

2021 Sapphire Awards Honorees

The 2021 Sapphire Awards recognized excellence and innovation in food security, health equity and mental well-being programming provided by individuals, organizations and programs from across Florida. Stories of the honorees' life-changing programming is presented here.

Program Category – Finalist -- \$30,000

Fleet Farming
Ideas for Us
Orlando, Orange County
Food Security

Ideas For Us, founded in 2008, is an Orlando-based nonprofit organization and accredited NGO of the United Nations. Its mission is to develop, fund, and scale solutions to the world's most pressing environmental challenges, through environmental action projects, programs, and eco-enterprises such as Fleet Farming.

Fleet Farming is an innovative urban agriculture program that is changing the cycle of local food systems of Central Florida through community supported agriculture. The mission is to increase local food accessibility, creating a healthier and more connected world. They transform local lawns into mini-organic farms, called farmlettes. Staff and volunteers travel, mostly by bicycle, to Fleet Farmlettes in four Orlando neighborhoods (Audubon Park, Winter Park, Parramore, and Holden Heights) to farm residents' lawns. In exchange for long-term land use, residents receive a percentage of the harvest. The produce is sharecropped with the farm host and the rest is cycled to local farmers markets that offer the SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program of the United States Department of Agriculture) program or the modern food stamps option that gives double the food tokens for fresh, local food. All farms use no synthetic fertilizers and no pesticides besides organic neem oil, and transportation by bicycle contributes to zero greenhouse gases. Fleet Farming has brought this system to local schools, community centers, women's rehabilitation centers, churches, affordable housing units, and individuals through special community projects. They involve at-risk youth in environmental action projects related to urban agriculture and habitat restoration in Orlando. To educate the public on growing food, they provide free educational events for children and families through weekly "Swarm Rides" that educate residents during educational bicycling volunteer events, going from farm to farm on bikes with the community.



Since 2014, they have converted 70,140 square-feet of lawns into gardens, harvested 5,840 pounds of produce, educated 8,392 locals, and created 11 school gardens. Fleet Farming as a program served more than 3,044 locals in the last fiscal year.

They are creating vocational agricultural programs at two high schools to create workforce training programs to support the community post-COVID-19 with vocational agricultural programs to further uplift low-income communities with locally grown food.

Program Category – Winner -- \$60,000

Total Care Clinic Group
UF Health Jacksonville Medical Center
Jacksonville, Duval County
Health Equity

As the region’s leading academic medical center and safety-net hospital, UF Health Jacksonville formed the Total Care Clinic Group (TCC Group) in 2012 to address health equity due to the growing need for comprehensive, coordinated outpatient care for the uninsured and underserved residents in Jacksonville. The mission of the TCC Group is to provide high quality holistic health care to the most vulnerable members of the Jacksonville community. The TCC Group provides health and well-being services including primary care, specialty care, pharmacy services, mental health counseling, social services, wellness services and community outreach. The TCC Group includes three National Committee for Quality Assurance designated Level 3 patient centered medical homes – the Total Care Clinic, Elizabeth Means Center, and Brentwood Family Practice Center – as well as two wellness centers focused on chronic disease education, and a pharmacy-led clinic for medication education and management. This novel comprehensive holistic approach to healthcare addresses the health equity.



The Wellness Centers are located in historically underserved neighborhoods of Durkeeville and Soutel. These centers provide free services to any resident including health screenings, health education, and holistic health programs such as the Health-Smart Holistic Health Program. The staff from the TCC Group also hosts community health fairs at senior centers, churches and other community sites to screen residents for high blood pressure, cholesterol and glucose and provides linkages to healthcare services if residents are identified as needing medical care. The also provided “brown bag” medication reviews by pharmacists at senior citizen centers to check for drug interactions or other safety issues with the multiple medications that seniors may be taking.

The clinic group provides care to over 14,000 patients resulting in over 40,000 visits per year. Over 90% of these patients are low income uninsured or are have Medicaid. Demographics of

the patient population include 57% African American, 31% white, 2% Asian/Pacific Islander and 10% Other race; 62% female and 38% male. Patients of all ages are seen at these clinics - 11% children under 18 years of age, 77% between 18-64 years old, and 12% are 65 and older. Most of the patients reside in the urban core of Jacksonville which reports high rates of poverty, food and housing insecurity and low access to quality health services.

