

Naples wine festival donors meet kids impacted by funds

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COLLIER COUNTY, FL - Over \$146 million - that's how much money the **Naples Winter Wine Festival** has raised since 2001. Those funds are distributed to 45 children's charities throughout Collier County and help transform the lives of underprivileged and at-risk kids.

It's one of the biggest charity wine auctions in the world, and it's back in Naples this weekend. With its return is the chance to raise millions of dollars for local children's charities.

But before the country's elite bid at the largest charity wine auction in the world, they were able to see the impact the Naples Children and Education Foundation has on local families at the annual Meet the Kids Day event.

This year, the event was held at **Grace Place in Naples** -- one of the Collier County nonprofits that benefit from the NWWF auction.

"Without NCEF and the Winter Wine Festival, none of us would be able to do the things we're doing," said Dr. Tim Ferguson, CEO of Grace Place.

The money raised by NCEF has helped support programs for more than 200,000 children -- like 10-year-old Gabriella Castro-Davila.

Gabriella participates in programs at the **Cal Ripken Sr. Foundation**.

"It's really fun because you get to learn how to play baseball. You get to learn how to have teamwork, sportsmanship, leadership and encouragement, which is the most important," said Gabriella.

This year's initiative is children's health. One student says the money raised will help them follow their dreams of becoming a doctor.

"SSTRIDE gave me a chance to learn what being an OB/GYN is and helping with the medical technology and being netiquette, knowing how to dress, being professional," said Ashley Decius who participates in the **SSTRIDE program**.

Attendees were able to meet some of the children who benefit from the grants first-hand. Many say it is the best part of the event-filled weekend.

"It's inspiring beyond belief. It's amazing to see the challenges some people face when you hear the stories and actually see them meet these challenges and deal and rise above. It's great," said Jerri Hoffman who is attending the Naples Winter Wine Festival for the first time. "It's inspiring beyond belief."

"[It's] the best part of the weekend because you see the kids and how wonderful they are," said Denise Cobb, NWWF co-chair.

More than \$11 million was raised at last year's auction. Saturday's auction boasts some of the most exclusive items including one-of-a-kind experiences

and trips.

"Our goal is to raise as much money as possible. Remember, bid early and bid often. It's all for the kids," said Cobb.

- [**CLICK HERE to see some of the auction lots**](#)

