

2016-17 SPARKPLUGS

Region I: Elementary School

SANTA ROSA COUNTY - WINNER

“Bulldogs in the House”

Bagdad Elementary School

4512 Forsyth Street

Milton, Florida 32583

Contact: Tiphanie Sapp

Phone: 850-983-5680 Ext: 5

Mission: To empower through experiences that maximize the potential of all learners.

Bagdad Elementary School’s “Bulldogs in the House” initiative divides staff and students into four different houses, each of which has its own mission. Houses compete among each other in attendance, discipline, academics, and parent and community involvement. If a house wins, students are awarded points. Houses essentially serve as platforms on which to garner enthusiasm to initiate different school events, such as Grandparents’ Day; Veterans’ Day; or clothes, book and toy drives. Because of Bulldogs in the House, parents and stakeholders are provided additional opportunities to become involved with the school. Bagdad Elementary feels that the program has greatly enhanced stakeholder buy-in, enabling the school to more holistically meet the needs of students.

BAY COUNTY

“Leading the Way through Leadership Day”

Hutchison Beach Elementary School

12900 Hutchison Boulevard

Panama City Beach, Florida 33405

Contact: Glenda Nouskhjian

Phone: 850-767-5195

Mission: To allow students to demonstrate student leadership skills, experience academic and personal growth, and witness the amazing transformation that takes place on and off the campus yearly by building a close relationship among home, community and school.

Monthly events at Hutchinson Beach Elementary School, such as Sizzling Science, attract parents, grandparents and community members to the school and reinforce connections. Leadership Day, a 100 percent student-led effort, began with students showcasing their leadership skills as student safety patrol members together with local fire people opened car doors to welcome guests. The day continued, featuring student presentations, the showcasing of grade-level service learning projects, WATCHDOGS speeches and students sharing aspects of positive school culture during school tours. In classrooms, students conferred with guests to explain their Leadership Binders which included academic and personal goals, data tracking forms, celebrations and leadership roles.

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

“Family Resource Night”

Montclair Elementary School

820 Massachusetts Avenue

Pensacola, Florida 32505

Contact: Kristen Danley

Phone: 850-595-6969

Mission: To increase parent participation and help parents support their child’s education by providing community resources and opportunities.

Montclair Elementary School held a one-night event designed to address concerns unique to families of this Title I school. The event was planned to increase parental involvement and combat some of the issues that affect student performance. Over twenty community agencies participated, providing resources to families on employment, children’s health and education, self-sufficiency, and family safety. Vocational schools offered information on vocational training and GED classes; Habitat for Humanity provided resources on affordable housing; health care agencies discussed affordable health care and where to go for assistance with drug and/or alcohol problems; and Boys and Girls Club provided childcare and homework assistance.

LEON COUNTY

“Community Walk and Family Health Day”

Bond Elementary School

2204 Saxon Street

Tallahassee, Florida 32310

Contact: Danika Rivers

Phone: 850-488-7676

Mission: To engage families and the community with Bond Elementary School and provide health and wellness awareness.

The Bond Elementary School community hosted “Community Walk and Family Health Day,” an event to raise awareness of health and wellness and promote healthy lifestyles. The event promoted both mental and physical health, involving parents and strengthening relationships between families and agencies that support family health. By inviting organizations and health experts, such as Move Tallahassee, Cold and Flu Prevention with Dr. Hannibal, the African Caribbean Dance Theater which taught Afrobics (African dance and aerobics), the Tallahassee Food Network and the Birthing Project, families learned about resources that they may not have known about previously. A 1.5-mile walk around Bond Elementary kicked off the event.

Region I: Secondary School

LEON COUNTY - WINNER

“Fort Braden Reads”

Fort Braden K-8 School

15100 Blountstown Highway

Tallahassee, Florida 32310

Contact: Bambi Jackson and Jes Andrews

Phone: 850-488-9374

Mission: To help students develop a joy of reading.

The “Fort Braden Reads” event brought families into the school for a fun night of reading together. Parents, teachers and even students read to one another throughout the night, making many realize how enjoyable reading together is and how easily it can be done at home. Books were provided in Spanish to help the growing population of Hispanic families participate and feel welcome in the school community. As a K-8 school, books were selected appropriate to all grade levels. When the little ones were reading “Empty Pot,” they planted seeds; when they read “The Train that Could,” they made sleds. Following the reading, families attended a PTO meeting, enjoyed pizza together, then participated in a student book raffle.

