

THE FIRST ✿ THE ONLY

# VeroBeach Magazine®

AUGUST 2023

*Suzi McCoy Shriner  
and hundreds of other  
philanthropic women are*

## Making an Impact





# On Board with Philanthropy

A CHARITY'S SUCCESS DEPENDS ON ENGAGED, INVESTED BOARD LEADERSHIP



BY JEFFREY R. PICKERING

**C**EO ... president ... chief investment officer ... executive vice chairman ... partner ... CEO and presidential advisor. These are some of the professional titles held by the seven past chairmen I have worked with so far during my eight-year tenure as president and CEO of Indian River Community Foundation. However,

you won't hear any of them bragging about these accomplishments.

Visionary ... energetic ... determined ... collaborative ... polished ... dependable ... inspiring. These are just a few of the characteristics I attribute to each of them respectively; although these superlatives could just as well be interchangeable,

along with a good dose of humility.

It is an honor to know Rick McDermott, Becky Allen, Bob Puff, Scott Alexander, Neill Currie, Rebecca Emmons, and Mike McManus. It is even more of a privilege to have worked alongside each of them in support of Indian River Community Foundation's mission of



Increasing proficiency in higher-level math classes is an important step in improving student outcomes.



Rebecca Emmons and Jeff Pickering

“building a better community through donor-driven philanthropy.”

Together, along with a growing list of more than 50 engaged and invested past directors, they are responsible for making an impact on our community that will last well beyond their lifetimes and mine. It is an awesome accom-

plishment, and at only 15 years old, we are just getting started. Equally important, they set a standard that is reflected in the leadership of some of our community’s most effective nonprofit charitable organizations.

If I could bottle the energy and enthusiasm that Judi Miller exudes

and sell it, I would likely join the ranks of Bernard Arnault, Elon Musk, and Jeff Bezos as one of the wealthiest people on the planet. As the current chairman of the board of Treasure Coast Community Health, Miller is “failing retirement” as she works with the organization’s CEO, Vicki Soule, to provide accessible, cost-effective, high-quality, comprehensive health care to everyone in Indian River County, regardless of their socioeconomic circumstances.

Over the last several years, despite the challenges of a global pandemic, TCCH has contributed to an increase in the number of Indian River County residents who are able to access primary medical, dental, and behavioral health care. Considering that more than half of all

county residents live in poverty or one paycheck away, this is a significant accomplishment.

Miller’s retirement schedule is not what most people would have expected from someone who spent almost 30 years leading a three-county chapter of Big Brothers Big Sisters. Then again, most people do not possess the kind of dedication and commitment that she has to making life better for some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

In addition to her “day job” as director of Extended Learning Services for the School District of Indian River County, Deborah Taylor-Long serves as chairwoman of the Gifford Youth Achievement Center. With so many improvements to our community’s education system taking place over the past several years, it can be easy to overlook or even forget about some of the most persistent problems facing some of our community’s most vulnerable students, including minorities. Not on Taylor-Long’s watch.

While kindergarten readiness, third grade reading proficiency, and high school graduation rates have all improved in recent years, certain segments of our student population that include African American children

Each year, hundreds of people living in Indian River County find themselves homeless.



Laura and Rick McDermott

continue to fall behind. For example, in the 2021–22 school year, just 37 percent of Black students were proficient in math, compared to 64 percent of white students. While this disparity may not seem so troubling when considering rather equitable graduation rates among all races, practically speaking it means most of our community’s Black students earn their diplomas without completing Algebra II—a nonstarter for today’s higher-paying careers in science, technology, engineering, and math that require mastery of this knowledge at a much higher level. Taylor-Long believes we must do better.

A long-standing federal desegregation order

requiring the school district to improve its education system for minority students and various community initiatives focused on equity provide the guard rails to keep us on track. However, mission-driven nonprofit charitable organizations such as GYAC, led by dedicated volunteers like Taylor-Long, serve as both the vehicle and the fuel that accelerate many minority students toward academic and life success.

