

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
May 28, 2014

For information contact:
Christopher Simoneau at (239) 590-1067

\$2 Million Gift Funds Scholarships for Healthcare Majors at FGCU

FORT MYERS, Fla. -- Community Health Association, Inc. (CHA), a private nonprofit foundation based in Lehigh Acres, made a \$2 million commitment to Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) in support of scholarships.

For more than 45 years, the Community Health Association has been promoting health education and improving the quality of care in Southwest Florida. In this, its final year, CHA decided to create an unprecedented legacy at FGCU to benefit the community of Lehigh Acres, its residents and the field of healthcare.

In 1998, CHA established a tuition assistance endowment with the Florida Gulf Coast University Foundation to support Lehigh Acres residents pursuing degrees in health-related fields. Since that endowment was established, more than \$26,000 has been awarded to deserving students from the earnings of that invested fund.

Today's \$2 million gift--100 times more than the original gift--will significantly increase the good that the Community Health Association Scholarship Fund is accomplishing.

To build on its past support for FGCU students, CHA board members asked that scholarships generated from this gift be "meaningful" to the student's individual circumstances. At a minimum, the scholarships will help cover the costs of tuition, fees and books.

These need-based scholarships will be awarded to students from Lehigh Acres who are in good academic standing at Florida Gulf Coast University. Priority will be given to students accepted into the Nursing Program, students enrolled in the other health-related degree programs within the College of Health Professions and Social Work, and students enrolled in the College of Education.

"We are deeply grateful for CHA's long tradition of support as well as the board's foresight in anticipating the long-term needs of the community," FGCU President Wilson G. Bradshaw said. "These scholarships will make a significant impact on the personal and professional lives of our students, while producing skilled graduates to meet regional workforce demands."

By providing students with financial assistance and meaningful encouragement, CHA plays a vital role in ensuring their success at FGCU and in the professional world, according to Mitchell L. Cordova, Professor and Dean of the College of Health Professions and Social Work.

"For many students, the cost of education is a difficult hurdle to overcome. With scholarships, dedicated students are able to better focus on learning and becoming the best

healthcare professionals they can be,” Cordova said. “It’s not only the students and college that benefit, but also the healthcare industry and all of the community members it serves.”

Belinda Celestin, last year’s recipient of the Community Health Association Scholarship, sent CHA a letter expressing sincere appreciation and excitement at the possibilities the scholarship affords her. “In my wildest dreams I never really thought I would get to become an actual nurse in my future.” She ended her letter, describing her elation on the day she learned of the award, with, “That day will be forever ingrained in my memory due to all the emotions I was feeling: happy, ecstatic, disbelief, dreamlike, and just an all-encompassing reality that I would finally get to start the process of becoming what I want to be for the rest of my life.”

The FGCU Foundation supports the University’s educational mission by securing and administering gifts on its behalf, managing its endowments and allocating funds that advance student achievement and enhance academic programs. For more information, call the Foundation at (239) 590-1067.

-FGCU-