SANTA ROSA COUNTY

“Community Pep Rally”

Gulf Breeze High School

675 Gulf Breeze Parkway
Gulf Breeze, Florida 32561

Contact: Sarah Smith

Phone: 850-916-4100

Mission: To engage the community in school spirit.

The Community Pep Rally launched by the student government at Gulf Breeze High School brought over 1,500 people to the school for the rally and over 6,000 people to the football game the following day. The pep rally was extensively advertised through radio, television, social media and partners such as Chick-Fil-A, Hancock Bank and others. In addition to recognizing the football team, the school celebrated the winning seasons of other school teams: the volleyball team, cross country, golf and swimming team, and acknowledged the successes of the school band, drama department, debate club and others. The effort sparked increased community support for the schools' clubs and teams.

Region II: Elementary School

ST. JOHNS COUNTY - WINNER

“Change for a Change”

Ocean Palms Elementary School (OPES)

355 Landrum Lane

Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida 32082

Contact: Jessica Richardson

Phone: 904-547-3760

Mission: To inspire a lifelong passion for leadership and service.

The Ocean Palms Elementary School project, Change for a Change, created a youth leadership model that is now being utilized by other groups. The innovative project started with former students that were service-minded and experienced in volunteering and leading OPES service projects. These students collaborated with current OPES students and attended a PTO event to collect pocket change for raising awareness for a music therapy grant benefitting their special needs students. The project then expanded to multiple sports clubs in the community and ultimately raised \$16,388. Through this work, OPES raised community awareness of music therapy and its benefit to special needs students. Similarly, the youth involved gained leadership, volunteer and service experiences. They worked directly with business partners and community leaders, ultimately strengthening relationships between students, staff, families and community partners.

COLUMBIA COUNTY

“Literacy Family Night Treasure Hunt”

Fort White Elementary School

18119 Southwest State Road 47

Fort White, Florida 32038

Contact: Carol Barnett

Phone: 386-755-8041

Mission: To provide a family-oriented activity that enhanced positive relationships between school and family and promoted literacy.

Fort White Elementary School hosted the Literacy Family Night Treasure Hunt during Literacy Week. The school’s reading theme for the year was “Treasure a good book; be a Bookaneer,” which gave the school the idea of hosting a treasure hunt. The school created treasure maps, treasure chests and pirate-themed activities. When children located the treasures, they discovered, of course, books for their enjoyment. At each clue area, parents were given an activity to do as well. Over 300 parents, students and teachers engaged in a very successful, fun and literacy-focused evening together.

NASSAU COUNTY

“Fall Reading Fair”
Callahan Intermediate School
34586 Ball Park Road
Callahan, Florida 32011
Contact: Jill Williams
Phone: 904-879-1114

Mission: To promote literacy to students and families and demonstrate that literacy is not just a graded subject but a door to endless possibilities.

The Fall Reading Fair, hosted by Callahan Intermediate School, offered fun with families reading in a carnival setting. Each class designed and constructed an activity station, such as Vocabulary Musical Chairs, Prefix and Suffix Toss, and Lollipop Lane Reading Strategies. On the night of the event, families and students visited these stations, engaging in the activities they offered. The digital literacy activity, which provided instruction and resources on how to incorporate the digital world into reading, was a hot commodity—students were taught how to create their very own online book. Parents left with greater insight into their child’s day-to-day life at school, with a better understanding of the Florida Standards, and with new strategies on fostering reading and writing at home.

Region II: Secondary School

DUVAL COUNTY - WINNER

“For the Love of Reading”

Mandarin High School

4831 Greenland Road

Jacksonville, Florida 32258

Contact: Diane Elenz

Phone: 904-260-3911

Mission: To show students that the community wants them to continue their love for reading. We want every student to have a book.

The Mandarin High School program, “For the Love of Reading,” was started in 2016 to show high school students that they are loved and cared about and to encourage them to read. Parents, teachers, businesses and libraries donated books for the project—in the first year, 1,100 books were collected and distributed. The 2016 event took place on Valentine’s Day in the school courtyard where students came during lunchtime to select free books for themselves. School parents, community volunteers and student leaders each played a role in making the event a success. The PTSA, School Advisory Council and school administration together feel that getting students to read for fun (the goal of this initiative) will boost student reading skills.

