The Patterson Foundation’s DeSoto Digest Newsletter strives to educate and engage while sharing the work of The Patterson Foundation’s initiatives and ways residents can participate. We each have a role in forging a positive future!
Relationships come in all shapes and sizes within a community, and when you use the power of connecting, learning, and sharing, it creates a chain reaction that brings the community closer together. The power of connecting has recently been seen in the efforts of DeSoto-based organizations, The Harwood Institute’s Community Conversations, the Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading’s various endeavors, including Suncoast Remake Learning Days and THIS BOOK IS COOL! (TBIC!), Digital Access for All, and Aspirations to Actions (A2A).

But what does that mean? A chain reaction is occurring in DeSoto County, with new connections being forged, allowing people to share and learn from one another.

Here are just a few examples of how The Patterson Foundation is creating connections with people, organizations, and communities in DeSoto:

- From 34 (2023) to 96 (2024) Remake Learning Days Events in DeSoto
- 200+ students who reside in DeSoto County are registered to participate in TBIC!
- 20 A2A Conversations in Community with 427 residents
- 24 Harwood Community Conversations in 2024 with 300+ new resident connections
- 310 people attended the DeSoto Solutions to Actions Dive Into Discovery community event in October 2023
- 353 communications survey responses from residents sharing with us how they get their information
- 800+ digital subscribers of TPF’s DeSoto Digest newsletter
- 750+ DeSoto Digest hardcopies printed in English and Spanish and distributed every month

Delivering this monthly newsletter virtually and through 750 hard copies in various locations across DeSoto County has facilitated relationship-building and interest in the power of connecting, learning, and sharing by people who care about DeSoto County, which continues to create new possibilities.

The power of learning is possible through intently listening and engaging, being present in the community, and making connections with diverse organizations.

The power of sharing has evolved into linking information and people together, creating a more informed and engaged community and helping people who have been invisible become visible.
As a part of The Patterson Foundation’s work with DeSoto County, The Harwood Institute’s Catalytic Community Guide Program in DeSoto County is an intensive 12-week program for community members who desire to guide their community to create lasting change using Harwood’s approach.

Catalytic Community Guides are local community leaders trained in the Harwood approach and positioned in the community to help people adopt a mindset and a practice that enables them to step forward, take action, create meaningful change, and unleash the potential of their community.

Currently, five DeSoto County community leaders are participating in this transformative course. The goals are to provide direct support to local public innovators, develop a network of public innovators within the community, and spread the Harwood approach across the community with the hope of widespread community-centered change.

Catalytic Community Guide Spotlight (CCG): Amanda Reuter

Amanda Reuter is currently a chaplain candidate in the U.S. Army Reserve, where she provides religious support to soldiers, integrates religious support plans into unit operations, performs chapel duties, provides counseling and training, and provides hope in crises. She is also the Ministry Director at First Baptist Arcadia and serves as the Executive Director of Hope DeSoto Long-Term Recovery Group, a nonprofit that works with community partners to rebuild homes and provide hope after a disaster. Amanda believes that providing hope is the common theme through all of these opportunities, and she embodies that in the work that she does each day.

When asked what she sees as the impact of CCG on DeSoto County residents, Amanda said:

“The spark for positive change happened after Hurricane Ian ripped through DeSoto County. When the residents of DeSoto County pulled together to assist each other in response and relief efforts, a spark of civic faith flickered. TPF and Harwood have helped to fan the spark into a flame of positive change because of their exactness in the restoration of civic culture and civic faith. Participating in the CCG Course has enabled me to see survivors and helping agencies as leaders of positive change and proof that a chain reaction of dynamic community rhythms is possible.”

We are excited to continue to see the growth in these community leaders as the Catalytic Community Guide Course continues and look forward to the impact they will have going forward.

If you or someone you know wants to get involved or learn more, please contact Avery Crews Prado de Lima at acrewspradodelima@thepattersonfoundation.org
From Saturday, April 20, 2024, through Saturday, May 4, 2024, Charlotte, DeSoto, Manatee, and Sarasota counties celebrated the joy of adults and children learning side by side, all while embracing curiosity and wonder during Suncoast Remake Learning Days (SRLD)!

SRLD 2024 allowed families to dive into a world of knowledge and fun through 304 dynamic learning experiences outside the conventional classroom setting.

On Saturday, April 20th, the first day of SRLD, the Florida Forest Service landed a helicopter at Casa San Juan Bosco in Arcadia, a farm workers-only community run by Catholic Charities. At this Family Fun Day event, Pilot Francis Neeley proudly represented the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, run by Commissioner Wilton Simpson. Children and their families learned about aviation and firefighting and even had the chance to get in the helicopter to examine the equipment and control panel.

