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Amelia Island CVB Completes Distribution of Amelia Island Foundation Funds *Take Stock in Children, Nassau County Ocean Rescue Final Two Recipients*

AMELIA ISLAND, Fla. (Nov. 30, 2021) – With a \$1,000 contribution to Take Stock in Children, Nassau County, and the purchase of a new offshore Jet Ski communication system for Nassau County Ocean Rescue, funding unanimously approved earlier this year by the board of the Amelia Island Convention & Visitors Bureau (AICVB) has been fully distributed. The two organizations were the last to receive part of the \$7,563 raised during a pilot program of the Amelia Island Foundation. The 501(c)3 nonprofit Foundation was created to supplement the work of various community partners, private organizations, and other nonprofits working to strengthen key assets of the island, which, in turn, ensures a healthy and sustainable tourism industry. Temporarily serving as board of the Foundation, the AICVB board voted earlier this year to distribute the funds after the Foundation’s voluntary contribution program ended due to ongoing COVID-related staffing issues in the local hospitality industry.

“The Foundation’s goal was to enhance and protect the island’s natural resources, vital workforce, and cherished way of life by creating a new funding source to support local improvement projects that don’t qualify for bed tax dollars,” said Jack Healan, Chair of the Amelia Island CVB Board. “Take Stock in Children aligns with the shared mission of investing in our local workforce, and Ocean Rescue plays a critical role in keeping our visitors and residents safe, making them both ideal recipients of the Foundation’s funds.”

Serving Nassau County since 1996, Take Stock for Children works to break the cycle of poverty for local low-income, academically qualified students by providing opportunities for a post-secondary education through scholarships, mentoring programs and more.

“We’re truly grateful for the contribution from the Amelia Island Foundation, which shares our mission for the community,” said Robin Lentz, executive director for Take Stock in Children, Nassau County. “These funds will be invested in deserving Nassau County students to pursue their college dreams and hopefully one day become leaders in our community.”

Foundation funds were also used to purchase a \$3,000 communication system to support offshore rescue operations of Nassau County Ocean Rescue, a partnership between Nassau County and the City of Fernandina Beach. The new system will allow lifeguards on shore to better communicate and coordinate efforts with offshore rescue personnel, improving response time.

“When launching one of our Rescue Watercraft to assist swimmers, paddle boarders or boaters in distress, good radio communication is essential to providing an efficient and effective response,” said Haynes Cavender, Ocean Rescue supervisor. “With our new communications kits, operators will be able to hear information from land-based crews while on calls that previously had limited communication due to the difficult nature of operating in the marine environment. We’d like to thank the Foundation and AICVB for the generous donation of this lifesaving equipment.”

The money distributed is from voluntary contributions collected over a 34-day period at Sliders Seaside Grill, the local test site for the Foundation's voluntary contribution program. Sliders offered customers the chance to make a donation to the Foundation in the form of a 1% voluntary contribution on their bill. Out of more than 16,000 checks presented during the test period, fewer than 200 guests opted not to participate. On average, contributions were less than 50 cents. All donations were sales tax exempt for the business and tax exempt for the customer. The funds collected have now been distributed to several local organizations, as approved by the AICVB board.

The Foundation reported that the pilot program raised more than \$7,500 at one restaurant. A similar program has been in place on St. Simons Island to support the St. Simons Land Trust for more than a decade, collecting nearly \$800,000 a year. The Amelia Island Foundation projected that the voluntary contribution program could have generated at least \$300,000 this year, and had similar success to the St. Simons program in subsequent years for local charities and civic projects.

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