



# Marine Education Initiative

Annual Report  
2023







# A WORD FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

I'm excited to share the highlights of 2023 and our vision for 2024. The year has been marked by significant achievements, showcasing the collective impact of our efforts in education, food security, and community collaboration.

In April, the inauguration of our Aquaponics Center marked a pivotal moment in our commitment to access to STEM education and food security. More than 500 students have benefited from STEM education programs, fostering a passion for science and technology. Simultaneously, we've provided over 75,000 nutritious meals to local soup kitchens in South Florida through the cultivation of fresh produce at the center.

These accomplishments wouldn't have been possible without the unwavering support of our donors, the dedication of our volunteers, and the collaboration with numerous partners. Their commitment has played a crucial role in making a lasting impact in the South Florida community. As we celebrate these achievements, we acknowledge that there is more work to be done.

Our gratitude goes out to everyone who has been part of this journey. The journey toward creating lasting change is ongoing, and we invite you to be an integral part of it. Join us as we forge ahead, making a meaningful difference in South Florida and beyond.

With gratitude,

**NICK METROPULOS, CFRE**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR





## EDUCATION PROGRAM

We're thrilled to have welcomed Alyssa Dorfman as our new Director of Education this year. Her belief that science is accessible to everyone, coupled with her passion for ocean preservation, has inspired her to educate a broader audience. We are delighted to have her on board, and her passion and dedication have inspired our team to achieve several milestones. One of our notable achievements is becoming an approved field trip provider with the Palm Beach County School District, with a focus on sustainability and conservation topics. This has enabled us to share our knowledge and expertise with a wider audience and create a positive impact on our students. In the 2023 school year, we have already educated over 500 students at our new Aquaponics Center, and we are committed to continuing this program and expanding it to reach even more South Florida students. We believe that by educating the younger generation, we can create a positive impact on the environment and promote sustainable practices in our community.

# A TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE

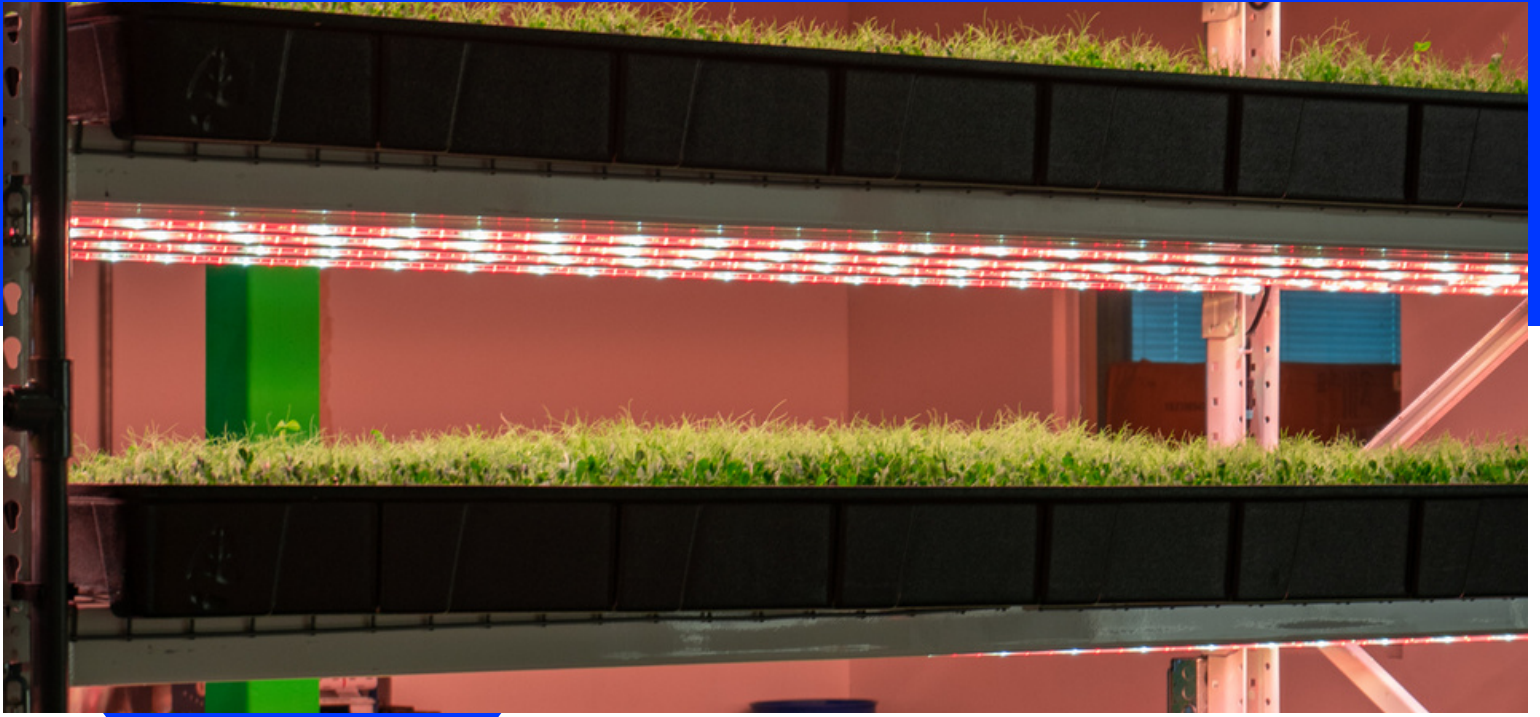
Our Responsible Angling Education Program began as a way to teach students about marine conservation using fishing as a tool to do so. This program has reached multiple cities and countries, including the Bahamas, and has taught thousands of students how to be better stewards of our marine ecosystems. Recently, on a trip to Bimini, Bahamas, our Executive Director, Nick, ran into one of his former students, Bryan, as Bryan is now a jet ski tour guide on the island.

