

HOBE SOUND COMMUNITY CHEST



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ANNUAL REPORT

BOARD MEMBERS



HSCC Board of Directors

MISSION

The mission of the Hobe Sound Community Chest, Inc. is to promote the social and educational wellbeing of the entire community by funding programs and initiatives serving Hobe Sound residents in need.

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A 501(c)(3) Organization Federal I.D.# 59-6155092

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear Friends of the Community Chest,

Thanks to the generosity of our donors, this year we received a record \$2,801,909 in contributions to the Annual Campaign and the Hobe Sound Strong Start Initiative. In keeping with our policy of distributing all the annual funding, we reinvested those funds in the Hobe Sound community via a record \$2,080,701 in grants to 43 entities serving Hobe Sound residents. The Chest also provided \$620,888 for scholarships and an additional \$202,011 in funding for special projects in Hobe Sound. These numbers represent \$2,903,600 of total community impact this year.

We keep operating costs below 10%, with an administrative expense ratio that places us in the top 1% of local charities. As the oldest philanthropic organization of its type in Martin County, the Chest remains the county's single largest private grantor of philanthropic funds. Our all-volunteer board members visit and monitor our agencies as well as serve on committees related to the Chest's mission, such as Health or Education.

The Board also oversees Special Initiatives that address the community's unmet needs. We are especially proud of Hobe Sound Strong Start, our six-year project to ensure every child has access to pre-K education and the means to pay for it. As a result, the portion of preschoolers' who are kindergarten ready has risen from 46% to 86%.

The Chest's effectiveness would not be possible without the dedication and hard work of Executive Director Scott Berry, Community Liaison Jenny Ojeda, Operations Manager Rachel Terlizzi and Fiscal Specialist Monica Troy.

It has been an honor to serve as Chest President. My tenure ends with this report, and I extend best wishes to my successor Anne Patel, a truly gifted leader who will continue advancing the Chest's mission.

Finally, thank you to our donors for entrusting us with your gifts. Your continued support is essential to improving the quality of life for so many individuals and families in our community.

Sincerely,



COMMITTEE *on* EDUCATION

CINDY DWYER • MARY FAHRENBACH • ELLY MCKENNA • PAM WHITE



HSCC takes great pride in the progress we have made raising the quality of education in Hobe Sound. The Chest supports scholarship programs for residents from ages 1 to over 21, from pre-school through college or trade school. This year we awarded \$664,388 in scholarship money—the most in our history.

- Hobe Sound Early Learning Center: 46 scholarships - \$461,490
- Hobe Sound Elementary School Voluntary Pre-K After-School Program: 10 scholarships - \$52,398
- Indian River State College (IRSC): 9 scholarships - \$25,000
- IRSC Take Stock in Children: 1 scholarship - \$8,500
- Copper Key Scholarship Program: 1 scholarship - \$20,000
- Natives Helping Natives Scholarships: 14 scholarships - \$10,000
- HSCC College/Trade School Scholarship Program: 9 scholarships - \$87,000

Our grants to both the Hobe Sound Early Learning Center and Banner Lake Early Learning Center help fund competitive teacher salaries, which, in turn, allow both pre-schools to attract and retain a skilled and experienced faculty. The Chest further supports the Blast program at Banner Lake, which serves 200 children and fosters 17 First Serve high school mentors.

The Chest also provides grants to the Education Foundation of Martin County and the Library Foundation of Martin County, agencies that foster education. The Education Foundation underwrites learning opportunities for Hobe Sound public school students and their teachers and supports curricular initiatives that upgrade the reading, writing and math skills of children in grades K-12. The Library Foundation of Martin County sponsors the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, which provides one free book each month for every child from birth to 4 at HSELC and BLELC, as well as other Hobe Sound preschoolers. In addition, the Library Foundation offered adult ESL classes for both Creole and Spanish speakers in local mobile home communities.



COMMITTEE *on* GRANTS

ANNE PATEL

The Grants Committee had another record-breaking year. For the second consecutive funding cycle, we awarded over \$2 Million to 43 local nonprofit 501(c)(3) agencies. As always, our focus remains on serving the most significant areas of need in the Hobe Sound community. These grants advance our priorities of education, support services for children and youth, as well as assistance programs for the mentally ill, the homeless and the elderly.

We are very proud of the rigorous process we use in awarding our donors' funds. Each year, Chest directors personally visit each agency and thoroughly examine programming as well as fiscal accountability. The Grants Committee then evaluates each agency's performance in providing services and analyzes the impact of Chest funding in meeting the needs of the Hobe Sound community.

