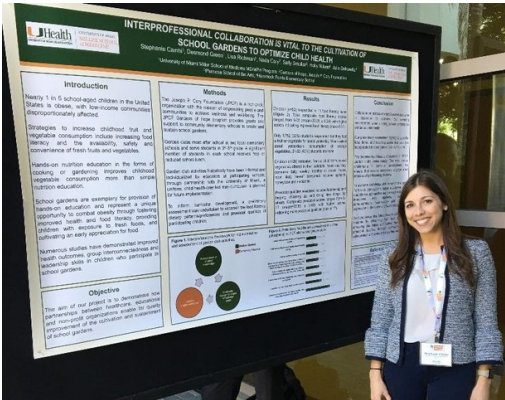


Gardens of Hope are “Being Counted”!



It is our mission at the **Joseph P Cory Foundation** (JPCF) to educate and empower children, families and communities to achieve wellness and wellbeing through expertise, education and guidance. As collaborative partners with **The School District of Palm Beach County, and its Wellness Promotion Task Force** (SDPBC) (WPTF), we are fortunate to employ our Gardens of Hope (GOH) program in schools, bringing our profound work to a wider audience, thus impacting our students' optimal health.

Nearly 1 in 5 school-aged children in the United States is obese. Gardens of Hope, one of the foundation's signature programs, provides an absolute mind-body-spirit experience for all those involved. These exemplary environments provide hands-on nutrition education, movement, and promote leadership skills and peer collaboration. During their weekly extra

curricula garden club, this program grants opportunities for students to utilize strategies that increase fruit and vegetable consumption, food literacy, and offers the availability, safety and convenience of fresh organic produce. Through nutrition education in the form of cooking, gardening and eating herbs/vegetables, advancements multiply in excess of learning from merely textbooks. Most notably, numerous studies substantiate that school gardens represent a unique opportunity to combat obesity and foster improved health, while cultivating an early appreciation for beneficial foods.

Prior to the school year, the Foundation gained the support and attention from several third-year medical students, Stephanie Camhi and Desmond Green, from the **University of Miami's Miller School of Medicine's MD/MPH program**. New, and mutually sought-after public health objectives, demonstrating how the Gardens of Hope program would reflect and verify changes in knowledge, attitude and behavior, were created. With the addition of pre and post testing, and a series of five original age appropriate lessons, Phase 1 for our data collection/garden initiative was set in motion.

The recognized The School District of Palm Beach County's School Garden agenda, already in place was ideal, so we piloted our GOH program on two sites; **Hammock Pointe Elementary**, overseen by teacher Mrs. Holly Nilsen, and **Plumosa School of the Arts**, with media specialist Mrs. Sally Smollar. The preliminary data has been outstanding, and we hypothesize that future work will impact students by enhancing food literacy, improving diet habits and further developing prosocial qualities through peer teamwork and collaboration in the garden setting. Phase II is underway, and the work will carry on within these and other elementary schools, adding middle and high schools around the district.

The year ended on a high note, as the GOH project was showcased at the Task Force's Spring Wellness Celebration, when Founder and President Nada Cory spoke following a video presentation filmed by **The Education Network**. To support its efforts, this year's "Grow it Forward Scholarship" winner Karina Brown from Plumosa School of the Arts was revealed, and it was made known that her award would be presented at the Foundation's Annual "Homegrown Health Gala", held each April. It should be noted that in addition to strengthening the urban agriculture movement - garden to table - JPCF provides other opportunities that can be obtained through volunteerism, internships, and community service.

We thank the District wholeheartedly, and believe that collaboration across interprofessional domains is essential to optimize the learning environment of school gardens and thereby target specific knowledge deficits. Above all, we are happy to report that the students conceptualize their garden activities as *cool, fun and enjoyable!*