Bryan shared that he is now able to share his passion about marine life with visitors to the island. Bryan had a dream—to delve deeper into marine science, to understand and protect the ecosystems he had come to cherish. Bryan wants to study marine science when he goes to college so can further care for his local marine ecosystems. It was a full-circle moment, a testament to the transformative power of education and the enduring impact of a program that aimed not just to teach but to kindle a flame within the hearts of its students. As Bryan spoke of his aspirations, Nick couldn't help but feel a swell of pride. The program had not only equipped Bryan with knowledge but had sown the seeds of a lifelong commitment to our oceans.

Thanks to your support we can continue to educate and spark a passion in marine conservation for students like Bryan in our programs.







## FOOD SECURITY PROGRAM

**75,000**      **100,000**  
**MEALS**      **MEALS**

donated in 2023

projected to be donated in 2024

Since our expansion in April 2023, we have more than doubled our weekly produce donations to local soup kitchens. Delivered within 48 hours, our pesticide-free, nutritionally rich produce adheres to the highest food safety standards. This support ensures access to fresh goods, contributing to overall well-being and promoting a more nourishing diet for those most in need.





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**WITH YOUR HELP, WE...**



**EDUCATED OVER  
500 STUDENTS**

**PROVIDED OVER  
75,000 MEALS**



**SAVED OVER 150,000  
GALLONS OF WATER**



**REDUCED OVER 10,000  
POUNDS OF CARBON  
DIOXIDE EMISSIONS**





# Testimonials

“I learned today about how plants grow and survive only with water and no soil. I think it is cool to farm plants only using fish, bacteria, and water”

**Gabriel, 10 American Heritage**



“Farm Share is grateful for Marine Education Initiative’s commitment to addressing food insecurity through innovative and sustainable hydroponic food production. Their generous donations of healthy and nutritious food products provide Farm Share with the resources it need to distribute life-sustaining food to hungry persons throughout South Florida. Farm Share looks forward to continuing to collaborate with MEI to increase its production and distribution volume and the corresponding impact this will have on addressing hunger in a responsible and sustainable manner.”

**Stephen Shelley, CEO of Farm Share**

“It was fun and meaningful. I learned something new and I want to be a part of helping.”  
**Laylah, 16 PACE Center for Girls**

“I think my experience at the aquaponics center was extremely interesting. I was not bored for a second and I am so happy that you brought in the plants we planted. Aquaponics is very important and an efficient system.”

**Eric, 12 Boys and Girls Club Miami Dade**



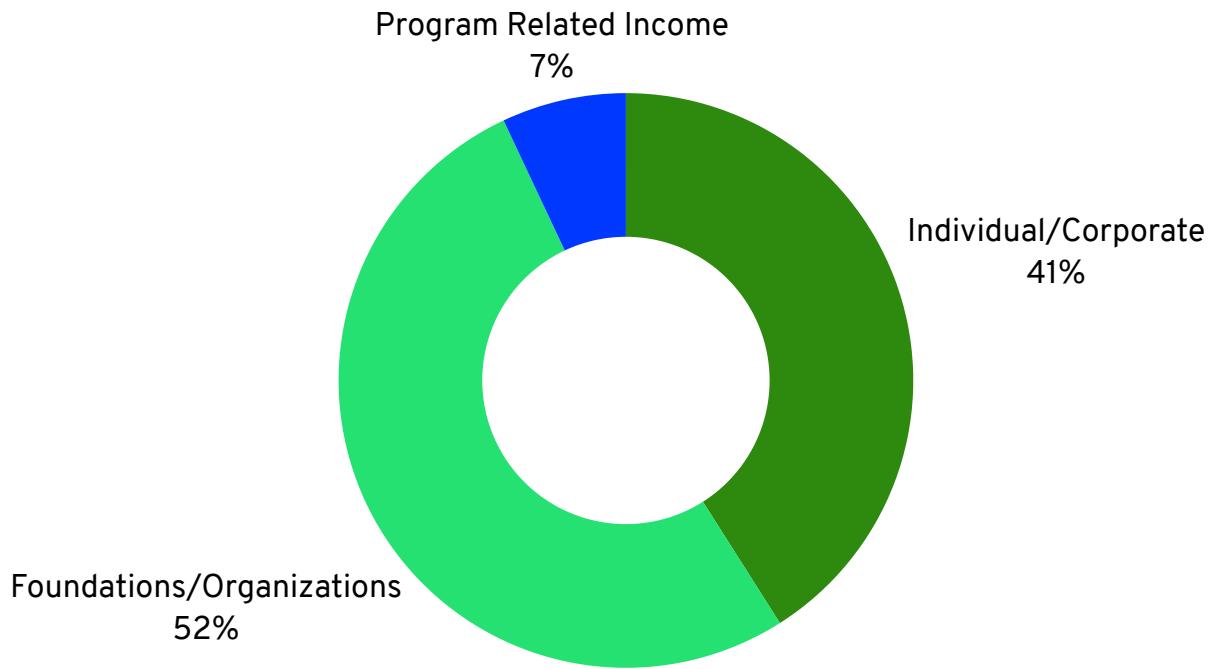
“The students loved having the opportunity to do Hands-On Science and see how Science can help not only our community with the way you collaborate with Boca Helping Hands but even globally. The way there was a follow-up in-class experience at our school site was so much fun for our students as well. They couldn’t believe how fast things grew and enjoyed the harvest.”