Program Category – Winner -- \$60,000

UCF RESTORES®

University of Central Florida

Orlando, Orange County

Mental Well-being

Founded in 1969, the UCF Foundation, Inc., is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with a mission to encourage, steward and celebrate charitable contributions from alumni and friends to support the University of Central Florida.

The mission of UCF RESTORES®, a nonprofit clinical research center and treatment clinic, is to become the premier resource for innovative, high-quality trauma care and research while breaking down stigma-related barriers to mental well-being through education. UCF



RESTORES provides comprehensive trauma treatment – available at no cost to all Florida residents – with success rates up to 90% greater than the national average for similar treatment programs. UCF RESTORES’ one-of-a-kind approach to treatment – including a uniquely condensed and successful three-week intensive outpatient program – is designed to break down traditional barriers to care and combines evidence-based exposure therapy, emerging technology (i.e., virtual reality), and one-on-one and group therapy sessions to help those suffering in the wake of trauma regain control of their daily lives.

Treatment is offered on an outpatient and intensive outpatient basis at the Rosengren Trauma Clinic at UCF RESTORES in Central Florida and, to enhance accessibility amid COVID-19, all programs are currently offered via telehealth. To-date, the center has treated 500 veterans and active-duty personnel, 375 first responders, as well as survivors of the Pulse nightclub, Las Vegas and Parkland mass shootings – many of whom only started to come to grips with their emotional wounds once physical healing had advanced – and their families, displaced survivors of Hurricane Maria, survivors of sexual assault and mass violence, and more. All UCF RESTORES clinicians receive cultural competency training that equips each team member with the skills needed to successfully treat patients of varying occupations, lifestyles and experiences.

In fiscal year 2019-2020, a total of 222 patients, representing 3,984 therapy hours, were treated; and 200 first responders were engaged through peer support training initiatives. Since inception, 64 undergraduate and graduate students and post-doctoral fellows received clinical training

In response to the pandemic, UCF RESTORES also produced a free 12-part, Facebook-hosted “Wellness Education” video series (drawing more than 40,000 views to-date) to address common concerns and stressors unique to this period of time; and, in September, the organization published a three-part “Power of Peer Support” Q&A series amid National Suicide Awareness & Prevention Month.

Organization Category -- Finalist -- \$50,000

Ability Housing

Jacksonville, Duval County

Health Equity

The mission of Ability Housing, founded in 1992, is to build strong communities where everyone has a home. Ability Housing builds quality housing and transforms areas of blight and disrepair into community assets. It strengthens communities by ensuring residents have wrap-around supports to achieve their potential and assists the most vulnerable neighbors – families and individuals with a disability and/or those experiencing -or at risk of - homelessness so they can grow as contributing members of the community. It provides quality affordable housing because everyone should have a safe place to sleep, eat, and raise their family.



Ability Housing is a front-runner in providing Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) and adopting the principles of Housing First with 27 years of experience developing affordable supportive housing. Ability Housing's accomplishments in the improvement of health equity in the community served include:

- Providing affordable housing with comprehensive supportive services to 1,219 persons including 679 previously homeless persons and 374 persons with disabilities in 2019.
- Housing stability rate of 96%.
- Attaining health coverage for 140 individuals in 2019.
- An increase of annual income of \$1,150 per household.
- Leadership activities at local and state level advocating for persons experiencing homelessness and those living with a disability.

Case managers work with participants in developing comprehensive, individualized service plans, including identification of personal goals and strategies to achieve them. Case managers link participants to benefits, employment, Medicaid, medical and behavioral health care, and other services as needed. In conjunction with case management services, the program also uses certified recovery peer specialists to help participants develop a recovery plan. Peer support specialists must complete 40 hours of training, 500 hours of recovery support work and pass a certification exam administered by the Florida Certification Board. The certified peer support specialists assist participants in articulating their goals for recovery and learning new skills, aid them in their treatment, model effective coping techniques, and support them in practicing self-advocacy.

Ability Housing tracks success measures through a Resident Information Management System (RIMS) database; a secure, customized, electronic database that stores resident demographics as well as produces critical reports such as: resident demographic criteria, property demographics, individual benefits received, change of income, family demographics, health care

coverage, rents and subsidies paid, program enrollment, and housing stability. Some of the outcomes from 2019 include:

- A housing stability rate (households remain in permanent housing 12 months or more) of 96%
- An increase in health coverage for 140 individuals in 2019
- An increase of annual income of \$1,150 per household

Ability Housing's advocacy efforts led to the Florida Housing Finance Corporation's (the primary funder of affordable housing in Florida) adoption of the principals of Permanent Supportive Housing as a model for their dedicated funding for housing projects supporting persons experiencing homelessness.

