

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 30, 2025

CONTACT: Alissa Hudak – Alissa.Hudak@uwcollierkeys.org



Delegation to Travel Abroad for UWCK-UAE Coral Reef Learning Exchange

Collier and Monroe Counties, FL: United Way of Collier and the Keys (UWCK) announces a groundbreaking **Coral Reef Learning Exchange** with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) from February 3-8. This international initiative brings together UWCK leaders and top coral reef experts for a weeklong exchange, fostering collaboration in reef restoration, conservation, and sustainability.

Organized by the UAE Embassy in Washington, DC, the delegation will be led by Dana Al Marashi, Head of Cultural Diplomacy at the UAE Embassy, and includes: Tiffani Mensch, President & CEO, UWCK; Leah Stockton, Keys Area President, UWCK; Jessica Dockery, Reef Revitalization Project Liaison, UWCK; and mid-career marine biologists and coral restoration experts from across the U.S. and its territories.

“This exchange provides an invaluable opportunity to strengthen global partnerships and advance the science of coral reef restoration,” said Tiffani Mensch, President & CEO of UWCK. “By collaborating with experts in the UAE, we share insights and innovations, learning from each other to enhance the sustainability of our reef ecosystems.”

Strengthening International Collaboration

The delegation will visit Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and other key sites, engaging in high-level discussions, hands-on reef restoration activities, and cultural exchanges. The program is designed to enhance global conservation efforts by sharing best practices in reef restoration, sustainability, and marine science education.

A Partnership Built on Impact

This exchange builds on a five-year UWCK-UAE partnership focused on revitalizing the Florida Keys through reef restoration and beyond. In 2020, the UAE contributed \$3.5 million to UWCK to fund reef restoration and education—the first major private-sector gift to Mission: Iconic Reefs, a project restoring seven reefs in the Florida Keys. This donation was part of the UAE’s \$10 million commitment to Florida’s recovery after Hurricane Irma.

“We’re looking forward to sharing the real, multifaceted, and forward-looking UAE,” said Dana Al Marashi, Head of Cultural Diplomacy at the UAE Embassy. “Through this exchange, we’ll introduce outstanding people and organizations who share common goals. I’m confident this experience will foster lasting connections and create new opportunities for collaboration.”

#####

About United Way of Collier and the Keys: United Way of Collier and the Keys (UWCK) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the education, health, and economic mobility of our neighbors in Collier and Monroe Counties. Through strategic partnerships and collaborative efforts, UWCK addresses critical social issues and works towards driving positive, sustainable change to build stronger, healthier, and more resilient communities.