2023-2024 Grant Finalist Summary
American Association of Caregiving Youth | Caregiving Youth Project
Impact Focus Area: Education/Family

The Organization
American Association of Caregiving Youth champions, supports and celebrates youth who provide care for chronically ill, injured, elderly, and/or disabled family members. Founded in 1998 in Boca Raton, FL, what evolved to become the American Association of Caregiving Youth (AACY) by 2010 has been at the forefront of addressing the needs and challenges faced by this huge, hidden population for over 16 years. The organization offers direct services to middle and high school students in Palm Beach County and is a leading national authority on matters related to Caregiving Youth.

The Program
In 2006, AACY's Caregiving Youth Project made history by becoming the first program in the U.S. to provide direct services for caregiving youth. The agency currently serves 538 students at 37 middle and high schools across Palm Beach County. They plan to use impact funding to expand services to an estimated 30 students at two Title 1 middle schools in northern Palm Beach County: Jaega in West Palm Beach and Crestwood in Royal Palm Beach. Through a Cooperative Agreement with The School District of Palm Beach County, AACY provides needs-driven wrap-around support customized for each family.

- In-School: Skills-building support groups using a copyrighted AACY-developed curriculum, individual caregiving coaching support, and Lunch and Learn sessions.
- At home: Family assessments from a qualified social worker Family Specialist, special projects (such as ramps for wheelchairs), respite care and house cleaning for those who qualify, laptop/computers as needed, tutoring services, educational support, and more.
- Out of School: overnight camp, picnics, education, Holiday celebrations, and fun/educational activities are provided. These activities allow much-needed freedom away from adult responsibilities and stressors.

Services are provided at no cost to families and continue throughout the calendar year until either the care receiver is no longer in need of assistance, is deceased, or the student opts out, moves or graduates. Students are 89% minorities, 85% are financially insecure, and 20-25% live in single-parent or grandparent homes. The program aims to prevent school dropout due to caregiving responsibilities, and empowers students to achieve success despite challenges.

How will this program impact Palm Beach County?
The program's impact in Palm Beach County arises from its compelling reduction of the dropout rate among Caregiving Youth in Palm Beach County schools, breaking the cycle of limited educational attainment and fostering a more resilient and educated community. Early research in Palm Beach County indicated that there were more than 10,000 public middle and high school students who were doing some level of caregiving. One-third report they are missing school, not completing homework, having trouble focusing, or a combination of all these. Research shows Caregiving Youth have more stress, anxiety/depression, physical issues, and sleep deprivation. Caregiving Youth exhibit remarkable qualities such as maturity, compassion, the ability to form strong adult relationships, altruism, selflessness, adept problem-solving skills, and a drive for excellence in life. A significant number of them aspire to pursue careers in healthcare, a field in urgent need of attention and dedicated professionals.

Measurable Outcomes
At least 90% of Caregiving Youth participants will graduate from high school
At least 90% of students will move on to the next grade level on time
85% of students will learn to manage stress

How will Impact Palm Beaches grant be used?
$55,000 for existing staff salaries/benefits; $5,000 for office supplies; $5,000 for student transportation; $5,000 for tutoring services; $6,000 for laptops and IT support; $1,000 for basic needs support; $5,000 for background checks; $10,000 for professional cleaning services; $5,000 for client field trips; $3,000 for rent and insurance