Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading Awarded at GLR Week
During an inspiring week of connecting with more than 700 thought leaders, educators and supporters of grade-level reading efforts nationwide at GLR Week in Philadelphia, the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading honored the Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading in several ways for its efforts to promote early learning, children's health and well-being, afterschool and summer programs, and getting all children reading on grade level by the end of third grade - a key predictor of continued success in school and life.

The Suncoast Campaign is thrilled to be one of only 29 communities in the Campaign's Network of more than 390 communities in 44 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Canada to be honored as a Pacesetter. Pacesetters serve as proof points of the Campaign's efforts to drive third-grade reading proficiency through three key solution areas: early literacy and school readiness, addressing chronic absence and its effects on reading progress, and mitigating summer learning loss by connecting children with quality educational opportunities and programs.

Beyond the Pacesetter honor, the Suncoast Campaign was included among the national Campaign's 57 Bright Spots. Bright Spots are communities that are home to schools and programs undertaking promising efforts to boost early literacy. The Campaign highlights the work in these Bright Spots to inspire other communities in the Network.

"As wonderful as it is to be honored by the Campaign's leadership, it's exciting to imagine how this recognition can help us connect with other communities that share our dedication for moving the needle on grade-level reading," said Beth Duda, director of the Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading for The Patterson Foundation. "The spirit of sharing actionable takeaways nationwide is at the heart of GLR Week and this Network of people, organizations, and communities rallying behind our children and their families."

The Suncoast Campaign's communications efforts were featured at GLR Week in Philadelphia's Communications Expo, which showcased submissions of communications tools from around the nation in an environment that allowed visiting communities to learn and apply similar approaches in their own grade-level reading programs. The Suncoast Campaign was recognized for examples of awareness campaigns, events, media stories, print collateral, social media, and videos it has developed to highlight the importance of grade-level reading and galvanize the community to support these efforts.

In addition to these wide accolades, individuals working in the Suncoast Campaign were recognized by the national Campaign as Champions. The Council of Champions is an exemplary group of volunteer reading tutors, parents, funders, policymakers, elected officials, business leaders, public agency heads, researchers, nonprofit executives, educators, and countless others who are doing remarkable work in communities across the country. The Suncoast Campaign's Champions are:

- Diana Greene -- former superintendent of the School District of Manatee County
- Jim Henry -- The Rotary Club of Sarasota Foundation
- John and Amanda Horne -- Anna Maria Oyster Bar, home of the Dive Into Book Club
- Steve and Carolyn Roskamp -- Soar in 4 program
- William Russell -- president and CEO of Sarasota Housing Authority

The lead supporters of the Suncoast Campaign include the Community Foundation of Sarasota County, The Patterson Foundation, and United Way Suncoast. Additional partners include the School District of Manatee County and Sarasota County Schools.
"This honor belongs to our region as businesses, community, nonprofits, media, and government continue to own our responsibility for our children's future," said Bronwyn Beightol, United Way Suncoast Manatee area president. "Awards are a way of spurring us on to bolder steps to achieve results for all of our children and thrivability for our community."

"The Community Foundation of Sarasota County looks at our grade-level reading investment through a two-generational lens, addressing the needs of parents and their children together," said Kirsten Russell, director of community investment for the Community Foundation of Sarasota County. "GLR Week served as a reminder of the power of collaboration to fuel sustainable change for our families across the county. The awareness the national Campaign brings to these key areas will continue to bring organizations together to move the needle on grade-level reading so that our children and their families are on a path to economic stability and educational opportunity."

To learn more about the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, visit gradelevelreading.net and follow the movement on social media using #GLReading. Follow @SuncoastCGLR on Twitter and Facebook.

GLR Week 2018 in Philadelphia proved to be an opportunity to discover new possibilities for collaboration and replication across GLR community coalitions and reflect on the activities of local, state, and national funders that support the five pillars: School Readiness, Attendance, Summer Learning, Family Engagement, and Health Determinants.

On Tuesday, July 24, Beth Duda presented in a session titled, "Moving the Needle: GLR in the Crucible of Practice." The session was designed to be a
deep-dive learning conversation about the intensive work of a handful of locations engaged in the GLR Campaign. She shared two of the Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading's successes complete with hurdles overcome. The other presenter was Sally Fuller from The Irene E. & George A. Davis Foundation.

The following day, Debra Jacobs, president and CEO of The Patterson Foundation, moderated a Town Hall: "Philanthropic Partnerships for Impact" with Henry Berman, CEO of Exponent Philanthropy. Debra and Henry engaged an audience of 150 people on the topic of building connective tissue for thrivability.

Both presentations encapsulated the Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading's approach through actions like connecting, learning, sharing, evolving and strengthening and characteristics like leadership, readiness, willingness, capacity, and culture to embrace the future and stay the course for positive change.

We welcome your thoughts. Contact us at info@GradeLevelReadingSuncoast.net.