



## 2022-2023 CRO-Vineyards Mid-Year Report

January, 2023

Dear Friend of Cliffs Residents Outreach - Vineyards,

With our annual donor tax letters in process, I wanted to take this opportunity to THANK YOU for your support of CRO-Vineyards and provide a mid-year update. We had a very successful fundraising effort last June raising a total of \$172,000. Simply amazing! While the bulk of those funds come from YOUR individual donations, we also did well with our event proceeds from the Auctions (live and silent), the Wine Pull and the Ticket Sales for the Play-It-Forward Golf Challenge. I would especially like to thank our Corporate Partners, who are a key component of our success, and are highlighted on the last page of this letter. Our Corporate Partners contribute either cash or items for our auctions. We are grateful fans of them and we hope you are, too!

Here is a mid-year report on what your donations are accomplishing for the children of Pickens County, South Carolina:

### **Family Emergency Aid**

While not the largest area of our spending, the family emergency aid situations always tug at our hearts and CRO-Vineyards always budgets funds to respond to emergency aid requests for the families in the schools we support. In all cases, these funding requests come directly from those school Principals. So far this school year we have supported the following requests:

- When a teacher was helping a young student with his coat and backpack, several roaches made an appearance! This led the school to request CRO-Vineyards fund pest control treatments for the family's house. \$135 that we did not hesitate to pay!
- A young student was out of school for several months due to an illness. During the day, she was cared for by her grandmother at her grandmother's house. For the student to keep up with her schoolwork she needed access to the internet, which the grandmother did not have at her house and could not afford. The school was able to get the grandmother approved for a reduced monthly internet fee but the \$180 installation costs were not part of the assistance. CRO covered the internet installation and set up fees. The student was able to keep up with her assignments and is now back in school half days.
- A single father was unemployed and looking for work. While he owned a truck, the truck was not insured and therefore he could not transport his young children or look for work. The school researched and found a policy and CRO provided 6 months of payments to help the father get back on his wheels.
- A grandmother was raising her grandchild and had recently moved to South Carolina after the grandfather had passed away. The move required transitioning the child's Medicaid support which paid for the child's medicine. This transition led to a gap period with no coverage for the prescription. Once again, the school stepped up to help and CRO stepped in to pay the \$388.26 needed for the prescription.

Applause for the school principals and their staff! I am constantly amazed at what they do and how they go about assisting their students and families with life situations.



**Early Childhood Literacy**  
**Dolly Parton's Imagination Library**  
Big. Bold. Now Available in Pickens County!

***CRO-Vineyards started with a 40 child pilot at the Holly Springs preschool one year ago, and now 12 months later, 76% of Pickens County children under 5 years old are eligible to receive a free book monthly through this program.***

Organized by zip codes, DPIL mails an age appropriate book every month to registered children between the ages of 0 and 5. DPIL is an award winning, well-established and well-organized program that now ships 2 million plus books a month...all over the world. Entire states, like North Carolina and Kentucky...and more recently California, have adopted and funded DPIL statewide. For \$2.20/month or \$26 per year, a registered child receives a book every month (and that includes shipping and postage!). Because the Dolly Parton Foundation covers the overhead and administrative costs, 100% of our funding goes directly to purchasing and mailing books to our registered children.

CRO-Vineyards's goal is to provide Imagination Library access to every eligible child in Pickens County. There are an estimated 6,636 children under the age of 5 in Pickens County. The funding requirements for that goal could eventually be in excess of \$130,000 per year, which is more than CRO-Vineyards can sustain. Rob Ackley, who is leading our DPIL effort, has been busy recruiting funding partners so all the Pickens County zip codes are sponsored. And we are almost there! ***Eight out of ten Pickens County zip codes are now sponsored and 1,465 children have registered!*** We are delighted that CRO-Springs, The Reserve Foundation and First Steps of Pickens County have joined us and collectively we can now work on growing our registrations. We are still working to find a sponsor(s) for the remaining two zip codes. Stay tuned!



CRO-Vineyards has spent \$13,500 since we launched DPIL and we have budgeted \$50,000 of your donations to cover the costs for 2023 and 2024 as participation grows in the zip codes we support. We did not want to start a program that we could not sustain. Thus we plan to always stay one budget year ahead of our estimated funding requirement, We look forward to sharing more about this exciting new effort as it grows and as we reach out to you again this year for support.