COMMITTEE *on* FINANCE & INVESTMENT

STUART BELL

The Finance & Investment Committee oversees the receipt and disbursement of all the Chest's gifts, grants, and assets. We review and approve the funds allocated for grant distribution, administrative expenses, and Strategic Reserve investments, along with the annual financial statements and audit prepared by our independent accounting firm.

The Strategic Reserve is a conservative, long-term investment portfolio segregated from the Chest's operating funds. These funds provide the Chest resources to respond to unforeseen emergencies caused by hurricanes and other natural disasters. Additionally, the Board has used these funds to initiate programs like Hobe Sound Strong Start that fulfill unmet community needs, as well as participate in our agencies' capital projects like rebuilding or replacing aging physical facilities.

COMMITTEE *on* HEALTH

RUTH COLKET

When the Chest conducted its community needs assessment, it discovered nearly 50% of children in select Hobe Sound neighborhoods did not have health insurance and typically received medical care in emergency rooms. Hobe Sound Kids, the subsequent innovative partnership with Cleveland Clinic Martin Health, serves children from low-income families that lack access to pediatric care. These families visit pediatricians in a medical office and never receive a bill for treatment or medications. The Chest also partnered with the United Way of Martin County through the Ride United Program to transport these young patients to and from medical appointments by Uber or Lyft.



To date, 81 children have been enrolled in the program. They have received check-ups, immunizations, vision screenings and hearing screenings. When these children are sick they can see a pediatrician, and they have access to no-cost prescription drugs. To cover costs, the Cleveland Clinic Foundation established the Hobe Sound Kids Medical Program fund, which we hope will serve an increasing number of children. Due to the pilot's success, Cleveland Clinic Martin Health is duplicating this program with other partners.

COMMITTEE *on* COMMUNICATION & OUTREACH

SUE LESTER



Throughout the year this committee raises awareness of the Chest with special events, various promotional materials, the frequently updated website (hobesoundcommunitychest.org), and now a social media presence.

In November, the Chest sponsored House of Hope Director Rob Ranieri's guided tour of the HOH hydroponic garden in Palm City, which yields fresh fruits and vegetables for food-insecure Martin County residents living in poverty. In February, the Chest held its annual morning Agency Tour, the most direct way to learn how our social service agencies improve Hobe Sound lives. Participants took a 2 ½ hour journey through local neighborhoods, visiting some of the agencies we support. In April, the Chest hosted the Community Service Award Luncheon (p. 9) and organized the Mobile Agency Fair (p. 14).

In fall 2024, to further expand outreach, the Chest initiated a social media presence on Facebook and Instagram (p. 12)

COMMITTEE *on* NOMINATING & GOVERNANCE

TED MCGRAW

To maintain an effective Board of Directors, this committee identifies Hobe Sound individuals dedicated to the Chest's mission who can devote the time and effort necessary for agency-vetting and fundraising. These volunteer directors also participate in one or more of the Chest's oversight committees, helping to keep the administrative rate low while making our mission a reality. This season, the Board welcomed 4 new board members: Truman Hobbs, Ted Pardoe, Hal Reed and Laura Traphagen. We also thanked 2 retiring members: Bill Davenport and Bruce Wiltsie.

IN MEMORIAM

Lisa Schiff (1952 -2025) joined the Chest's Board of Directors in 2022 and served as an active member of both the Development and Communication & Outreach Committees. In addition to fundraising, she helped organize the successful annual House of Hope hydroponic garden visit and the Mission in Motion mobile agency fair. She will be greatly missed.

