



To: Members, Board of Directors *E.W.*
From: Eric Williams, Ed.D., CEO & President
Date: 8/6/2025
Subject: Confidential Board Update

Notes

1. It is with a heavy heart that I share that Amy Snyder passed away at 8:29 a.m. on August 2 after a courageous and lengthy battle against ovarian cancer. Amy served as Director of Educator Programs at Champions For Learning from June 2017 to November 2023. Her professional life was devoted to education, from the classroom to museum education, to her impactful work with us, and most recently with the Georgia Historical Society. Amy left a lasting mark through her passion, kindness, and unwavering commitment to educators and students. We will share any information we receive regarding a memorial service or services.
2. On a positive note, we're excited to share that, later this month, we'll announce a return to a community-based nomination process for Teachers of Distinction, an important step in the lead-up to selecting this year's Golden Apple recipients. Marilyn Daniels (Director of Educator Programs), Sydney Fahrenbruch (Director, Digital Fundraising and Operations), and I are working closely with Collier County Public Schools to plan the rollout. We'll be distributing tens of thousands of Thank-A-Teacher nomination cards across the community, supported by widespread communication through social media and traditional media. CCPS is even translating the cards into Spanish and Creole to ensure broad accessibility. While the nomination process shifted to a principal-driven approach a few years ago due to a hurricane, we continue to hear from former Teachers of Distinction who've saved their original nomination cards. Many are now well-worn, but the heartfelt words from students and community members still mean the world to them. This return to community nominations is about honoring that spirit of gratitude and letting our educators know, loudly and clearly, how much they matter. Champions For Learning will make a difference for educators by facilitating this community-wide effort to thank teacher, including those who may never advance in the process but still feel deeply seen and appreciated. You can be proud Board members!
3. Last week, Danielle Viens-Payne (Director, Development & Major Gifts), Nicole (Volunteer Coordinator), and I interviewed five candidates for the Director of Community Engagement position. Stephanie Viviano and I conducted second

interviews with two finalists earlier this week. Both individuals bring extensive experience leading volunteer and community engagement strategies for nonprofit organizations in SW Florida. We are checking references now. These conversations, and my interactions with several volunteers this week, including Dottie Whipple have me reflecting on the exciting potential we have to elevate the experience of our volunteers. Nicole will report to the new Director, and together, they will lead our efforts to strengthen how we recruit, support, and recognize these incredible individuals. Volunteers are central to our mission, and while we've had some gaps in fully supporting them, we're taking intentional steps forward to build a culture of connection, responsiveness, and appreciation.

4. Mark your calendars! Wyatt Blatt (Director of Special Events) is leading our efforts to prepare for two events you won't want to miss! On October 20, from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Naples Grande, come rub elbows with outstanding educators at the Teachers of Distinction Kickoff Reception. Then, on Thursday, November 20 at 11 a.m., join us at the Ritz-Carlton Beach Resort for the Luminary Luncheon, where we'll celebrate donors who have contributed \$5,000 or more cumulatively in the last two years. Your presence as Board members at these events sends a powerful message of appreciation and commitment, both to our educators and to the generous donors who make our work possible. Your participation matters – thank you in advance to those who can attend!

Emails and Other Documents

1. *Board Update – Development*, email from Rebekah Telfer, August 14, 2025; pps. 4-6. I've asked Rebekah, whose responsibilities as Director of Annual Giving include grant writing, to provide content for Board Updates on behalf of the development team until we hire a new Chief Development Officer.
2. *Board Updates*, email from Kristin Carolan, August 14, 2025. p.7.
3. *Board Update – Educator Programs*, email from Marilyn Daniels, August 14, 2025, p.8.

Communication

1. [\\$7,228.40 Grant from Florida Power & Light Company Supports STEM Teacher Innovation in Collier County](#) Posted July 22nd on Champions For Learning's website
2. Naples Daily News Placements (this ad space is provided in-kind by Naples Daily News)
 - a. Wednesday July 18th: Classroom Grants Full Page Ad

b. Wednesday July 23rd and Wednesday July 30th: Classroom Grants Half
Page Ad

Key Dates

5. Finance Committee Meeting – September 11, 2025, 2 p.m.
6. Executive Committee Meeting – September 16, 2025, 3:30 p.m.
7. Board of Directors Meeting – September 23, 2025, 3:30 p.m.
8. Teachers of Distinction Kickoff Reception – October 20, 2025, 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.;
The Naples Grande
9. Finance Committee Meeting – November 5, 2025, 2 p.m.
10. Executive Committee Meeting – November 11, 2025; 3:30 p.m.
11. Board of Directors Meeting – November 18, 2025, 3:30 p.m.
12. Luminary Circle Luncheon – Thursday, November 20th, 2025, 11 am; Ritz-Carlton
Beach Resort
13. Night for Champions Gala – February 21, 2026, 6 p.m. to 11 p.m.; The Ritz-Carlton
Beach Resort

Eric Williams

From: Rebekah Telfer
Sent: Monday, August 4, 2025 12:54 PM
To: Eric Williams
Subject: Board Update - Development (Department Update)

Dear Champions For Learning Board of Directors,

The Development Team is pleased to share the following update regarding fundraising efforts for Fiscal Year 2026. This update is divided into various fundraising channels, with the name of the team member that oversees that specific channel's implementation in parenthesis. However, we would like it to be noted that we are a highly collaborative team that helps each other reach our goals.