COLUMBIA COUNTY

“Project UNISON” (Uplifting Non-Cognitive Skills and Innovation through Student Opportunity Networks) Columbia High School

469 Southeast Fighting Tiger Drive
Lake City, Florida 32025
Contact: Tiara Arline
Phone: 386-755-8080

Mission: To break the cycle of poverty for low-income, academically qualified students by providing opportunities for a post-secondary education. We offer college scholarship assistance to students, provide caring volunteer mentors and instill hope for a better life.

Columbia High School is one of the three schools chosen in Florida to pilot a Four-year grant called Project UNISON (Uplifting Non-Cognitive Skills and Innovation through Student Opportunity Networks) developed by Take Stock in Children. The mission is to promote personal growth, self-responsibility and academic success for deserving, low-income students by providing a unique set of resources, including mentors, scholarships, long-term support, student advocacy and guaranteed educational opportunity. Through Project UNISON, Columbia High has expanded the traditional 1:1 ratio mentoring program to a schoolwide effort.

LEVY COUNTY

“Family Focus Groups to Problem Solve and Ensure Equitable Discipline”

Chiefland Middle High School

811 Northwest 4th Drive

Chiefland, Florida 32626

Contact: Dr. Rosalind Hall & Elizabeth (Liz) Kennelly-Smith

Phone: 352-493-6025

Mission: To learn about minority families’ perspectives on school and district regarding equitable discipline policies and practices.

Chiefland Middle High School is working to address the issue of racial/ethnic disparities in discipline by listening to the families most affected by the disparity. The “Family Focus Group to Problem Solve and Ensure Equitable Discipline” project is intended to ensure that more equitable disciplinary measures are issued to Black/African American students who receive more office referrals and out-of-school suspensions in Florida than students of other races. Project staff meet with families to ask a series of questions in an effort to identify more effective approaches to discipline. The school intends to continue these conversations for the purpose of resolving conflicts, establishing positive relationships, and implementing more effective behavioral policies and practices. In turn, the project is nurturing relationships between the school and the families who are often excluded from conversations about school-based improvement efforts.

ST. JOHNS COUNTY

“Dining with Dignity – Feeding St. Augustine Homeless St. Johns Technical High School

2980 Collins Avenue
St. Augustine, Florida 32084
Contact: Linda Krepp
Phone: 904-547-8500

Mission: To have the Academy of Culinary Arts plan, prepare and serve dinners to over 100 individuals, three times a year.

The Academy of Culinary Arts at St. Johns Technical High School, in collaboration with St. Johns County Homeless Coalition’s “Dining with Dignity” program, planned, prepared and served dinner to St. Augustine’s homeless population. In August, November and January of the 2016-17 school year, students not only prepared the meals but delivered the food and helped with setup, serving and cleanup. The chef and the students took great care in planning the menu, ensuring that the food was fresh and nutritious. Students learned to work with budgets, with large-scale food production and acquired ‘front of the house’ serving skills. “Dining with Dignity” is a wonderful example of involving the community with students learning to serve.

Region III: Elementary School

ORANGE COUNTY - WINNER

“PTO Start Up”

Bay Lakes Elementary School

12005 Silverlake Park Drive

Windermere, Florida 34786

Contact: Tammy Forrester

Phone: 407-217-7960

Mission: To develop closer contact between school and home and to empower families through volunteerism and financial support.

The “PTO Start Up” initiative ensured that the new school in town, Bay Lakes Elementary School, would live up to its slogan: “Pride of the Community.” In an effort to bring together the school family, administrators hosted several events, such as an ice cream social where families met the new administration, teachers and staff in a friendly setting. PTO Start Up established the school’s first PTO which hosted the “Welcome Back to School Food Truck,” an event that offered families an opportunity to enjoy some unique eats together and network with other families. Local agencies and businesses showcased their products and services, enabling parents to access organizations they may have never knew existed. PTO Start Up activities were a creative means of eliciting parental involvement; the new school now has a huge volunteer base.

MARTIN COUNTY

“iStand: Against Bullying”
Citrus Grove Elementary School
2527 Southwest Citrus Boulevard
Palm City, Florida 34990
Contact: Sharon Moody
Phone: 772-223-2513

Mission: To promote bullying awareness, so that students know others are watching and will take steps to interject instead of standing by letting it happen.