Organization Category -- Winner -- \$75,000

DACCO Behavioral Health

Tampa, Hillsborough County

Mental Well-Being, Opioids/Substance Abuse

Since its beginning in 1973, DACCO Behavioral Health has offered access to all and fought tirelessly to help all understand that behavioral health treatment should be comparable to other chronic health issues such as diabetes or arthritis. DACCO uses evidence-based practices and



innovative strategies to bring the message to youth, adults and policy makers. Prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery support are DACCO's tools for success. Its mission is to work for a drug-free community; one person, one family at a time. Over the past 47 years, DACCO has evolved into an expansive community-based behavioral health

provider that serves over 30,000 individuals in Hillsborough and surrounding counties annually through prevention, intervention, and treatment of substance use disorders, mental illness, and co-occurring substance misuse/mental health issues.

DACCO's headquarters, a state-of-the art facility opened in 2008 in East Tampa, houses the administrative offices; an 88-bed women's residential program; outpatient services; medication assisted treatment with naltrexone, buprenorphine and methadone; a CLIA moderately complex licensed laboratory; multiple meeting spaces for clients; space for GED prep in partnership with Hillsborough County (HC) Public Schools; a licensed child care center in partnership with Head Start and Champions for Children; and medical clinic space integrating DACCO physicians and Tampa Family Health Centers primary care. In addition, two small cottages are available for women in treatment with space for their young children. The 126-bed men's residential facility, Quest House, is approximately one mile from the headquarters and also houses the commercial kitchen. Nearby is DACCO's Community Housing Solutions Center (CHSC) that provides transitional housing for 75 homeless men and women. Operated in partnership with Tampa Hillsborough Homeless Initiative and the County, the CHSC is a model center providing full access to supportive services to move adults into permanent housing. DACCO operates a satellite office in Lakeland to serve Polk County providing outpatient and recovery support services. DACCO has a mobile outreach bus that travels throughout HC to provide prevention education, HIV and STD testing and counseling, and substance misuse treatment.

In coordination with the Hillsborough County Schools, DACCO implemented two new digital platforms for students to be able to use as part of the schools' curriculum: RxSmart and Mental Wellness Basics. During the 2019-2020 academic year, DACCO Behavioral Health provided more than 35,000 students with access to a digital learning experience designed to equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to make health decisions.

- 76% of students indicated that after participating in the Mental Wellness Basics that the course gave them ways to recognize stress, and tools to cope in a healthy way.
- 82% of students indicated that after participating in the Mental Wellness Basics they feel confident that they know how to help someone else in need.
- 69% of students indicated that after participating in RxSmart that the course helped them identify the signs of prescription drug abuse and misuse.

To promote access to care, DACCO created a same day walk in policy for assessments. Patients no longer have to schedule appointments in advance for an assessment but can walk in and be seen same day without an appointment. The approach allows patients to receive treatment when they are ready for treatment and on their time schedule.

- Average 10-14 walk in assessments daily.
- 90 pregnant women were treated in a medication assisted treatment program for opioid use disorder in 2019.
- 99% of medication assisted treatment patients indicated that they are learning to manage their behavioral health.

Organization Category -- Finalist -- \$50,000

El Sol Jupiter's Neighborhood Resource Center
Jupiter, Palm Beach County
Health Equity

Founded in 2006, El Sol, Jupiter's Neighborhood Resource Center (El Sol) exists to improve the quality of life for the residents of Jupiter and surrounding communities by providing services primarily to day laborers, their children and families.

El Sol has worked diligently to be collaborative in its work to alleviate poverty, hunger and food insecurity and promote good health. Its programs are collaborative and effective with demonstrated success. Its dynamic leadership and community partners have established an unusual level of cooperation and provide a template for other communities working with immigrants.

El Sol has grown to offer services in a number of different program areas to meet the needs of the people in its service area. Services begin with Case Management, where they provide client-centered service using an innovative Self-Sufficiency Matrix to determine areas that need improvement so the client can reach self-sufficiency. Other areas of services include Pandemic Response, Crisis Funds, Food Distribution, Labor, Adult Education, Health, Community Life, Legal Assistance, Food/Nutrition, and Child Development.