Clara Alvarez, a TPF engager, and the rest of the Catholic Charities staff connected with Arcadia Municipal Airport, DeSoto County Florida 4-H, United Way Suncoast, and the Florida Department of Health to provide games, hands-on activities, and arts & crafts projects centered around aviation at this 3-hour well-attended event.
The Patterson Foundation would like to thank everyone who participated in the Newsletter Naming Contest. DeSoto Digest: Connecting Communities, Sharing Stories submitted by DeSoto County resident Jinny Schafer has been selected!

When asked why she submitted that name, Jinny shared: “I selected the title DeSoto Digest: Connecting Communities, Sharing Stories to reflect our commitment to fostering connectivity and inclusivity within the community. "DeSoto" honors the locality, providing a sense of belonging and ownership to residents, and "Digest" suggests a concise yet informative compilation of news and stories, while "Connecting Communities, Sharing Stories" emphasizes our mission to unite residents through shared experiences and narratives, promoting a sense of solidarity and engagement.”

For this contest, the winner had an opportunity to win a $500 Pay-It-Forward (PIF) award to give to a DeSoto County organization of their choice with a Giving Partner Profile, and a Spinner Wheel selected additional contest participants to win $100 Pay-It-Forward Awards. The Patterson Foundation awards PIFs to demonstrate that everyone can be a philanthropist.

Jinny won a $500 Pay-It-Forward award and chose the Drug-Free DeSoto Coalition “because of its vital role in promoting community well-being and resilience.” The Spinner Wheel randomly selected four contest participants to win $100 PIFs. The organizations they chose were Links to Success, DeSoto Cares Homeless Services, and Drug Free DeSoto Coalition.
THE 2024 GIVING CHALLENGE RESULTS

This year, the Community Foundation of Sarasota County hosted the Giving Challenge from noon to noon on April 9 and 10. During the 2024 Giving Challenge, 724 organizations attracted 53,305 donors and 90,147 total gifts (meaning people gave more than once), raising $17,244,298, including TPF’s 1:1 match for unique donations between $25 and $100 with NO CAP! The Patterson Foundation matched $6,725,932!

DESO TO COUNTY DATA HIGHLIGHTS

6 *Participating NPOs were based in DeSoto

Arcadia DeSoto County Habitat for Humanity, Canine Castaways, Inc., DeSoto Cares Homeless Services Inc., DMH Real Estate Holdings Inc. (DBA DeSoto Memorial Hospital), Hope DeSoto LTRG, and Links to Success.

2 of the 6 organizations were participating in their first Giving Challenge this year

Nearly $70K

raised by all six DeSoto NPOs ($69K+ total)

357 total donations 381 total donors

This year, a new Giving Challenge award called Devoted to DeSoto was created. The award, which consisted of $4,000, was divided among all organizations based in and doing work in DeSoto County. The six Devoted to DeSoto winners were the six organizations mentioned above.

TINY TOWN
By Sandy Krost, Arcadia Garden Club Volunteer

The Arcadia Garden Club (AGC) teamed up with DeSoto Cares Homeless Services by creating a decorative shrubbery area in front of the first house in Tiny Town. AGC volunteers Kathy Connolly, Sue Knight, and Sandy Krost planted and mulched native Golden Dew Drops and fragrant Lady of the Night to provide a welcoming home. Junior AGC member Spring Pace planted butterfly attractors of blue Sirius sage and zinnias grown by the AGC propagation team.

The Tiny House program plans to provide 11 more homes to previously homeless persons who desire to better their circumstances. DeSoto Cares volunteers built the first dwelling. The City of Arcadia will build the remaining homes simultaneously. The Arcadia Garden Club continues to water and take care of the plants to get them well-established.

Celebrate National Garden Week (June 2–8) with AGC! Join AGC at the Community Garden next to the DeSoto Library on Tuesday, June 4, at 9:30 a.m. and Wednesday, June 5, at 1 p.m. for the kids’ summer program. AGC will set up and plant two new accessible raised planters made from reclaimed cypress. Everyone is welcome!
DeSoto County is much smaller today than when it was founded in 1887? It once extended from the Gulf of Mexico to Lake Okeechobee and from Polk County to the Caloosahatchee River. In 1921, the original DeSoto County was divided into the five present-day counties of Charlotte, DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, and Highlands.

— Provided by Carol Mahler, Coordinator of DeSoto County Historical Society’s Museum and Research Library
DO YOU HAVE A STORY OR IDEA TO SHARE WITH THE DESOTO COUNTY COMMUNITY?

Contact AspirationstoActions@thepattersonfoundation.org
Learn more about The Patterson Foundation at thepattersonfoundation.org