**Nicolette, PBC 6th Grade Teacher**

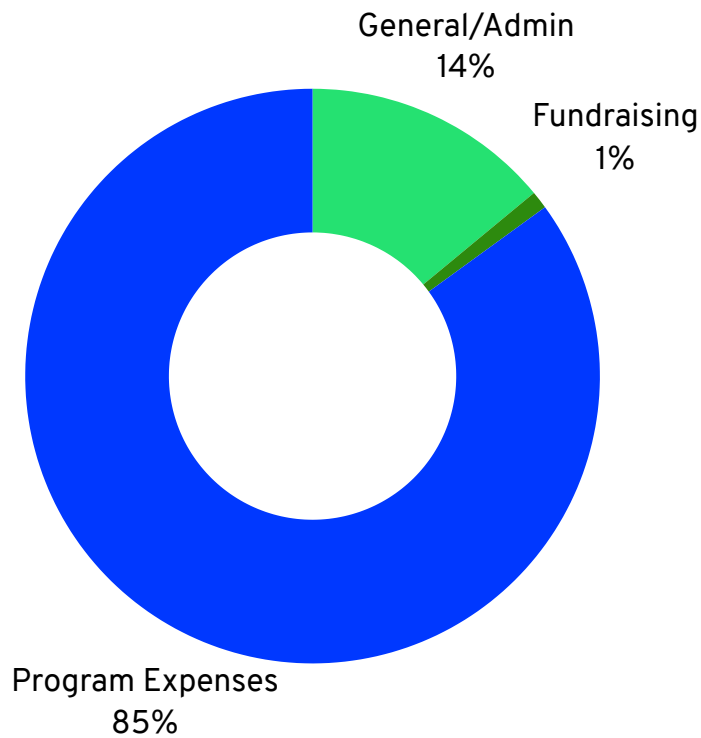




# SOURCES OF INCOME



# EXPENSES



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# 2023 CONTRIBUTORS

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT! We greatly appreciate the generosity from the following individuals, organizations, corporations, and foundation for helping to support our efforts.

## CHANGEMAKER: \$50,000 - \$99,999

Impact 100 Palm Beach County  
The Sodexo Stop Hunger Foundation  
United Way of Palm Beach County

## ADVOCATE: \$10,000 - \$49,999

Colburn Family Foundation  
Fish Florida  
Impact 100 Men  
JM Family Enterprises  
Leslie L. Alexander Foundation  
LIV Golf  
Moss Foundation  
Palm Health Foundation  
Pat Moran Family Foundation  
The Primerica Foundation

## LEADER: \$1,000 - \$9,999

Asofsky Family Foundation  
Blue Lake Elementary School  
Florida Blue Foundation  
GEO Group Foundation  
George and Melissa Nottingham  
Goody Two Shoes Inc  
Grandview Preparatory School  
Gary Peters Family Foundation  
HVC & NC LP

Juan Pellerano  
Lev Investments  
Lucas Metropulos  
Marine Industries Association of Palm Beach  
Matthew McKay  
Nozzle Nolen  
Normandy Insurance  
Rotary Club of Downtown Boca Raton



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## EVERYDAY HERO: \$1 - \$999

Alexandra Vavoulis  
Andrew Cassas  
Angel Garcia  
Anita Orr  
Anne Barksdale  
Bill Harper  
Brian Oliver  
Charles Tumazos  
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Christina and Erik Vander Kolk  
Christina Hicks  
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Ron Oppenheimer  
Sports in Action Club - Saint Andrews  
School  
Stefanie Karangelen  
Tim Sharp  
Tony and Eleni Alexiou  
Yianni Karangelen



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# SPONSORS







# Thank You for an Amazing 2023!



*Marine Education Initiative (MEI) is a  
501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.  
EIN: 45-3862555*