**YAM Instrumental Music Program at Pickens and Hagood Elementary Schools**



Research shows that instrumental music training fires up the brain circuitry that is also used for languages and math. While the Pickens County School District does not offer a full instrumental music program at the elementary school level, they do make their school facilities available to Young Appalachian Musicians (YAM) for after school lessons. ***YAM introduces children to the music of their heritage through small group instruction in instruments common to the Appalachian region*** (fiddle/violin, guitar, banjo, mandolin).

Although the program has been around since 2007, enrollment dropped significantly during the pandemic as school facilities were closed for after school lessons. CRO challenged YAM to increase their enrollment by offering funding for instruments and scholarships. We also offered to fund a pilot for YAM Plus, a new initiative that targets academically challenged students. Each YAM Plus student is enrolled free of charge and receives a weekly tutoring session after their weekly group music lesson. Here is what the Program Director at Pickens Elementary said about one of her YAM Plus students:



*"One of our third-grade boys tried YAM Camp this summer and asked to take his guitar home. When we sent interest letters for fall enrollment, he did not return his. (I feel it may have been a money situation.) When he was invited to join YAM Plus, the paperwork came back immediately. He has not missed one lesson or one tutoring session. At the beginning of the year, he was below the 54 percentile in reading and in the 50 percentile in Math. At the winter benchmark he is now in the 69 percentile in reading and 69 percentile in math. This means he is meeting the 3rd grade goals at this time. Can all of this be attributed to a 45 min. tutoring session and 45 minutes of music each week? Probably not. BUT his behavior and academics have improved. He can't wait to get to YAM each week."*

This year YAM has increased their enrollment across Pickens County from 160 to 400 students. Hagood Elementary went from 0 enrolled students to 38 students. At Pickens Elementary we now have 61 enrolled students! We are currently supporting 25 children in the YAM Plus Academic program at Hagood and Pickens Elementary Schools.

CRO-Vineyard's \$21,000 grant has covered 1) the restringing of instruments, 2) free or reduced fees so no child is financially prohibited from participating and 3) full scholarships for the Hagood and Pickens Elementary students in the YAM Plus Academic program. YAM was able to leverage CRO-Vineyard's funding with the Pickens School District and convince them to offer YAM Plus at additional elementary schools. That's music to our ears!

### **FOLKS Jack Lewis Watershed Stewardship Scholarship**



Jack Lewis was a beloved member of the Vineyards community and a twenty year volunteer with Friends of Lake Keowee Society, a 501(c)3 dedicated to preservation and conservation of our beautiful Lake Keowee and watershed. Jack was a past President of FOLKS and recently they named a scholarship in his honor. ***The Jack Lewis Watershed Stewardship Scholarship is a \$2,500 scholarship awarded to high school students who show a strong interest in natural resource conservation and the environment.*** FOLKS received 10 applications for scholarships in 2022 and awarded scholarships to 5 students. This year CRO-Vineyards has endowed two scholarships for Pickens County students. The scholarship application is due January 31st and winners will be announced March 1, 2023.

### **Flame Fridays at Pickens High School**



The Pickens High School Principal recognizes that many of his high school students are not free to participate in after school clubs, sports or activities. Research shows that students that are engaged with their fellow students are less likely to drop out and generally perform better. Over 56% of the Pickens High School student population is identified as pupils in poverty (PIP). It is very difficult for these students to stay after school for clubs because many of them work to help support their families or are the caregivers for younger siblings or cousins so that the adults in the family are free to be full-time wage earners in the evenings. Another challenge is that many of the students are highly dependent on the school bus system as the Pickens attendance area runs from the county border with Greenville County all the way to North Carolina.

This situation led the PHS Principal to initiate "Flame Fridays" and dedicate a school hour, every other Friday, to club activities ***so every student can participate in a club***. The goal is create a culture where every student feels a sense of belonging. CRO Vineyards provides \$50 to each club each semester to offset expenses and student fees.

### **Pickens Middle & High School Robotics Club**

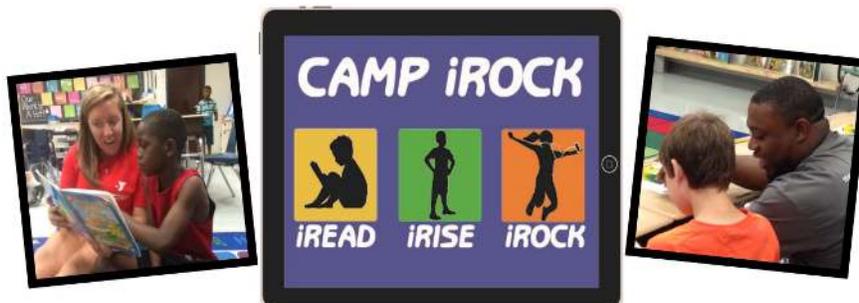


Courtesy photo  
Pickens Middle School students Cassidy Riddle, left, and Zoe Morris recently qualified for the VEX Robotics World Championship in Dallas, Texas.

