In the 2021-2022 grant cycle, the Beaches Community Fund’s top priority continued to be HELPING NEIGHBORS MEET THEIR BASIC NEEDS.

Ensuring Beaches residents have access to healthy food, shelter, health care, mental health support and emergency financial assistance in times of crisis has long been a priority of the Beaches Community Fund. This was especially true during the pandemic, as needs skyrocketed in 2020 and remained high in 2021. In 2022, many lower- and middle-income Beaches residents were still recovering from pandemic-related financial hardship when they were hit by rising prices, especially for housing and food – which meant they had little cushion for unexpected expenses.

The Fund’s biggest investment this year was to help ensure our neighbors did not go hungry – through BEAM’s Mayport pantry and mobile pantries, Blessings in a Backpack’s weekend food bags for children receiving free and reduced lunch during the school week, and a partnership with Feeding Northeast Florida, which keeps healthy food flowing to all Beaches organizations that provide meals and food support.

Health care for low-income residents was another top priority. Led by member Dr. David Loeb, the Grants Committee hosted a series of conversations among Beaches nonprofit health care providers and key funders to ensure collaboration and avoid duplication. The Fund made grants to WeCareJax for the Beaches Health & Wellness Collaboration and to the Sulzbacher Beaches Clinic to expand dental care, which ensured residents got the care they needed while reducing inefficiencies in the system.

(continued on back)
The Fund has made 14 grants to organizations providing in-school supports, afterschool programs, and enrichment for low-income students.

Among these, two highlights are our long-term partnerships with Communities in Schools and Baptist Health.

This year, the Fund made its fifth grant providing partial funding to Communities in Schools for the Student Enrichment Program at Mayport Middle School. A case manager works in small groups and one-on-one with struggling students to address challenges with behavior, academics, attendance, social dynamics and basic needs. The program has proven so successful that Fund members Glenn and Lisa Ullmann and Greg Landwirth funded a companion program at Mayport’s feeder elementary schools.

The Fund made its third grant this year to the Tipping the Scales mentoring and job skills program at Baptist Beaches, with similarly impressive results.

Both programs have been instrumental in helping teens through the learning losses of the pandemic, mental health strain and years of financial hardship in their families.

To learn more about the Beaches Community Fund, an initiative of The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida, call (904) 356-4483 and ask for Tom Caron at tcaron@jaxcf.org, or Kacie Smyth at ksmyth@jaxcf.org.