The iStand Club raises awareness about bullying and provides a platform for peer support so that students learn how to deal with situations of bullying. Club members model positive behavior, encouraging others to take a stand or get help if they see someone being bullied. iStand sponsors Unity Week, a national bullying awareness week in which students engage poster contests, theme days and signing anti-bullying banners. Videos highlighting the clubs message “Be an iStander, not a bystander” are made all year long and shown at school events. With the help of two local business partners, iStand acquired two playground benches where students on the playground can go if feeling excluded. When a child sits on the “Buddy Bench,” another student can invite them to play.

OSCEOLA COUNTY

“Morning Mile Running Club”

Narcoossee Elementary School

2690 North Narcoossee Road

Saint Cloud, Florida 34771

Contact: Tanya Sienko

Phone: 407-892-6858

Mission: Promoting a healthy body leading to a healthy mind.

There is a saying that a healthy body leads to a healthy mind. That is the mission of the Morning Mile Running Club which encourages aerobic activity before the school day begins. The program not only inspires students to be active and exercise but teaches them discipline and responsibility (they are expected to arrive on time, participate in activities and track their progress). Morning Mile serves more than 90 students each day, using volunteers from the U.S. army, parents and staff who coordinate activities and participate with students to keep them actively engaged. The increased involvement with individuals from the community, such as the 143rd Sustainment Command, is especially helpful to students whose only positive interactions with adults may be at school.

ST. LUCIE COUNTY

“Tutoring and Mentoring at Rivers Edge Elementary School”

Rivers Edge Elementary School

5600 Northeast St. James Drive

Port St. Lucie, Florida 34983

Contact: Zahadia Ceballos

Phone: 772-785-5600

Mission: Advance the abilities of the students.

Rivers Edge Elementary School partnered with Westside Baptist Church to create a tutoring/mentoring program that now serves 87 students. Volunteers were recruited from the coast guard, fire department and general populace. Students are selected to participate in the program according to need, current reading levels, teacher recommendation and parent request. These mentoring sessions are reported to provide students with increased confidence and guidance as they develop through the school years. To date, testing data reflect progress in reading achievement for the individuals receiving the tutoring.

VOLUSIA COUNTY

“Adopt a Soldier Community Project”

Edgewater Public School

801 South Old County Road

Edgewater, Florida 32132

Contact: Erica Deaton

Phone: 386-424-2573

Mission: To support an Army unit of forgotten soldiers in Afghanistan not receiving communication from the United States.

Edgewater Public School initiated an “Adopt a Soldier” community project for an army task force of approximately 50 U.S. soldiers serving in Afghanistan. These soldiers were not receiving any communication, care packages or letters from friends or family in the United States. In response, students, families, faculty, staff, area schools and community partners came together to send care packages and letters of appreciation to these forgotten men and women for the duration of their tour. Edgewater brought other nearby schools into the initiative. Local businesses, such as Running Elements, set up supply boxes for drop locations and advertised the needed care package items on their Facebook business page. From the Adopt a Soldier project, students had an opportunity to strengthen core values such as gratitude and support, character traits taught through the school’s Character Program.

LAKE COUNTY

“Sed de Saber”

Beverly Shores Elementary School

1108 West Griffin Road
Leesburg, Florida 34748
Contact: Serita Morgan
Phone: 352-787-4175

Mission: To involve our Spanish speaking parents into learning how to speak conversational English so that they can communicate with teachers.

“Sed de Saber” (Thirst for Knowledge) is a program at Beverly Shores Elementary School, a Title I school in which 13 percent of students come from Spanish-speaking homes. The program offers parents that are enrolled in the program workbooks, electronic resources and instructors/facilitators as well as childcare and refreshments. A ten-week class, scheduled at a time convenient for working parents, Sed de Saber gives English Language Learners parents a chance to enhance their language skills so they can effectively help their children with assignments. Parents work at their own pace, receiving certificates of completion when finished.

Region III: Secondary School

ORANGE COUNTY - WINNER

“Freedom Middle School Family Involvement and Community Events”

Freedom Middle School

2850 West Taft Vineland Road

Orlando, Florida 32837

Contact: Ivonne Ruiz

Phone: 407-317-3323

Mission: To bridge the home-to-school gap by providing educationally relevant opportunities within which families, students, school staff and business partners can interact.