Building on the success of last year's 7th grade team that qualified for the World Competition, CRO asked the Robotics Club teacher what she needed to expand and grow participation. She provided us with a list of technology items from robotics kits to GPS technology that would enable participants to develop higher level programming skills and allow more students to join. One robotic kit costs \$1,200. CRO provided \$9,608 to purchase the new technology. The Robotics Club teacher has used the older technology to expand robotics learning to 6th graders.

### **Camp iRock**

Not surprisingly, elementary level reading competency took a hit during the pandemic. Last year and this year will be key to getting students back on track. Camp iRock is an award winning summer reading camp that targets students needing a little extra boost to reach grade level reading skill before the next school year. Camp iRock attendees are nominated by their teachers and attend free. CRO, once again, is providing \$10,000 to Camp iRock for this summer's camp.



### **One School, One Book**

Last summer, CRO funded a summer pilot of One School One Book for Hagood Elementary School. Pickens and Hagood Elementary school offer this program during the school year in which one book is selected and the entire school community - parents, volunteers, and teachers - reads that book over a period of weeks to the children. CRO has budgeted \$5,000 to purchase all the books for this summer's initiative and have reached out to Pickens Elementary to see if they would also like to participate. CRO's goal is that every child at these two schools will go home at the end of the school year with the selected book and recommended activities for the parents and children to follow.



### **Angel Tree**

Once a year, volunteers from our community provide some holiday cheer for deserving children in our area. This past year Pickens and Hagood Elementary School staff selected 20 children for some extra aid and 20 volunteer angels rallied to their cause. Each volunteer purchased needed clothing items and a gift, then wrapped them all so the parents could give them to their child. In total, their gifts represented \$3,000 in donations.

**Thanks to YOU and your generous and sustained support**, CRO is in a sound financial position to pursue expanding our support in Pickens County. CRO-Vineyards is vetting other grants as I write this mid-year update. This year's fundraising efforts will insure we can continue to support the schools, the Imagination Library and instrumental music programs and many more initiatives for next year and beyond. 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 new opportunities.

Please feel free to contact anyone on the CRO Advisory Council with suggestions or questions or to join the Council!

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

Jean Ann Bollman, Advisory Council Chairman

Ken Michaels (Treasurer)

Rob Ackley

Penny Barr

Rebecca McNichols

Stephanie Cookson

Jan Heppe

Paula Nesbitt

Dick Bollman

Jeanette McCarthy

Brenda Schultz

Laurelle Williams

**Save-The-Date**  
**CRO-Vineyards 2023 Annual Fundraiser**  
**Monday, June 12, 2023**

## ***Cliffs Residents Outreach Corporate Partners***

**CRO-Vineyards would like to gratefully acknowledge the generous and sustained support from our Corporate Partners. Donations are shared across multiple Cliffs Resident Outreach community branches.**

### **Presenting Partner**

***The Cliffs***

### **Titanium Partner**

***Kroeger Marine***

***South Street Partners***

***Fairview Custom Homes***

***Palmetto Upstate Group-Dream Yard Sports***

### **Platinum Partners**

***Justin Winter Sotheby's International***

### **Gold & Silver Partners**

***Villa Verona Design***

***The Dental Retreat***

***Singleton Marine***

***Retracta Screen***

***Audi of Greenville***

***Dave Vandeputte / Joan Herlong Sotheby's***

***Resource Land Holdings***

*Cliffs Resident Outreach, 501©3, is a 100% volunteer organization focused on the literacy, nutrition and well-being of children in Pickens County, SC. CRO-Vineyards utilizes 98% of its donations for grants to qualifying organizations or individuals within our focus. Funding supports initiatives for pre-school age children through high school. In general, our expenses are less than \$2,000 a year and cover items like our website cost, post office box rental and very limited printing, mailing or fundraising expenses. For family emergency aid, our funds typically cover situations at one of the schools we support. In those schools, 70%+ of the student body is at or below the poverty threshold for government benefits.*