Events (Wyatt Blatt, Director of Special Events)

- Golden Apple Teacher of Distinction Kickoff
 - Working with Marilyn Daniels and Sydney Fahrenbruch on details and event logistics
- Luminary Circle Luncheon
 - Completed walkthrough of event space with Eric Williams in mid-July
 - Finalizing event invitation lists
- Night for Champions Gala
 - FY26 Gala Committee will include Anne Girod- Event Chair, Jerry Brown, Ann Cohn, Helena Dabrowski, Julie Diermeier, Debra Ezzell, Rafael Feliciano, Brenda O'Connor, Toni Mueller, and Kat Zagal.
 - Finalizing sponsorship slick kit for the event to be mailed by end of August

Digital Fundraising and Marketing/Communication (Sydney Fahrenbruch, Director of Digital Fundraising & Operations)

- Wyatt Blatt and Sydney Fahrenbruch met with Meegan Wyatt and Naples Illustrated to discuss our event sponsorship for this year. We submitted 2 listings for our signature events, Night For Champions and The Golden Apple Celebration of Teachers, to be published in NI's "Naples Charity Register," an annual publication of Naples' charitable organizations and their major fundraising activities, published in November 2025. Due to our partnership, we receive this space as an in-kind donation rather than paying the \$500 value.
- We secured a 1-page profile in Gulfshore Business' annual Giving Guide, which is a yearly publication that showcases Collier County nonprofit organizations to differentiate their mission and work so that businesses better understand how they can contribute.
- Sydney Fahrenbruch is working closely with Marilyn Daniels (Director of Educator Programs) on developing a communication plan around Golden Apple returning to community nominations this year. This includes:
 - Designing and printing nomination cards
 - Creating a digital nomination form embedded in the Champions For Learning website
 - Distributing a Press Release announcement to media partners
 - Distributing an eblast announcement to Champions For Learning's newsletter list
 - Posting the announcement to Champions For Learning's website and social media pages
 - Working with the CCPS communication team to facilitate school-wide communication to CCPS parents and students
 - Creating a communication toolkit for CCPS principals to utilize to facilitate communication within their school

Development Operations (Mary Polli)

- Worked with Danielle Viens-Payne in researching and selected a wealth screening/prospect software that will help the team identify new major donors and identify current donors who could potentially become major donors
- Working with Stephanie Viviano on pulling lists in Raiser's Edge for the auditors
- Pulling donor lists in Raiser's Edge for Luminary Circle invitations, the Night for Champions Sponsorship Slick, and others as needed

Annual Giving and Grants (Rebekah Telfer)

- Grants Awarded for FY26
 - Consortium of Florida Education Foundation | Florida Power and Light: Awarded \$7,228.40 to support peer-to-peer learning among CCPS teachers
 - Meeting with CCPS curriculum coordinators and Marilyn to discuss grant implementation during the school year on 8/11
- Grants Submitted for FY26
 - Collier Community Foundation
 - Requested \$100,000 to support Classroom Grants
 - Requested \$20,000 for Take Stock in Children (was not invited to move forward)
 - Fifth Third Bank: Requested \$5,000 to support Student Programs
 - Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation: Requested \$250,000 for College and Career Preparation Program
 - Suncoast Credit Union: Requested \$220,000 to support Night for Champions, Golden Apple, Take Stock in Children, Classroom Grants
 - The League Club Letter of Intent: Requested \$15,000 to support College and Career Preparation Program
- Grant Applications in Progress for FY26/FY27
 - Arthrex, Inc.
 - BMO
 - Consortium Matching Grant
 - CLA Foundation
 - NCEF (for FY27)
 - Had lunch with Dani Henderson, Grants Manager at NCEF on 7/28 to discuss the possibility of including a capacity building component in our grant
- Impact Report 2025
 - Writing/pulling content for the annual impact report with Sydney Fahrenbruch, which is divided into high level spreads featuring our programs, community engagement, and why our work is important to encourage our donors to give
 - Updated CFL profiles on GuideStar and Charity Navigator to ensure CFL receives highest ratings

Major Gifts (Danielle Viens-Payne)

- Since the start of FY2026, Danielle has been focused on building meaningful relationships with individual donors, family foundations, corporations, and alumni to advance our mission.
 - Stewarding long-time supporters, re-engaging lapsed donors, and cultivating new prospects through referrals, events, and one-on-one meetings.
 - Strengthening relationships with corporate leaders aligned with mission goals, as well as building a more connected alumni network thus expanding our base of future donors and community ambassadors.
 - Conducting donor meetings with those still in Naples and actively securing in-person visits for fall.