Freedom Middle School Family Involvement and Community Events program is able to support students in making consistent learning gains by bringing together students, families, staff and business partners with a common mission in mind: to develop career- and college-ready students. Each year, this Title I school plans monthly Title I Nights. Each “Night” is hosted by a different content area team of teachers that present on their subject matter, highlighting the importance of academic rigor. “A Night at the Museum—walk through history and government;” “Health and Fitness Night—exercise physiology and the biology;” and “Holiday Literacy and Craft Night—creating stories and decorations,” are just a few of the titles of these presentations. During these talks, students engage in fun, interactive activities.

OSCEOLA COUNTY

“P.E.A.R.L.S.” (Pursuing Empowerment and Reclaiming Love for Self)

Westside K-8 School

2551 Westside Boulevard

Kissimmee, Florida 34747

Contact: Shakelia Henderson

Phone: 407-390-1748

Mission: To deliver a clearly defined program to inspire all girls to capitalize on their respective strengths—a key factor to improving their lives

P.E.A.R.L.S (Pursuing Empowerment and Reclaiming Love for Self) is a mentoring program that assists middle school teen girls in building self-confidence and social skills so that they mature into determined, career-focused young women. Mentors work with behavior, encouraging the girls to attend school regularly and make good grades. Mentees are matched with mentors who engage them in activities that help build positive relationships, promote making good choices and build self-esteem. Each month, community partners are invited to lead learning workshops or community service events. The sheriff's department, for example, gave a presentation on social media awareness; the local bank discussed the importance of financial literacy; and a local group called CAIRE worked with the girls on interpersonal skills and good decision-making.

ST. LUCIE COUNTY

“Northport Speaker’s Bureau Partnership”

Northport K-8 School

250 Northwest Floresta Drive
Port St. Lucie, Florida 32025
Contact: Lynne Gruszka
Phone: 772-429-5502

Mission: To support and impact student achievement.

Northport K-8 School partnered with six other district schools and a school board member to bring a Speaker’s Bureau to the school community. Realizing that they cannot educate their students alone, Northport School used the Speaker’s Bureau to bring in guest speakers who tell interesting stories about their lives, stories that help motivate and inspire students. One speaker, who was the brother of a flight attendant on Flight 93 which crashed on 9-11, spoke to the students about country, compassion and empathy. Another speaker, the St. Lucie County superintendent, offered advice about setting goals, staying focused and making good choices. Students evaluate the presentations and discuss lessons learned.

VOLUSIA COUNTY

“The Familia that Reads: A Crosscultural Reading Experience”

Deltona High School

100 Wolf Pack Run

Deltona, Florida 32725

Contact: Maria G. O’Brien

Phone: 386-255-6475 Ext: 38381

Mission: To engage our community in literacy and cultural exchange.

The goal of “The Familia that Reads: A Cultural Reading Experience,” is to provide the school community with an opportunity to experience reading and cultural exchange.

Students, staff, faculty and families from Deltona High School, where a large percentage of families are of Hispanic descent, enjoyed a brief presentation on the importance of reading with the family. Family reading can promote literacy and embrace cultural heritage. The author of “Paws to Read” read her book in English followed by a student who read the same book in Spanish. Families were asked to participate in a reflective activity drawing on the story’s theme. This effort resulted in an additional 25 bilingual titles added to the school book collection making it easier for students to check out books that families can also read.

Region IV: Elementary School

MANATEE COUNTY - WINNER

“The Walking School Bus”

Daughtrey Elementary School

515 63rd Avenue East

Bradenton, Florida 34203

Contact: Jan Alvarez

Phone: 941-751-7023

Mission: To improve student achievement by increasing student safety at Daughtrey Elementary.

The Walking School Bus program at Daughtrey Elementary School organizes students and parents into groups that walk together to school. Not only does this initiative foster safety, it promotes health, reduces traffic around the school, improves attendance, increases parental involvement and may positively impact student achievement. Over 100 people, including members of the local fire department and community leaders, attended the initial Walking School Bus event. The school hopes that the Walking School Bus will impact parents as well; that they will choose to walk to school with their child instead of driving the car.

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

“Seniors in Service Foster Grandparents Program”

Oak Grove Elementary School

6215 North Armenia Avenue

Tampa, Florida 33604

Contact: Debra L. Blossom

Phone: 813-872-5254

Mission: To contact volunteers, age 55 and over, to meet the literacy and social emotional needs and challenges of struggling children in the community.

