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UWCK & UAE Celebrate Two-Year Anniversary of Reef Revitalization Project

Reef Renewal USA to begin work on restoring Looe Key

Florida Keys— The United Way of Collier and the Keys (UWCK) and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are celebrating two years of partnership in revitalizing the iconic coral reefs that run throughout the Florida Keys. This project, which also includes diverse educational and stewardship programs, began with a \$3.5 million gift from the UAE in February 2020.

“It’s amazing to think we are two years into this life-changing project,” said Florida Keys Area President Leah Stockton. “Our partnership with the UAE has been tremendous, and we look forward to continuing this vital work in restoring Florida’s coral reefs and ensuring the continued financial stability of our community.”

In May of 2021, UWCK awarded \$2.1 million to begin restoration efforts at Carysfort Reef in the Upper Keys and Sombrero Reef in the Middle Keys. Earlier this month, UWCK awarded \$209,000 to Reef Renewal USA to begin work on Looe Key, located in the Lower Keys. Reef Renewal USA will use innovative techniques to outplant more than 10,000 corals and utilize 5,000 volunteer hours throughout this 4-year grant.

“Reef Renewal USA is excited to broaden and strengthen our partnership with the United Way of Collier and the Keys while engaging the volunteer networks of both organizations,” said President Mike Echevarria.

In addition to coral restoration, several educational programs are part of the revitalization project. These include marine science education grants to Monroe County schools and educational facilities as well as higher education scholarships awarded to students seeking advanced degrees in marine science-based fields.

“Empowering the next generation of reef stewards is a vital aspect of this project,” said Jessica Dockery, Reef Revitalization Project Liaison. “We need to ensure that the work being done today continues into the future, and these students are the ones who will one day keep the reefs protected.”

To find out more about *Revitalizing the Florida Keys Through Reef Restoration and Beyond*, visit KeysUnitedWay.org.

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About United Way of Collier and the Keys:

The United Way of Collier and the Keys (“UWCK”) is committed to improving lives by mobilizing the caring power of community to advance the common good. We will accomplish this through improving education, economic stability and health, as well as providing access to food and safety net services. United Way plays a unique role in convening businesses, nonprofits and government to work together to address community needs. Give. Advocate. Volunteer. LIVE UNITED. For more information, call the Key West office at (305) 735-1929.

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