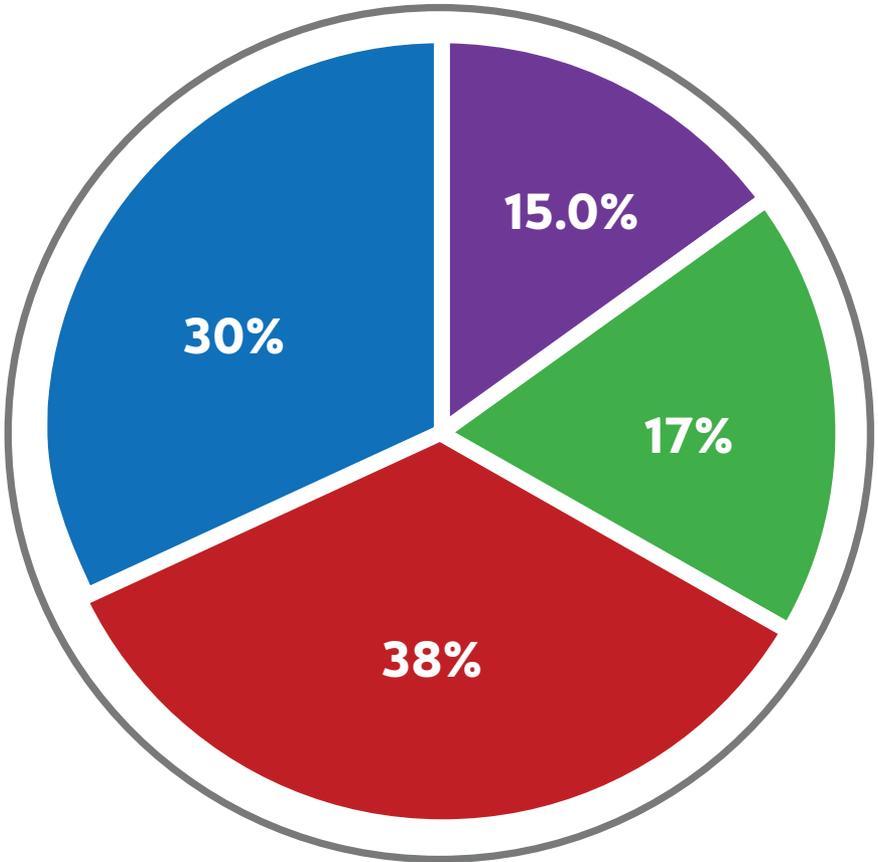
COMMITTEE *on* DEVELOPMENT

JOYCE BULLEN GAY • DON MCCREE • ERIC WESEL

Donors are the key to our success, and we thank them wholeheartedly for their continued generosity and support. We also thank our directors who contact current and prospective donors, making 2024-2025 another outstanding fundraising year. We have raised more than \$2.8 Million.

In addition to our annual campaign, the Chest promotes the Banyan Society, our planned giving program. Planned gifts designate the Chest as a beneficiary in a will; trust; retirement account, such as an IRA; or a life insurance policy. Also, members may have contributed a special donation to the Strategic Reserve or a gift to a sponsored initiative, such as Hobe Sound Strong Start. This year, in most IRAs, up to \$100,000 for single individuals and \$200,000 for married couples may be contributed to the Chest exclusive of RMD, the normal required minimum distribution at age 70 ½. (Please consult your financial advisor). If you have a charitable gift fund, please also consider naming the Chest as a final beneficiary for any remaining investment balances. This year, the Banyan Society has 45 members.

2025-2026 CHEST FUNDING BY PRIORITY AREA



ANNUAL GRANT AWARDS

(All figures in thousands)

BASIC HUMAN NEEDS	25/26
Priority Leader: Donaldson	
CareBag, Inc.	20
Caring Children Clothing Children (4Cs)	18
Elev8hope, Inc.	20
Habitat for Humanity of Martin County	85
House of Hope	125
Love and Hope in Action (L.A.H.I.A.)	45
	313

EDUCATION	25/26
Priority Leaders: White, McKenna	
College Financial Aid	105
IRSC - Take Stock in Children	8.5
IRSC Foundation (Adult)	25
Education Foundation of Martin County	30
Library Foundation of Martin County	26.99
Banner Lake Club	300
Hobe Sound Early Learning Center	285
	780.49

COMMUNITY SERVICES	25/26
Priority Leaders: Patel, McCree	
211 Palm Beach/Treasure Coast, Inc.	10
American Red Cross of Martin County	10
Natives Helping Natives	10
Hobe Sound Fine Arts	8.40
Hobe Sound Nature Center	49.76
Treasure Coast Food Bank Whole Child Connection	32.41
Girl Scouts of Southeast Florida, Inc.	10
Kitchen Foundation	3
Boys & Girls Clubs of Martin County	90
Martin County Chamber Foundation	10
Hobe Sound Little League	10
First Tee	5
Hobe Sound Soccer Club, Inc.	35
Martin County Jaguars	15
Martin County Police Athletic League	20
Martin County South Youth Athletic League	17
Hobe Sound Ravens	18
	353.57

HEALTH & WELLNESS	25/26
Priority Leaders: Patel	
Alzheimer's Community Care	10
Children's Emergency Resources, Inc.	15
Christian Community Care	20
Cleveland Clinic	10
Light of the World Charities	15
Treasure Coast Hospice	10
Council on Aging of Martin County, Inc.	140.24
SafeSpace	40
Tykes & Teens, Inc.	90
Volunteers in Medicine	65
Project L.I.F.T.	75
Reverse the Door, Inc	20
Helping People Succeed, Inc.	38.4
Martin County Healthy Start Coalition	85
	633.64

TOTAL: 2080.70

HOBE SOUND COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD



Gigi Suntum

In 1996, an endowment from Robert McNeil's family foundation established the annual Hobe Sound Community Service Award. This year's 28th recipient, Caring Children/Clothing Children's Executive Director Gigi Suntum was selected from a list of individuals who have made a significant social service contribution to our community. Honored by the Chest with a luncheon this spring at the Kane Center, she was awarded a commemorative gift and a \$10,000 contribution to the charitable organization of her choice.