The volunteers with the “Seniors in Service Foster Grandparent” program serve as tutors as well as mentors, offering reading support to struggling students and also taking time to listen, support and share their knowledge with these children. They assist in classrooms and during lunchtime, and provide supplemental academic instruction which many of these students may not get at home. In the classroom, they work closely with the teacher to appropriately address grade-level content pacing and skill development. Currently, 66 seniors spend time in 28 schools, mentoring and tutoring children for an average of over two hours a day, for a total of 15 hours per week.

COLLIER COUNTY

“Make Your M.A.R.K. at Estates Elementary: Parent Involvement Tracking”

Estates Elementary School

5945 Everglades Boulevard

Naples, Florida 34120

Contact: Jill Rexford

Phone: 239-377-0151

Mission: To support the children by families and staff working together as a team.

The initiative “Make Your M.A.R.K.” (M.A.R.K. stands for Meaningful, Accomplished, Reflective and Knowledgeable) at Estates Elementary School promotes the engagement of parents in their child’s education. The school offers a tangible and visual way to encourage parent involvement—by giving parents different colored marks for their participation in varying school initiatives and for classrooms to then compete for the most marks. This system also enables the school to identify areas of parental involvement that may need bolstering (a shortage of marks of a certain color means parents are not engaging in the activity associated with that color). The school has found that involving students has created increased ownership and accountability for parents.

PASCO COUNTY

“Locke’s Closet and Resource Center”

Mitty P. Locke Elementary School

4339 Evans Avenue

New Port Richey, Florida 34668

Contact: Andrea Morrow

Phone: 727-774-3100

Mission: To provide families with new clothing and community resources for assistance.

When children are striving to keep up with social norms, attending school in ragged clothes is often embarrassing and can hinder learning. Locke Elementary School partnered with the school’s PTA and a non-profit called New Threads of Hope to create Locke’s Clothing Closet where low-income families were able get new clothes for free. Inadequate clothing can contribute to, among other things, children skipping school and experiencing behavioral and academic problems. On the day of the event, volunteers and local agencies laid out clothing according to gender and size and handed the clothes out as family members arrived. A Resource Guide was available with information on counseling services, substance abuse services, housing, food and medical support services, childcare, county offices, and disability services. Over 80 families attended.

PINELLAS COUNTY

“S.E.M. (School Enrichment Model)”

Cypress Woods Elementary School

4900 Cypress Woods Boulevard

Palm Harbor, Florida 34685

Contact: Kim Shipley

Phone: 727-588-5050

Mission: To develop the talents and potential of all students by offering them an opportunity to engage in their personal interests.

The School Enrichment Model offers enrichment clusters in which groups of students who share a common interest come together during specially designated blocks of time to produce a product, performance or targeted service. Student-centered and student-led, the program gives students an opportunity to apply higher order thinking skills, be creative and participate in real world, hands-on learning. Cluster titles include “Animals in their Homes,” “Life in the Ocean,” “Painting” and “Police Work.” Volunteers and others in the community assist and educate students on their themes. The effort culminates in an evening event called “Focus on Achievement” where families can experience the final products crafted by their child.

Region IV: Secondary School

PINELLAS COUNTY - WINNER

“Countryside High School Career Center and its College and Career Fair”

Countryside High School

3000 State Road 580

Clearwater, Florida 33761

Contact: Jane J. Hussar

Phone: 727-726-7956

Mission: To help our students see the value in planning for careers.

Countryside High School offers two initiatives in which students and families thrive: the Career Center which has been operational since 1999 and the College and Career Fair which started in 2009. The school discovered that when families and students have a vested interest in a major endeavor, student success climbs and parental involvement soars. The Career Center introduces students and families to opportunities and resources for college and career preparation, such as afterschool and weekend employment, online career assessments, and tips for résumé writing and interviews. What began as an onsite career guidance center is now a model for other schools. The College and Career Fair is an annual event that in 2016 featured over 140 colleges, universities, technical schools, branches of military and business professionals. Over 30 students served as ambassadors and 5,000 people attended the event. Significant planning, bookkeeping, cooperation and outreach go into making both these endeavors successful.

