

Communities of Coastal Georgia Foundation awards annual grants to area organizations

By ANNA HALL The Brunswick News | Posted: Monday, June 8, 2015 12:00 am

In the past decade, the Communities of Coastal Georgia Foundation has made a well-defined footprint on the Golden Isles and beyond.

Since its founding in 2005, the non-profit organization serving Glynn, McIntosh and Camden counties has awarded more than \$5 million in grants to community organizations in the three-county region.

“The foundation has a mission to not hand out, but hand up,” said Valerie Hepburn, president and CEO of the foundation. “We are investing in the community and we know there is a return on our investment.

“We may be only a piece of the puzzle, but we are happy to be a piece that supports the ongoing efforts to improve the lives of children, families and communities in our area.”

The foundation board has voted to award grants to 13 community-based non-profit organizations serving the tri-county area.

For the 2015 competitive grant cycle, the focus centered on two major philanthropic arenas: serving at-risk youth and their families, as well as supporting arts, culture and heritage tourism in the communities.

Twenty-one organizations applied for grants and 13 were awarded funds totaling \$57,395. Seven were first-time recipients of funds, Hepburn said.

Grants were rewarded to:

- Advance Learning Academy, St. Marys, in the amount of \$4,500 to support its summer reading and math enrichment program;
- Camden County Court Appointed Special Advocates Program, in Kingsland, for \$5,000, for training;
- Court Appointed Special Advocates of Glynn, in Brunswick, for \$2,400 for training;
- Children In Action Sports Club, in Brunswick, for \$3,500 to help the club develop a viable strategic plan and create a resource management plan;
- Coastal Georgia Historical Society, St. Simons Island, for \$5,000, to support a pilot archaeology and history summer day camp;

- Communities In Schools of Glynn County, in Brunswick, for \$5,000, to partially support the site coordinator for the Blueprint Graduation program at Glynn Middle School;
- FaithBridge Foster Care, in Brunswick, for \$5,000 to support the Glynn County Chapter of FaithBridge with the ongoing recruitment and training of foster and respite families;
- The Gathering Place, in Brunswick, for \$4,000, to support The Gathering Place's summer college tour;
- Golden Isles Youth Orchestra, in Brunswick, for 5,000, to support its "String-On," program;
- Keep Golden Isles Beautiful, in Brunswick, for \$4,000, to support the "Make Art Not Litter" program;
- Marshes of Glynn Libraries, in Brunswick, for \$4,995, to continue and expand the Early Literacy Parental Involvement Initiative across Glynn County;
- The Methodist Home for Children and Youth, in St. Marys, for \$4,000, to support upgrades in furniture, fixtures and equipment for the organization's group home in Camden County and
- St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, in Darien, for \$5,000, to fund transportation costs, food and curriculum resources for a summer and after-school program for youth residing in the communities adjacent to the church.

"This year, we have a very exciting and diverse range of organizations to which we awarded funding," Hepburn said. "Every year, we try to select different applicants and move the needle, so to speak. Our themes change each year and so, with that, the applications we receive tend to change, as well."

"Overall, our goal is to fill in the gaps and bridge the spaces of need to encourage the community to continually evolve."

Hepburn pointed to the Coastal Georgia Historical Society and the Keep Golden Isles Beautiful organizations as stand-out recipients of grants. The historical society has recently hired a new education-based representative who will primarily work with county school systems to reach out to students and spread the vast legends and history of the Golden Isles — a much needed addition to area curriculum, she said.

"We have children who live in this community but don't know about its esteemed past," Hepburn said. "This new employee can do so much to help educate our children about the majestic place in which we live."

As for Keep Golden Isles Beautiful, which recently dropped the Brunswick name from its name, the organization does wonders for helping educate the community about the impacts of litter and waste, as well as help keep the area clean, Hepburn said.

“We live in one of the most beautiful places in the nation, and people still just throw litter out their car window,” she said. “Every effort this group makes has an impact, an important impact.”