Each year, hundreds of people living in Indian River County find themselves homeless, which puts them at a high risk of experiencing adverse health outcomes, both physically and mentally. According to John’s Island resident and automobile dealership owner Gordon Stewart, one of the most damaging effects of homelessness, especially for homeless men, is a loss of dignity. Stewart serves as chairman of Camp Haven, a local charity that provides safe transitional living, psychological support, and a job to each resident. Together, these supports help restore that lost dignity, along with other social and emotional



United Way of Indian River County

**SPEAK UP**  
& advocate for those who can't.



United Way is nurturing future-forward initiatives that will move us from imagining a bright new future to achieving it.



**Support our story.  
Change the outcome.**

Continue LaKisha's Story at  
[UNITEDWAYIRC.ORG/STORY](https://www.unitedwayirc.org/story)



Jeff Pickering and Scott Alexander

qualities and life skills needed to live a healthy, prosperous life.

Stewart did not go out of his way to get involved with an organization to help homeless men. He

was motivated to learn more about Camp Haven and its unique programs while driving to and from a weekly date with his wife, Linda, at The Majestic cinema. Week after

## The pay is not great, but the benefits—at least for the soul—are endless.

week, he kept noticing men standing on the street corner asking for money and thought, “There has to be some way to help them.” Many people probably make similar observations, but Stewart did something about it. Hundreds of homeless men have benefited from his kindness and his dedicated leadership.

“When you help someone like that to be able to provide for themselves,

it’s a tremendous feeling,” Stewart says.

I first met David Johnson, senior vice president and financial advisor at Northern Trust, in December 2014 while on a conference call with several other young professionals as I was being recruited to become president and CEO of Indian River Community Foundation. Over the years, he and I have worked together to serve mutual clients;



Linda and Neill Currie

however, it was during a visit to an event at Indian River Habitat for Humanity's ReStore that I learned of his role as one of 9,000 volunteers contributing more than 50,000 hours annually to help neighbors find financial stability and affordable housing by becoming Habitat homeowners.

The affordable housing crisis is a headline that nearly every community in America is reading about lately. In Indian River County, however, the problem is as bad as it gets, with more than 54 percent of renters paying more than 30 percent of their annual income for housing expenses. Rather than throw his hands up at the problem, as chairman of Habitat's board of directors, Johnson and his firm are doing something about it.

Last year, Indian River Habitat for Humanity provided more than 100 emergency home repairs to low-income homeowners, almost 20 percent of which were veteran households.

It was also able to start 19 new homes, where at least 35 children will live along with a parent. In addition to donations and sweat equity from volunteers and homeowners, this step was made possible in part by Northern Trust's portfolio of more than \$4 million in Habitat mortgages in Indian River County.

There are many reasons to get involved with or financially support one of the numerous nonprofit charitable organizations in Indian River County. Many can be found by searching Indian River Community Foundation's online Nonprofit Search at [ircommunityfoundation.org](http://ircommunityfoundation.org).

When doing so, I suggest taking a moment to learn about the organizations with the most engaged and invested boards of directors. For me, this is one of the best predictors that my time or treasure will be used to generate meaningful results.

With so many other recreational activities to engage in locally, it must mean quite a lot that so many accomplished people volunteer to assume leadership roles in nonprofit charitable organizations doing some of the most difficult work around. The pay is not great, but the benefits—at least for the soul—are endless. ☼



## Your trusted source for home care, hospice and private care.

**Your care is our mission.** For over 45 years VNA has been providing our community a unique continuum of care – Home Health, Private Care and Hospice – with excellence, integrity and compassion so our patients can experience optimal quality of life at all times. Let VNA provide peace of mind for you and your loved ones when you need it most.

### Home Health Services

Post-surgical, cardiac and wound care • APRNs  
Licensed dieticians • Chronic disease management  
Lymphedema therapy • Music therapy  
Speech, physical and occupational therapies  
Advance Care Planning

### Private Care Services

Assistance with daily living activities  
Bathing and dressing • Meal preparation  
Companion care • Medication reminders  
Transportation to and from appointments

### Hospice Services

Only hospice provider in Indian River County  
12-bed Hospice House  
Music therapy • Pet therapy  
We Honor Veterans partner  
Grief and bereavement programs for patients and family members

*Choose local. Choose VNA.*

**Call 772.202.8570 or  
visit [www.vnadc.com](http://www.vnadc.com)**



License# HHA299991281/HHA21276095/HPC5038096 • Hospice License Issued in 1996