



ONE COMMUNITY, THREE CAUSES

TURTLES ON THE TOWN TOTALS

- 50 artists created loggerhead sea turtle sculptures which made their way to seasonal homes across Collier County in November 2015
- 50 turtles auctioned at the TOTT gala in March 2016 and made final treks to their permanent nesting sites
- \$330,000 raised to support the arts and environment in the community
- 2020 – Next projected community collaboration project

Turtles on the Town raised awareness, excitement and funds through collaboration and a months-long public art exhibition to make a lasting impact.

What do sculpture and philanthropy have in common? In Collier County this past year, they fused into a fun focal point of the community with a charitable intent. Community Foundation of Collier County President/CEO Eileen Connolly-Keesler felt that the timing was ideal to launch a wide-scale collaboration. The driving force was to simultaneously benefit three organizations: the Community Foundation, United Arts Council of Collier County (UAC), and Conservancy of Southwest Florida. The Foundation already supports these two

organizations, and Connolly-Keesler saw the opportunity to make a bigger splash. “Philanthropy, the environment and the arts have far-reaching impacts in our community,” she said, “so we want to ensure their continued expansion and success.” The community collaboration event, Turtles on the Town, netted proceeds of \$330,000. \$110,000 was given to both the Conservancy and the United Arts Council to support their programs. The Community Foundation split its \$110,000 between the CFCC Environmental Endowment Fund and

the CFCC Arts Endowment Fund to make annual grants available for both causes. The Conservancy’s share from Turtles on the Town is funding its extensive, long-running sea turtle nesting monitoring program, which includes paid academic interns, a staff biologist, public awareness outreach, monitoring equipment and the maintenance and upgrade of a crucial but dilapidated field station on Keewaydin Island. Conservancy President/CEO Rob Moher calls the island “an epicenter for sea turtle reproduction” during nesting

season. Five species of what Moher calls the “dinosaurs of the seas” can be found in Southwest Florida. While the loggerhead sea turtle — the species the 50 sculptures were based on — is the most common, other species are rare and endangered. Thanks to this collaboration, “thousands of them will be protected,” said Moher. “Without that first step of protecting their nests, the journey would end. None of this works without money and we are extremely grateful for Turtles on the Town to invest in and grow the program.”

The funds raised for the UAC, an arts umbrella organization, are being invested to enrich lives through outreach programs for at-risk youth in over 20 schools and nonprofit centers throughout Collier County. Newly appointed UAC Executive Director Laura Burns said “A stream of research shows just how instrumental exposure to the arts is — not only for academic achievement, but also in enhancing life skills. By working together with the Community Foundation, through the arts, we can help make real and positive change in children’s lives.”