



May 10, 2020

Dear Cliffs Resident Outreach (CRO) Supporter,

I am writing to you today to provide an annual report and update of how Cliffs Resident Outreach – Keowee Vineyards is supporting our schools and children in Pickens County. This is NOT a fundraising letter. I simply want you to know how your donations are helping the children of Pickens County.

What started out as a fairly normal school year certainly isn't ending that way. Fortunately, CRO has been able to adapt and assist in these unprecedented times. ***Thanks to YOU and your generous and sustained support***, CRO is in a sound financial position to help at a time when it is critically needed. The CRO Council is so grateful that you have trusted us to make wise allocations and enabled us to have sufficient funds to respond to these extraordinary times. Please read on for the highlights of this year.

Library Outreach Vehicle (Bookmobile)

The Pickens County Library System (PCLS) is working through the finishing touches and launch plan for the first mobile library in Pickens County. If ever there is a time when a mobile literacy outreach program is needed, then it is now. PCLS has the staff for this program and CRO is providing the vehicle. Unfortunately, Covid-19 has disrupted the manufacturing and delivery of the vehicle. But the library staff is preparing to launch it as soon as they can get it. ***CRO has provided 100% of the \$53,000 funding for this vehicle and the equipment and materials needed to finish it out.*** The library intends to use this vehicle to deliver programs not just “books-on-wheels”, hence the hesitation to call it a bookmobile. The vehicle will be equipped with an exterior awning plus carts and furniture that can be rolled out and set up outside the vehicle for conducting outreach programs.

Distance Learning

When the schools shut down for COVID-19, distance learning started up. For distance learning to be effective, technology must be available on both ends of the wire, so to speak (to see and listen). And critically, “the wire” has to be available to connect the two. The Pickens County school district worked to insure all school students could connect, with the priority being the secondary school students first. The state of South Carolina dispatched 3,000+ school buses with mobile Wi-Fi hotspots so students without Wi-Fi could connect. Both Pickens and Hagood Schools have mobile hot-spot areas in their parking lots that are available to students for connectivity. CRO has offered and will support purchasing mobile hotspots and connectivity solutions for families that do not have internet access. Additionally, each of the schools we support is developing a distance learning “wish list” should distance learning continue to be required in the fall.

Camp iRock

For the last 4 years, the Pickens County United Way in partnership with the Pickens County School District and the YMCA of Easley, Pickens and Powdersville has conducted a successful summer academic camp at the elementary school level. The program focuses on preventing the “summer slide” and helping rising 1st - 4th graders who could use a boost to be at grade-level when the school starts. The students are nominated by teachers to attend a fun, high-energy summer academic program for 8 weeks. A program that started with 4th graders to insure they are ready for 5th grade has been extended to a lower grade each year. Now, fewer 4th graders are needing the extra assistance from Camp iRock. The results are clear and it is exciting. CRO has provided \$7,500

to support this summer's Camp iRock. While the status of this year's Camp is under discussion, our funds are earmarked for camp use.

Family Assistance

This has been a particularly hard year for some of our student's families. Even before the outbreak of COVID-19 and the corresponding economic impact, CRO had stepped in to provide emergency assistance:

CRO assisted an entire family who was dealing with an infestation of lice both personally and in their home; CRO assisted a homeless single mother bridge the gap in her housing situation. Now, our school principals are learning of situations daily - directing families to social agencies and asking for help from CRO when there is a gap. CRO has paid the electric bill for a single mother of two children who was reluctant to ask for help but clearly needed electricity. CRO has bought educational supplies for schools who in turn have provided them to students and their families. Recognizing the urgency and need to empower the "front line", the CRO Council spent \$2,000 to purchase \$100 gift cards to Ingles Supermarkets and Walmart. An additional \$1,000 was used to purchase gift cards to local restaurants for their curbside meals. Each elementary school principal received an allotment to disperse to families needing assistance.

School Facilities

As in the past, CRO has provided field trip scholarships and supplies for the schools. This year CRO also was asked to help replace a washer & dryer at Hagood School. The twenty year old washer & dryer are failing and this equipment is frequently used to clean children's clothes – accidents do happen – as well as supplies. With the closure of the schools, the purchase is on hold but we have reserved the \$1,000 funds. Additionally, at the beginning of the school year CRO assisted in purchasing \$1,200 of equipment for the set-up of a new second grade classroom. Both Pickens and Hagood schools are at full capacity!

Two years ago the CRO Council decided to use a portion of each year's fundraising to establish a \$15,000 reserve fund. The intent of the reserve fund is to buffer CRO during poor fundraising years or in times of catastrophic emergencies. The reserve is fully funded and so far, we have not needed to dip into our reserve fund.

All of this and more would not have been possible without you. As we look forward, our focus on education, literacy and family emergency assistance will remain. While it is not yet clear what may be required in this next school year, we stand ready to assist our students and schools in recovering from the shutdown. We will continue to endeavor to fill the gaps – stepping in where agencies and social programs cannot.

While this is NOT a fundraising letter, please be aware that due to ongoing Covid-19 concerns, we have postponed to 2021 our "*Play It Forward*" fundraising event. Stay tuned for an "alternative" invitation to support CRO in 2020.

On behalf of the CRO Council and with sincere and deep appreciation,

Dick and Jean Ann Bollman
CRO-Vineyards Co-Directors
CRO Council:
Ann Ackley (Treasurer)
Rob Ackley
Penny Barr
Lou Brand (mentoring focus)
Stephanie Cookson
Jan Heppe
Paula Nesbitt
Mary Whitaker
Laurelle Williams