To optimize and amplify impact, The Patterson Foundation supports efforts to close The Gap – the ever-widening gap that exists between individuals and families connected with affordable internet, devices (desktop, laptop, tablet), and digital skills training, and those who are not.
# The Team

## Leadership:

- **Cheri Coryea** — DA4A Lead, The Gap’s Talent Recruiter/Acquisition
- **Kiarra Louis** — Initiative Support Coordinator, The GAP Manager
- **Sandra Vega-Picchietti** — The Gap’s Co-Manager
- **Aileen Peña** — Event Coordination & Management
- **Kelli Karen Smith** — Event Process & Structure Development

## Active Digital Navigators

- Carol Kranitz
- Carolina Franco
- Cinthia Peña
- Joni Hansen
- Melissa Hirstein

## Active Engagers

- Aileen Peña
- Alexa Carr
- Alicia Exantus
- Andrew Spector
- Avery Crew Prado de Lima
- Carol Kranitz
- Carolina Franco
- Carrie Miley
- Cinthia Peña
- Donna Puhalovich

- Joni Hansen
- Kellie Alexander
- Kera Picker
- Krisztina Madak
- Laurey Stryker
- Lyndsey Smith
- Marla Smith
- Melissa Hirstein
- Sandra Vega-Picchietti
- Sherry Oehler
- Vida Perlow
Event Spotlight
Updates

As The Affordable Connectivity Program Winds Down, We’re Evolving The Gap

In January 2024, the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) announced that ACP applications and enrollments would cease after February 7, 2024. Without additional funding from Congress, ACP is projected to run out sometime between April and July 2024. As a result, ACP is winding down.

To continue strengthening individuals in the Suncoast region, The Gap is pivoting from closing the Gap between those ACP eligible and ACP enrolled to focusing on closing the digital access gaps that exist between those who are connected to affordable internet, devices, and skill support. The Gap’s team of trained Engagers and Digital Navigators will continue to increase awareness of local digital access resources and help individuals and households explore their options.

Strengthening digital access among people of all ages and backgrounds — especially those from asset-limited families — helps ensure that everyone is included in our journey toward these new realities and benefiting from the many advancements.

Digital Access Gaps in The Suncoast

Over 30,000 households in the Suncoast region are not connected to one or more of the three essential elements (connectivity, devices, and digital literacy /skills training).

According to the 2022 American Community Survey, over 30,000 households do not have an internet connection, and 10,000 do not have a computer. More than 30,000 own only a smartphone. Imagine trying to create a resume, work remotely, or type an essay using only a smartphone!

This Month’s Events

Soar in 4 at The Bishop
LOVN Wellness Fair
Daughtrey Elementary Family Literacy Night
Mr. Stevey & Friends: New Year, New Beginnings
Shifting The Gap’s Focus

To maximize and enhance impact, The Patterson Foundation is shifting the focus of The Gap program from solely addressing ACP enrollment to closing digital access gaps in connectivity, devices, and skill/support within the Suncoast region. An ever-widening gap exists between individuals and families connected with the three essential elements of digital access and those who are not. The three essential elements of digital access are:

- Connectivity: The ability to connect to affordable, reliable, high-speed internet
- Devices: Possessing the right device for one’s needs
- Digital Literacy Skills Training and Support: Having access to the necessary training and support to use devices and programs effectively while solving technical issues when they arise

Through the Digital Access for All team’s in-depth research and interviews with national thought-leaders in the digital access arena, we have learned that all three elements need to be present and work together for digital access for all to be achieved.

The goal is to drive collective efforts to close this gap by fostering wide collaboration. Initiatives, including Digital Access for All, Aspirations to Actions, and the Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, leverage resources and build relationships based on trust to find innovative ways to connect with community members, generate awareness, and increase connectivity, devices, and skill training options locally and nationally. Tapping into the Foundation’s Digital Navigator network, interested and eligible households will receive assistance obtaining one or more of these essential options.
Engager Spotlight

Q: What made you interested in becoming an Engager?
Having the opportunity to connect with my community and help families learn of the different resources available to them that they weren’t aware of or maybe thought they weren’t able to qualify for.

Q: How has the experience been so far?
Eye opener, fulfilling, grateful, exciting.