4Cs is a grassroots agency that originated in 1997 when a Palm City couple collected second-hand children's clothing for distribution to low-income families. Over time, 4Cs found an office-front in Stuart where parents could select their children gently used clothes as well as new underwear, socks and shoes twice a year, free of charge. An in-store children's library of donated books kept small customers occupied while their parents shopped. Eventually, this library evolved into the 4Cs literacy program, providing kids free books and reading instruction from volunteer tutors. Recently, 4Cs acquired a van to bring the store to isolated communities like Hobe Sound's mobile home communities.

Director Gigi Suntum and her volunteers work extremely hard. Masters of stretching a dollar, they have made 4Cs a major source of support for Martin County's needy families. Last year, 4Cs served more than 5,300 children.

HOBE SOUND STRONG START

Extraordinary results! In six short years, the Hobe Sound Strong Start (HSSS) initiative has lifted kindergarten-ready scores for youngsters enrolled at the Hobe Sound Early Learning Center, the Banner Lake Early Learning Center and the Voluntary Pre-K Program from 46% to 86%! Higher than Martin County's 73% and State of Florida's 72%. Studies show kindergarten-ready children are more likely to read at grade-level by third grade and eventually graduate from high school.

Brain development during a child's first five years is critical to future success. In 2019, Chest Executive Director Scott Berry conducted a needs assessment that found only 56% of Hobe Sound's children attended preschool before kindergarten. In addition, only 46% of entering kindergarteners were ready to learn, according to preliminary screening.





The Chest launched the Hobe Sound Strong Start Initiative (HSSS) to ensure that all Hobe Sound children from birth to 4-years-old could access high-quality early education and the means to pay for it.

In 2023, HSSS committed a multi-phase capital outlay for the non-profit Hobe Sound Early Learning Center (HSELC), leading to the addition of 4 new classrooms that allowed 76 extra students to enroll. The expansion's first phase resulted in 2 classrooms serving 28 additional children. The expansion's second phase resulted in 2 more classrooms serving an additional 48 children. That expansion also included a modular to be used for administrative offices and funding for needed administrative staff. In total, \$1.735M was spent.

In the past year, the Chest partnered with the Lost Tree Foundation to fund the addition of an infant care room at Banner Lake Early Learning Center. Infant care is the most sought-after form of care in Hobe Sound.

In addition to this capital investment, the Chest annually provides preschool scholarships for 48 qualifying low-income students. Our most recent evaluation showed that 60% of these children are reading at grade level in 3rd grade, compared to 47% of their peers or 51% of children county-wide.

As you can see, the impact of Hobe Sound Strong Start is real. More children are in preschool, more children are ready to learn when they begin kindergarten, and more children are reading proficient at 3rd grade.

Visit us on SOCIAL MEDIA...