El Sol has significantly improved access to health care and impacted community hunger/food insecurity and poverty in the community with targeted attention to immigrant families. El Sol has a full time Health Coordinator who not only works in but also lives in the community in which the majority of their clients live. The Health Program has significantly impacted the lives of clients with referrals, monthly health workshops, monthly OSHA trainings, Promotores de Salud (Promoters of Health), health fairs, and strategic alliances. El Sol also offered health classes on topics such as nutrition, exercise, diabetes management and heart health. In 2019, 3,663 people attended 121 education information trainings and workshops; 248 cases were referred to the local clinic; 68% of clients successfully followed up with their health referral appointment; and seven Promotores de Salud reached 436 people in the community.



The Food/Nutrition program addresses clients' needs around hunger, food insecurity and nutrition. El Sol's kitchen serves a hot meal to workers for a minimal cost. For many, this is their main meal of the day. In 2019, El Sol's kitchen served 10,427 meals with an average of 36 per day. El Sol had 1,613 attendees at nutritional workshops. The 2019 Annual Client Survey showed that 67% of clients come for breakfast and 50% say that the hot lunch is their main meal of the day. Last year, El Sol harvested 2,113 pounds of food from its Sunshine Organic Community Garden, providing food for an average of 252 clients. Ten percent (10%) of what is

grown is shared with the El Sol Kitchen to help provide fresh, organic produce in the lunches. El Sol Garden Coordinator held 24 garden workshops that had 222 attendees. El Sol, in partnership with C.R.O.S. Ministries, also has a food pantry two days a week on-site. This allows clients to obtain much-needed nutritional basics. Each month, approximately 250 families visit the pantry and are able to extend their meager food budgets

Together all the programs at El Sol have reduced poverty, hunger and food insecurity and promoted health in a culturally competent manner.

Organization Category -- Winner -- \$75,000

Starting Right, Now

St. Petersburg, Pinellas County

Health Equity

Founded in 2007, Starting Right, Now's (SRN) mission is to end homelessness for unaccompanied youth by providing a stable home, promoting educational achievement, securing employment, teaching financial literacy/life skills, and valuing one-on-one mentoring.

SRN's comprehensive programming targets homeless unaccompanied youth, an economically-disadvantaged, underserved population. These students in high school are not living with a guardian and are ineligible for foster care because they were not taken from their family by the Department of Children and Families, but rather chose to leave due to unlivable circumstances. Homeless unaccompanied youth commonly report family disfunction and/or economic insufficient as the primary reason they cannot live at home. Unaccompanied youths endure living without housing, food and health care, a caring adult, hygienic facilities, and



transportation. Unhoused, traumatized, and alone, homeless unaccompanied youths display high rates of illness and mental health challenges. They are at risk of school failure, incarceration, and death.

SRN removes obstacles such as poverty, discrimination, and their consequences. SRN empowers homeless unaccompanied youth to become self-sufficient citizens, breaking the cycle of generational homelessness and poverty. SRN is the only program in Florida to offer comprehensive wrap-around services, including long-term housing, to homeless

unaccompanied youth. The comprehensive model includes safe housing, social services, quality health care services, academic support, support systems, financial stability, self-esteem building, and advocacy.

In SRN, students seek to accomplish the following goals:

1. Earn high school diploma: SRN boasts a 97% high school graduation rate, a significant figure when compared to the 73% state average for this vulnerable population.
2. Progress to post-secondary education goal: 100% of SRN's high school graduates receive acceptance to higher education, military, or vocational training.
3. Obtain scholarships and financial aid: SRN's senior classes from 2015-2019 were awarded an average of \$953,368 in scholarships and financial aid.
4. Secure funds in savings account: Students receiving continued case management from SRN while completing their post-secondary education goal maintain an average of \$9,255 in their checking and savings account.

5. Demonstrate improved mental and emotional health: Results from questionnaires, as part of a longitudinal study conducted by the University of South Florida, show significant increases in self-reported rates of hope, coping strategies, presence of a caring adult, gratitude, commitment to school and life satisfaction, as well as significant decreases in self-reported rates of depression, somatic mental health, and stress after just six months in the program.