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

“Olympic Parent: Going for the Gold, 90 by 20”

Sanchez Full Service Center

2100 East 26th Avenue

Tampa, Florida 33605

Contact: Conchita Canty-Jones

Phone: 813-872-5254

Mission: To participate in the 2017 Publix Gasparilla Distance Classic 5K Run/Walk to raise awareness to the strategic priority of increasing the graduation rate to 90 percent by the year 2020.

Hillsborough County Public Schools and the Full Service Centers Department pulled together a team of individuals and family members to participate in the 2017 Publix Gasparilla Distance Classic 5K Run/Walk. Students and families from impoverished diverse communities joined up to run/walk the race. Through this effort, participants were able to engage in an enriching community event that formerly may have been beyond their reach; they also became members of a team. More importantly, the district set up workshops for race participants, sharing information with them about grade-level expectations, graduation requirements and physical fitness. District partners provided time, talent and funds for the event.

HERNANDO COUNTY

“School Advisory Council”

West Hernando Middle School

14325 Ken Austin Parkway

Brooksville, Florida 34613

Contact: Lori Lessley

Phone: 352-797-7054

Mission: To enhance community among stakeholders in the school community, a provision of the Annual School Improvement Plan

As an Exceptional Student Education cluster site for students in grades 6-8, West Hernando Middle School serves children with diverse disabilities alongside their nondisabled peers. A husband and wife volunteer team are spearheading activities in the school to engage parents, community partners and businesses. The team secured school participation in the Brooksville Holiday parade which fostered a sense of community within the school family. Strong advocates for special needs students, the couple serve on school committees; secure motivational speakers for presentations; coordinate with other agencies for funding; support Disabilities Awareness Walk & Roll; and welcome all families into the school community.

PASCO COUNTY

“Gulf Middle School ESOL Parent Involvement Program”

Gulf Middle School

6419 Louisiana Avenue

New Port Richey, Florida 34653

Contact: Liz Kuhns

Phone: 813-794-2207

Mission: To help English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students become successful in school and to support their parents and caregivers in becoming active participants in their child’s education.

The Gulf Middle School ESOL Parent Involvement program is a three-tiered effort. In addition to providing the typical support to ESOL students by employing a full-time ESOL instructional assistant, the program provides three additional support systems: quarterly meetings for ESOL families where critical information is offered, such as how to change the setting on the school website so that it will read in another language and how to find their child’s grades (this meeting is conducted in Spanish but translations to other languages are sometimes available); afterschool English class for ESOL students wherein students can practice English in a non-threatening environment; and free weekly English language tutoring sessions in the evenings for parents.

Region V: Elementary School

PALM BEACH COUNTY - WINNER

“Latino Community Cares Event”

South Olive Elementary School

7101 South Olive Avenue

West Palm Beach, Florida 33405

Contact: Melinda Springman

Phone: 561-202-0200

Mission: To nurture community relationships among the school, local organizations and the school’s Latino families.

The Latino Community Cares Event originated to ensure that all parents feel included in the school and that language not be a barrier to parent involvement. Initially, the school designed a program that provided academic resources and strategies for parents to use at home. Now, in its second year of implementation, the school hosted an event specifically for Latino families. They set up stations with bilingual teachers, bilingual counselors and bilingual legal advisors who offered Hispanic parents concrete help how to help your child with homework when it's in English; apps for translating from English to Spanish; how to prepare for middle school; legal advice for those reluctant to ask questions elsewhere; and resources for ESOL students. Food was provided and students performed musical numbers in Spanish.

Region V: Secondary School

PALM BEACH COUNTY - WINNER

“Boys and Blue at Congress Middle School”

Congress Middle School

101 South Congress Avenue

Boynton Beach, Florida 33426

Contact: Shannon Grice

Phone: 561-574-5600

Mission: To build relationships between middle school boys and local police officers.

The Boys and Blue program at Congress Middle School is a police mentoring program that pairs officers from Boynton Beach Police Department with male adolescent students (grades 6-8). The program was designed to build relationships between a specific male student and a community police officer whom the student sees and interacts with outside of school, such as an officer that may have already visited the student’s home for truancy issues. The officer mentor meets with the student mentee for 45 minutes each week, focusing on social studies concepts and strengthening their relationship. The goals of this program are also to educate police officers in adolescent child development, enabling them to better provide age-appropriate interventions. Most importantly however, the school hopes to provide children with someone in law enforcement that they can trust – someone who will guide them in becoming successful students and honorable, responsible adults.