- Developing personalized major gift stewardship plans and projecting year-end giving potential.
 - A new addition this year includes mid-point check-ins six months post-gift, offering donors tailored updates on student and educator success.
- While seasonal availability and shifting priorities pose challenges, we're moving forward with clarity and commitment—focused on lasting relationships that fuel long-term impact.

Rebekah Telfer

Director of Annual Giving

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CHAMPIONS FOR
LEARNING

To serve as a catalyst for educational success by investing in Collier's students and educators.

Eric Williams

From: Kristin Carolan
Sent: Monday, August 4, 2025 1:16 PM
To: Eric Williams
Subject: Board Updates

Student Programs

In July we completed our last two campus visits to University of Florida (27 students attended) and University of South Florida (20 students attended). We held a day of service on July 30th at Meals of Hope, where 28 students packed 10,368 meals for the community. Summer mentor sessions were held 2 days a week via zoom. Our College Complete scholarship application closed end of July. We are currently reviewing 10 applications to see how many of our former students met eligibility. This scholarship is for our students that previously received a 2-year Florida prepaid scholarship so that they can get another 2 years. August 5-7th the student programs team will be attending the Take Stock in Children Summit in Orlando. The team will be provided with new training and admission updates from the Florida University System. Once again, we will be receiving our gold level and luminary award, which are the highest awards for the Take Stock in Children program. References are being checked for the College & Career position. Staff attended the counselor meetings at Collier County Public Schools for both middle school and high school to share about our programs. Our regular fall programming will begin August 12th. Champions For Learning 8th grade Take Stock in Children application will open on August 11th.

We will be kicking off the year with 76 seniors, 42 are Take Stock and 34 are College & Career, 56 juniors, 33 are Take Stock and 23 are College and Career, 28 sophomores all Take Stock, and 30 freshmen that are all Take Stock. Due to the low number of juniors, we will be opening an 11th grade College and Career application on August 11th. The 10th grade College and Career application will open in the spring as usual.

Volunteer Engagement

Nicole has completed training and is working on reaching out to mentors and volunteers. She is planning a gathering for the mentor liaisons to kick off the school year. She will also be writing monthly updates email to mentors this year. She has done a few Champions 101s for community members to increase recruitment. Nicole will be adding Coffees and Conversations back into the mentor program. This is an opportunity for mentors to come together here in our café to ask questions and build relationships. Nicole is currently working on recruiting volunteers for our Career Explorations. The first one will be on September 8th and the careers are Business/ Finance and Veterinary. September 4th will be the first mentor learning session to kick off the year via zoom. The topic will be Roles, Responsibilities, and Rules Refresher.

Interviews for the Community Engagement position have been narrowed down to two.

Kristin Carolan

Eric Williams

From: Marilyn Daniels
Sent: Monday, August 4, 2025 12:19 PM
To: Eric Williams
Subject: Board Update - Educator Programs

We are excited to share updates from Educator Programs, including the Classroom Grants and Golden Apple Teacher Recognition initiatives.

Classroom Grants Cycle Overview (2025–2026)

Classroom Grants Cycle opened for teacher submissions on July 10; we continue to review grants for the Find It Fund It Florida website. These requests are eligible for public funding through March 7, 2026. As of August 4th, there are just over 100 grant requests totaling over \$50,000 in funding.

As a reminder to our new guidelines, teachers may submit up to four grant requests for consideration by Champions For Learning's volunteer Selection Committee, with a maximum annual award of \$2,000 per teacher. Requests beyond this limit will be posted for community-based funding only. Individual grant requests may not exceed \$2,000, ensuring broader impact across classrooms. Enhancements for this year include tutorials, a Grant Writing Technical Assistance Paper, and six sample grant requests, all of which have been helpful to support educators in their grant writing process.

Golden Apple Teacher Recognition Program (2025-2026)

The Golden Apple Teacher Recognition Program is returning to its "core" with community nominations, in light of stakeholder feedback. The CFL team has created a timeline, communication plan, and draft *Thank A Teacher/Nomination* card to be shared with the community in the coming weeks. This school year, Golden Apple will continue the focus on highlighting educator's best practices, with a goal of determining one Teacher of Distinction from each school.

We continue to collaborate with our CFL staff and CCPS on next steps:

- Securing Surprise Delivery of Grants Funded through CFL
- Sharing with CCPS administrators - Improvements of Educator Programs (Grants, Golden Apple) at August Principal meeting
- Golden Apple Teacher Recognition Program - timeline, community nominations, and communication plan

We're pleased to see growing enthusiasm for this year's Classroom Grants Program. The continued support from our educators, volunteers, and community partners plays a vital role in its success.

Marilyn Daniels
Director of Educator Programs