These benchmarks ensure the students stay employed, insured, and less stressed.

SRN has assisted in changing five laws in the state of Florida to protect unaccompanied youth:

1. Unaccompanied Youth can obtain their birth certificate, social security card and state ID without parental consent statewide
2. Unaccompanied youth have the right to a 14-day expedited emancipation trial without court fees
3. Unaccompanied youth are now eligible for Medicaid and food stamps
4. Unaccompanied youth can consent for their own healthcare, including mental health, as minors
5. homeless higher education tuition waivers are now accepted at all Florida colleges and vocational

Individual Category – Winner -- \$60,000*

Jeffrey Goldhagen, MD, MPH

Medical Director

Partnership for Child Health

Jacksonville, Duval County

Mental Well-Being and Health Equity

As a visionary leader in community and society pediatrics, Jeffrey Goldhagen, M.D., MPH, is a practicing pediatrician and serves as:

- Professor and Chief, Division of Community and Societal Pediatrics University of Florida College of Medicine -- Jacksonville;
- Medical Director of the Partnership for Child Health;
- Medical Director, The Players Center for Child Health at Wolfson Children's Hospital.

Goldhagen is a trailblazer for child health equity by conceptualizing, designing and implementing innovative health and well-being systems to ensure the highest quality of care for children marginalized by societal or environmental factors and funding \$40M in grants and financial support.



His child health equity leadership has resulted in:

- Screening 36,000 children for social and emotional issues;
- Training 6,000 professionals in culturally competent health equity;
- Providing annual nurse care coordination to 600 children in foster care;
- Training more than 300 pediatricians and behavioral health practitioners in a collaborative care model.
- Creating the Pediatric Wellness Center to serve children who were Battered, Abused and Neglected and provide them with a continuum of care.
- Providing LGBTQIA+ children and youth with access to medical and mental health professionals through JaxYouthEquality.com.
- Forming a Center for Children's Rights to create policy reform and provide systems to support youth in the juvenile justice system.
- Establishing a Children's Ombudsperson to bolster youth voice and participation through Child Friendly Schools and Full Service Schools.

His life work is laser-focused on improving the health, equity and well-being of all children and he is accomplishing this by:

- Creating three health care systems expanding access to care by establishing an innovative blueprint for child health in five counties.
- Collaborating and leading 45 community providers to create the evidence-based Jacksonville System of Care Initiative — a national model for social change now in its tenth year.
- Leading local, regional and global discussions, education and policy change on child health equity and a rights-based approach to health care. See curriculum vitae.
- Bringing in more than \$40M in funding and writing new grants to continue to advance and expand child health equity.

- Identifying gaps and mitigating the impact of COVID-19 to children: digital divide, food insecurity, mental health, etc. (ongoing)
- Coalescing a child rights and health equity movement through UNICEF USA with five U.S. cities becoming Child Friendly Cities.

*Award funds are directed to the individual honoree's affiliated nonprofit organization.

Individual Category – Finalist -- \$40,000*

Karen Woodall

Executive Director

Florida Center for Fiscal & Economic Policy dba Florida People’s Advocacy Center

Tallahassee, Leon County

Health Equity

Karen Woodall has 40 years of advocacy and organizing around issues pertaining to health, economic security, economic development, immigration and racial justice connecting the dots between direct service and changing public policy. She began this work while a student at Florida State University. Her focus was on community organizing and she has continued to work on policy issues in the state legislature and in Congress by organizing the people who are directly impacted by policy decisions.



Her long-time vision of finding a place that low-income individuals and nonprofit organizations from around the state that are working to achieve racial, social and economic justice can call home in Tallahassee when they come to the State Capitol to advocate for themselves and their communities has become a reality in the Florida People’s Advocacy Center. It has become a safe place for training, strategizing and working together to bring equity across the board especially to impoverished communities of color. This applies not only to physical and mental

health and well-being, but to a broader understanding of equity in individual and community well-being.

In addition to the Florida People’s Advocacy Center, Karen rallied farmworker organizations to believe their voices mattered and that collectively they could make a difference. She was instrumental in the push for farmworker rights, drawing together the farmworker organizations around pesticides, housing, food availability, health care, childcare and more. She has advocated for immigration reform, teaching others how to be their own voice. Her fight for farmworkers extended to all poor.

No other person has dedicated a life more to the welfare of all people.

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