Q: Any surprises, takeaways, or favorite moments?
Seeing the excitement on the parents’ faces when they hear that there is a program out there that allows them to have extra income in the month for gas, food, or even purchase a necessity that their child had and wasn’t able to afford before.

Event Spotlight

The Family Literacy Night at Daughtrey Elementary was a successful event! Carol was on fire, and lots of families were interested in The Gap's offerings. Some of the kids were translating for their parents at that event because there were many non-English speakers. Carol did a phenomenal job using Google Translate to help her connect and communicate with the families who only spoke English. In the feedback form, Carol stated that there were quite a few very interested people - 20 plus on the interest survey and 6 completed intake surveys.

Mr. Stevey & Friends: New Year, New Beginnings was well attended! A teacher from Booker High School wanted to connect about coming to an event at their school. We shared the business cards for her to reach out to! Someone from The Women's Center is conducting parent classes (currently on ZOOM but hoping to eventually do in-person classes) and may reach out to make connections for her parents.
Engager Spotlight

Q: What made you interested in becoming an Engager?
I am a big believer in “knowledge is power,” and when I heard of this opportunity for families, I was so excited to join the team. There are so many families that could benefit from the knowledge engagers share, and the idea of doing that made my decision easy.

Q: How has the experience been so far?
The experience has been great so far. The team of engagers is positive and very passionate, which makes all events successful as well as fun! I loved the event with Mr. Stevey as well as the event at Lincoln Middle School. One of my favorite things is to watch how many people take information to share with family and friends.

Q: Any surprises, takeaways, or favorite moments?
My favorite moment was at an event at Lincoln Middle School where the school invited children to have donuts with someone in their life who was a hero to them. In the middle of the event, the principal grabbed the microphone and talked about the hero they had at the school. The school nurse saved a life that week. A parent was suffering in the parking lot, and she started CPR on the parent and saved her life. The county was there, and she was recognized and given an award. After that, she still made time to come by our table. She spoke with me about how connected she is with the Haitian community in Manatee County and needed information so she could share it with them. I was reminded that day of the heroes we have in our four-county region and how connecting with the community and individuals to help others is truly so beautiful and special.
### Engagement & Outreach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jan. 2024</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flyers Given &amp; Shared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Intake Forms Completed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Digital Navigation

<p>| |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clients Waiting to be Served</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Referrals to TPF Digital Navigators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Navigator Feedback Rating</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Connectivity | Low-Cost Offer-  
Awareness -  
Not Interested -  

*Given The Gap’s transition, we look forward to sharing this new data in February.* |
| Devices | Sarasota Technology User Group-  
Other Low Cost Offer 0  
Awareness -  
Not Interested -  

*Given The Gap’s transition, we look forward to sharing this new data in February.* |
| Digital Skills/Support | Awareness -  
Referral  
Not Interested -  

*Given The Gap’s transition, we look forward to sharing this new data in February.* |
## The Digital Access Status in the Suncoast

### Digital Access in the Suncoast: Connectivity and Devices Per Household

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>2022 Total Number of Households</th>
<th>Connectivity</th>
<th>Devices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>With Internet Connection</td>
<td>Without an Internet Connection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte County</td>
<td>90,457</td>
<td>83,637 (92.5%)</td>
<td>6,820 (7.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DeSoto County</td>
<td>Data was not provided for DeSoto County.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manatee County</td>
<td>176,772</td>
<td>162,220 (91.8%)</td>
<td>14,552 (8.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarasota County</td>
<td>215,125</td>
<td>203,551 (94.6%)</td>
<td>11,574 (5.4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2022 American Community Survey - Table S2801

Although these numbers demonstrate that thousands of households within the four-county region are connected, it does not account for the following three things:

1. **Connectivity is the ability to connect to affordable and reliable high-speed internet**: Among those connected are households who are struggling to pay for their monthly internet connection in addition to their basic necessities.

2. **Device sharing is common among households**: Device sharing is also a challenge families experience. Many households have at least one device, yet it may be shared among multiple family members, limiting each member’s ability to use the Internet meaningfully.

3. **Having a smartphone is not enough**: To engage meaningfully online, you need the right devices for your needs, such as a laptop, a desktop, or a tablet. No matter how smart a phone is, it is not conducive to remote learning, remote working, or applying for social services.