

One of the best kept secrets in Naples is tucked away in the industrial area off of Old US 41 in North Naples. Those that are aware of the Gargiulo Education Center, know of the great work that is being done there. The Center is transforming lives of impoverished, latchkey students through education. Among its programs are the Entrepreneurial Apprenticeship Program teaching real-world skills to all of the almost 70 migrant students enrolled in the free after school and Summer programs. The students learn work skills such as: etiquette, operations, administrative, marketing and technology, among others. They are taught through a hands-on approach as well as through experiential educational outings to places such as Memory Care Centers, Country Clubs and the Naples Airport, to name a few.

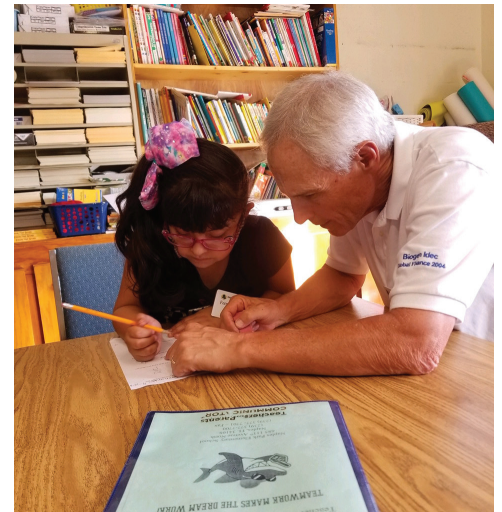


"These trips are intended to share with these students the variety of career and trade options that can be attained, many of which require formal education but not necessarily a full four-year education," stated Mary Asta, Executive Director.

Asta has just celebrated her second work anniversary with the center, but is by no means a stranger to the world of philanthropy. Asta served as Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer at the Fisher Center for Alzheimer's Research Foundation at Rockefeller University in New York City. There she developed the foundation's structure from the ground up, raising millions of research dollars as well as in-kind support. She has sat on the board of and/or advised several foundations, including The Intrepid Museum, Fisher House Foundation, Michael Stern Parkinson's Foundation, Fallen Heroes Funds, and Hanover Charities. But when she met the students at the Gargiulo Education Center, she was compelled to re-enter the non-profit world. "I will not allow these students to be lost in the system," says Asta. "We are their second home and are passionate to share academic and entrepreneurial enrichment, encouragement and respect, with each one of our students. They want to better their stations and are willing to put in the work to do so."



In addition to the Entrepreneurship Apprenticeship Program, the curriculum is rich in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM). "These are the skills that will propel these students into the in-demand careers that they will encounter," claimed Asta. She stated that the students are well loved and cared for by hard working parents. Unfortunately, due to the limiting nature of



their parents work, extremely long hours and lack of basic education, including English, the students are not exposed or even aware of much of the outside world, let alone that they have opportunities. She intends to reveal and prepare these kids for the jobs that are available and well-paying in the future. Some careers will require advanced degrees, but many of them may only require a higher level of education beyond high school.

Finally, the Gargiulo Education Center has layered an beta program this year, the SMART program; building emotional intelligence. The acronym stands for Serenity, Meditation, Awareness, Respect and Trust. After discovering the limited emotional and mental health support for these students, Asta worked with mental health professionals and her certified teachers, to develop this vital program. "Many of these children have severe anxiety, depression or anger issues as a result of the migrant lifestyle. This program has helped them to overcome many of these issues. The future looks bright for these students," claimed Asta. They are excelling and have shown notable grade and testing improvements as well as emotional stability to handle emotional stress and pressures.

If you would like to tour the Gargiulo Education Center or to help support their mission through volunteering or financial support, please visit www.Gargiuloed.org or call 239.596.1975.