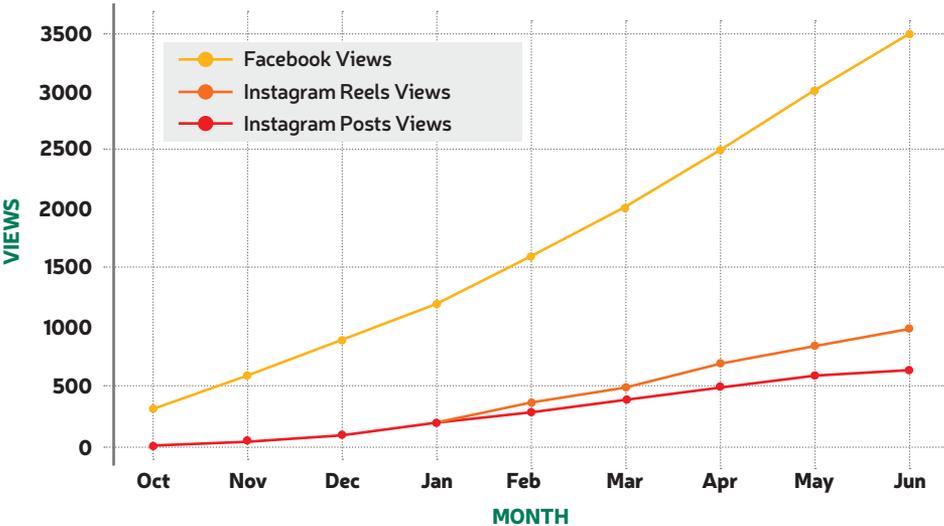


In the past, the Chest has used direct mailings, spotlight presentations, bus tours, email blasts, our website and this annual report to inform the Hobe Sound community about the many ways we improve residents' lives—from infants to the elderly.

But in fall 2024, to reach a larger audience and younger demographic, the Chest—under Director Laura Blatchford's leadership—launched a social media presence on Facebook and Instagram. This additional method of communication helps raise awareness of the Chest and emphasizes its impact on our residents, using images, sound and video.

Although still in the pilot stage, the results from this launch are encouraging. We reached a combined total of 5,000 unique views in just 9 months, creating meaningful engagement with younger residents and families. Our status growth summary in June indicated an increase in views on Facebook from 320 to 3,500, Instagram Reels from 0 to 1,000, and Instagram Posts from 5 to 643.

SOCIAL MEDIA GROWTH (OCT 2024-JUN 2025)



Visit us on Facebook



Visit us on Instagram



MISSION IN MOTION

In April, more than 100 people attended our second mobile agency fair, Mission in Motion, and learned first-hand how local Chest-supported organizations expand outreach to neighborhoods with limited public transportation, by using modified trucks and vans that deliver social services to clients where they live.

Visitors strolled around the Jupiter Island Town Hall circle, stopping at parked trucks and vans to learn how these agencies affect lives. In the Martin County Police Athletic League truck, they tried out boxing gear on a mobile arena designed for youth in the crime-prevention mentoring program. In the Project LIFT truck, they engaged with a big-screen simulator that teaches truck driving skills. The Caring Children Clothing Children van, which visits Hobe Sound mobile home communities every month, offered racks of gently used children's clothing, free for low-income families. The Carebag van, which travels to Banner Lake twice a month, displayed a personal hygiene pantry and portable shower closets for the homeless. New this year, Martin County Healthy Start's MOM (Maternity on the Move) Mobile provided a fully equipped doctor's office on wheels, with examination room and phlebotomy lab, for expectant mothers.



Additional participating agencies included House of Hope's mobile garden, Council on Aging's case management office, and the Hobe Sound Nature Center's education van. Boys & Girls Club members passed hors d'oeuvres made in their food truck, and the South Fork High School jazz band provided musical entertainment.

IN MEMORY *and* IN HONOR DONORS

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IN THEIR OWN WORDS...

Hobe Sound Early Learning Center Head of School Ashley Azzi:

The Hobe Sound Early Learning Center is a place where you can see the support of the Hobe Sound Community Chest in action. We want to make a difference in these students' lives and not only their lives but also their families. We want to be able to shape a community. The Chest and the Hobe Sound Early Learning Center share that in common.

Council on Aging President & CEO Karen Ripper:

The Hobe Sound Community Chest has supported us over the past thirty years in providing Meals on Wheels to the people that are on the waitlist to receive state funding. They have made it possible for us to always say yes when people call us from Hobe Sound who need a meal.

HSCC Scholarship recipient Dr. Amber Deckard:

At the most crucial point in my life, the HSCC Scholarship allowed me to pursue my academic dreams. Contributing to the Hobe Sound Community Chest can make a difference in more than just one person's life. It can change the trajectory of somebody's life and then for generations to come. Because my daughter has seen how I benefitted, that has driven how she perceives what she can do. To the Chest, I say a sincere thank you. You changed my life.

Habitat for Humanity of Martin County Executive Director Mike Reading:

When the opportunity to purchase the Pettway property arose, I knew I needed \$60,000 to buy it. The Hobe Sound Community Chest was the first number I called. They came through, and we were able to purchase the property. They also funded the first house that was built in Pettway Village, and they continued to be an amazing partner throughout the whole process.

Pettway Village homeowner:

My experience with the Hobe Sound Community Chest has been amazing. They were one of the ones who funded this beautiful home that I'm actually living in. This has changed not only my life, but my kids' lives. What the Hobe Sound Community Chest has given my family is priceless. My kids laugh at me sometimes, because I'll sit outside, taking it all in and cry because it's unreal...but I know *it is real!*

DESIGNED BY

