



The Paul A. & Veronica H. Gross
WILDLIFE CENTER
OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA
Educate Rescue Rehabilitate Release



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Wildlife Center of Southwest Florida awarded a \$25,000 grant from the Community Foundation of Sarasota County to help fund a new seabird rehabilitation therapy pool.

The grant received will be used to install this habitat-specific therapy pool for our native seabirds.

Venice, Florida – The Paul A. and Veronica H. Gross Wildlife Center of Southwest Florida has just begun a major expansion of its wildlife hospital and rehabilitation center. The expansion includes species-specific habitats and enclosures. One very important species-specific habitat that is currently underway is the seabird habitat. In order to better rehabilitate seabirds such as pelicans and loons, a new therapy pool is needed. Funding for this new therapy pool is provided in part by the Animal Welfare Grant from the Community Foundation of Sarasota County.

The drastic decline in our native wildlife population is a major cause for concern. The mission of the wildlife center is to protect and preserve Southwest Florida's native wildlife through educational outreach and to rescue and rehabilitate sick, injured, and orphaned wildlife and return them to their natural habitat when healed. While the center began as a small operation seeing just over 300 animals a year. They receive thousands of animals every year now. 2022 brought in well over 5,000 animals in need of medical attention. With our area's rapid development, Florida's wildlife is experiencing human encroachment at an unsustainable rate.

With the larger influx of patients, the center's expansion is imperative. The new seabird habitat's design incorporates a much-needed therapy pool. The pool is designed to improve the way these beautiful birds and their seafaring neighbors are rehabilitated. It is designed to reduce their overall stress levels, which will help them recuperate better and faster. The pool will also provide the perfect environment to test waterproofing, a prerequisite to their release.

The center looks forward to its upcoming ground-breaking ceremony which will kick off the site's groundwork in preparation for the installation of the new therapy pool. The center's Executive Director, Pamela DeFouw shared "We are excited about all the changes and upgrades happening. Our center has come a long way and all of the upcoming improvements have been designed with each animal's welfare and survival in mind."

Thanks to the grant, presented to the center by the Community Foundation of Sarasota County, the center is ready to get the therapy pool plans underway.

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About the Wildlife Center of Southwest Florida

Wildlife Center of Southwest Florida, a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit, extends care to native wildlife including reptiles, mammals, and birds but excluding marine animals. They have various programs to help educate the community about the importance of wildlife to the environment and ecosystems and how humans can successfully co-exist. For more information about the Wildlife Center of Southwest, visit wildlifeswfl.org.

About the Community Foundation of Sarasota County

The Community Foundation of Sarasota County is a public charity founded in 1979 by the Southwest Florida Estate Planning Council as a resource for caring individuals and the causes they support, enabling them to make a charitable impact on the community. With assets of \$520 million in more than 1,570 charitable funds, the Community Foundation awarded grants and scholarships totaling \$27.5 million dollars last year in the areas of education, the arts, health and human services, civic engagement, animal welfare and the environment. Since its founding, the Community Foundation has been able to grant more than \$350 million to area nonprofit organizations to our community thanks to the generosity of charitable individuals, families, and businesses. For more information, visit www.CFSarasota.org or call (941) 955-3000