

Coronavirus has changed – everything. Yet, we know when people unite around a common cause, real and lasting change happens. With this in mind, America's Charities is celebrating #GivingTuesdayNow, a new global day of giving and unity taking place on May 5, 2020, in emergency response to the unprecedented need caused by COVID-19.

One of the best things we can do while we maintain physical distance is to show social connection on behalf of each other and our communities. In response to the enormous need caused by COVID-19, the day will focus on generosity, citizen engagement, and support for communities and nonprofits around the world.

TLA's Kindergarten Readiness Collaboration is ensuring that books are available to every child during this time of uncertainty.

KRC Family Engagement Specialists Nikki Boswell and Maria Pantoja have been delivering literacy survival kits to families living in poverty to make sure Indian River County low-income families have the supplies they need during the COVID-19 crisis to close the reading achievement gap.

These families are in survival mode every day, living in poverty. A crisis such as we're experiencing today makes things so much harder for people who are struggling to afford the essentials.

While the coronavirus has shut down schools, children of school age are still receiving instruction. These little ones – birth to age 5 – are falling through the cracks. The families our Family Engagement Specialists are dropping off books and activities to don't have internet access or home libraries to keep learning during closures.

Help us support these children as we deliver books and activities to children living in pockets of high-poverty where students are typically underperforming.

We've had an overwhelming response to the kits delivered in April. While practicing social distancing, 55 learning kits containing books and 275 learning activities have been dropped off on doorsteps in Fellsmere and Gifford.

Each kit contains books, school supplies, and activities explicitly selected for the recipient in consideration of the child's learning needs. Nikki and Maria call each family to discuss the "learning activities," answer questions, and offer suggestions on how to extend learning opportunities using the materials provided and other items readily available at home.

Based on the phone interviews Nikki and Maria will drop off additional learning materials as needed for the children.

"It's those open lines of communication that make the difference," explains Pantoja. "We live in these communities, and the families trust us. We're all afraid right now, and they're more willing to accept our help."

It's hard to tell who is more excited about the deliveries – the parents or the children. The parents are relieved and grateful to have some extra support. Many have expressed feelings of inadequacy in providing their children with the support they need to grow and thrive, more so now than ever.

"We're greeted by smiling faces peeking out the windows when we arrive to drop off the kits," shared Boswell.

*The activities are great! They are a really big help to keep my son working on his skills while he's at home.*

— Gifford parent

*I am so happy with the materials and activities that came in the April kit. My two children enjoy the kits so much that they get up in the morning and tell me that they want to work on their homework! We can't wait until next month's kit arrives.*

— Fellsmere parent

