. “But I think it’s something I’d love to do.” The festival doesn’t just build skills, it expands possibilities.

The Festival Finale

Festival Day brings everything together. During Author Talks, students discuss their work one-on-one with adults who listen and ask thoughtful questions. Moments like this reveal a powerful shift, when students begin to see themselves not just as learners, but truly as writers. The celebration concludes with a performance by The Naples Players improv troupe. 3rd grader Durwin was thrilled that his book, *My Everyday Life*, was selected. He said he particularly loved how an actor pretended to be a dog and sit on the sister in the story. It made him laugh even though he knew what was going to happen. A writer is born! ❤️

MEET THE AMBASSADORS

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS MAKING AN IMPACT

Dodgeball tournaments. Brewery book drives.
One-on-one mentoring with high school students.
If it sounds like fun with a purpose, that's exactly the point.

“

*Education is
the best gift
my parents
gave me, and
I want to pay
it forward.*

– PATRICK

Grace Place Ambassadors are young professionals who show up for students in creative, energetic, and meaningful ways. Led by the Board of Ambassadors, this group brings fresh ideas and real community connections to Grace Place's mission.

Flexible by Design. Impactful by Nature.

The Ambassador program was built for busy people. You contribute what you can, when you can, and every bit counts. Whether you're organizing an event, mentoring a student, or simply spreading the word, you're directly changing outcomes for children and families in Golden Gate.

Patrick Lawler, a Grace Place Ambassador, puts it simply: "Education is the best gift my parents gave me, and I want to pay it forward. As a Grace Place Ambassador, I amplify their mission and encourage other young professionals to help students become the best versions of themselves."

Real Moments. Real Impact.

At the Ambassadors' third annual high school networking event, dozens of young professionals sat down one-on-one with Grace Place students to share career stories, offer hard-won advice, and provide a firsthand look at what life beyond the classroom can hold. For students still figuring out who they want to be, those conversations matter enormously. ❤️

SEPT
16

Town Hall

September 16, 2026

Mark your calendar for our upcoming Town Hall meeting.

Ready to make a difference and have fun doing it?

Join the Grace
Place Ambassadors.
[Click to get started.](#)





FROM BROCHURES TO REALITY

HIGH SCHOOLERS EXPLORE COLLEGE LIFE

For a student who has never set foot on a college campus, the idea of going to college can feel more like a fantasy than a plan. This spring break, nine Grace Place high schoolers changed that, one campus visit at a time.

Our students visited Florida State University, Florida A&M, the University of Florida, Santa Fe College, and the University of Central Florida. They walked the quads, ate in dining halls, sat in classrooms, and felt, for the first time, that a future like this was actually within reach.

“That Could Be Me”

For Gissel, Grace Place has always been home. She arrived at four years old and is now a 10th grader with her sights set on medicine. During the college visits, something changed. Watching students move across the quad, she saw herself among them. Years of building reading, writing, and critical thinking skills in the Grace Place afterschool program had quietly done their work. A future in medicine no longer felt like a dream. It felt within reach.

“Seeing the students on campus made me feel like that could be me,” she said. And visiting schools far from home allowed her to dream big. “I had never thought about going to a school that far away, but it didn’t feel so scary anymore.”

Guided by Those Who’ve Been There

The trip wasn’t just a tour. It was a conversation. Grace Place graduates, who are now scholarship students, served as guides, sharing honest, firsthand insight into academics and campus life. That peer perspective is powerful. By the end, Gissel’s takeaway said it all: **“The spring break trip showed me all the possibilities waiting for me. There’s so many open doors.”** Without Grace Place, it’s likely these students wouldn’t get to college.

Opening Doors, One Student at a Time

Not only do trips like this inspire our students, they make college feel real, familiar, and possible. Through our afterschool programs, which complement instruction from the public school district, students receive targeted academic and literacy support that builds on the school day. Paired with our college prep program offering career exploration, application support, and scholarships, students gain the tools they need to walk confidently through those open doors. ❤️

[Click to meet our 2026 Scholarship Recipients and see what adventures lie ahead for each of them.](#)



“

Seeing the students on campus made me feel like that could be me.

– GISSEL



SAVE THE DATE • SAVE THE DATE • SAVE THE DATE



A signature event
to benefit Grace Place

featuring

Michael Strahan



Join us for an evening
of dinner and entertainment on

DECEMBER 3
at the
GREY OAKS COUNTRY CLUB

*Don't miss your chance to hear
Michael Strahan in person!*

Not only is he well loved for his career
as a NY Giants NFL football player and
as a television host on GMA,
but also because of his humanity.

He embodies the message Grace Place stands for:
when people are seen, supported, and
given opportunity, they rise!



TICKETS
GO ON SALE
**SATURDAY,
AUGUST 1**



EVENT
WILL BE ON
**THURSDAY,
DECEMBER 3**



Stay up to date about all
the exciting activities and
achievements at Grace Place by
following our social channels.

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