



INDIAN RIVER COUNTY, FLORIDA
AGENDA ITEM
Department of Parks, Recreation & Conservation

CONSENT
BCC Meeting March 5, 2024

Date: February 26, 2024
To: The Honorable Board of County Commissioners
Through: John A. Titkanich, Jr., County Administrator
Michael C. Zito, Deputy County Administrator
From: Beth Powell, Director of Parks, Recreation and Conservation
Subject: Request to Apply to Florida Blue Foundation for Teen Wellness Program

BACKGROUND:

Indian River County Parks, Recreation & Conservation Department is excited to be positioned to apply for, receive, and carry out a 3-year Florida Blue Foundation grant for the purpose of targeting programs to our pre-teen through teenage residents. Florida Blue will award approximately \$1.7 million through the 2024 Mental Well-being Initiative. As of 2021, Indian River County's population data sources show that there are more than 26,000 children under the age of 18. With a growing population projected to add 20,000 residents over the next 6 years, it's more important than ever that we are developing rich and robust opportunities for children and young adults to succeed and prosper into their adult lives. We are committed to ensuring that opportunities are found throughout the County with support provided through Parks & Recreation programming as well as through programs supported by the County's Children's Services Program. These programs are changing the lives of families and children in our community, but we can do more!

DESCRIPTION & CONDITIONS:

Indian River County has successfully implemented a Senior Wellness program over the last three years which is underwritten by the Florida Blue Foundation. A second grant award was received this past year and continues to show exceptional success at meeting the needs of our Senior residents. This program is carried out by a recreation leader whose salary is funded entirely from the Florida Blue Foundation Grant. The two grants received to date total approximately \$400,000.

Recently, staff was made aware of another funding initiative through the Florida Blue Foundation for Mental Well-being for the purpose of addressing youth mental health challenges. The grant period is for three years and funds up to \$100,000 per year. Recreation Division staff are developing an application which would propose funding a full-time Recreation Coordinator for the purpose of developing pre-teen and teen recreational programs in collaboration with agencies within the County for the purpose of improving mental health. The grant application is due on March 5, 2024, and will be awarded on or before May 31, 2024.

This funding, if awarded, would provide a full-time Recreation Leader/Coordinator whose sole purpose would be to implement and run a pre-teen/teen wellness program called "RECREATE MIND/MATTER" through the Indian River County Recreation Division which would be a new County initiative targeted specifically toward the County's adolescent population. This position

will be responsible for creating content and programming throughout the County's north, central, and south recreation areas with regular programs and activities meant just for them. These programs will be developed to build resilience, reduce stress, and increase positive physical and mental well-being. We aim to do this with the assistance and guidance of our community partners, and especially from those who work with pre-teens/teens daily.

Topics for programming will include free and inclusive activities for teens and pre-teens that will

- build a sense of community and friendship,
- foster connection to community resources,
- improve physical ability and wellness,
- provide information on healthy nutritional choices,
- and encourage productive ways to reduce and manage stress.

The evaluation plan for the program funded by this grant will include measurable outcomes coupled with data provided from participants to ensure that the programs offered are providing a positive impact in their lives, as well as achieving the goals and objectives outlined in the grant proposal. While goals and objectives are still being developed, it is expected that at least 10% of the County's pre-teen to teen youth will participate at least once in a program each year the program is offered. A secondary goal is to have a return rate of at least 25% of the participants to the same or other programs offered throughout the grant period. We aspire that the programs offered will also connect our pre-teens/teens to other services and programs available throughout the County, expanding their ability to access resources and programs that they may be unaware of, thus enhancing their lives further.

We have already received several letters of support from the Indian River County School District, United Way of Indian River County, Airmasters R/C Club, Young Adults of Vero Beach, Rotary Club of Vero Beach, and more are coming in each day. As always, we remain committed to improving the lives of all Indian River County residents and know that community partnerships are key to success.

The funding requested in this grant cycle will be \$300,000 for a three-year period and requires no match of County funds. Some County funds may be used to cover minor operating costs that are not eligible under the grant.

FUNDING:

There is no funding requested at this time, as this item is just for approval to submit a grant proposal.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff respectfully recommend that the Board authorize staff to submit a grant proposal to the Florida Blue Foundation which, if awarded, will be brought back to the Board for approval.

ATTACHMENTS:

Florida Blue Foundation Notice of Funding Availability
IRC Grant Form

APPROVED AGENDA ITEM FOR MARCH 5, 2023

