

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 30, 2025

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

United Way of Collier and the Keys (UWCK) is excited to announce the launch of a Coral Reef Learning Exchange with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) from February 3-8. This collaborative exchange is designed to enhance efforts in coral reef restoration, conservation, sustainability, and education.

The trip will include Tiffani Mensch, UWCK President and CEO; Leah Stockton, UWCK Keys Area President; Jessica Dockery, UWCK Reef Revitalization Project Liaison; Alissa Hudak, UWCK Communications and Engagement Manager; selected marine biologists and experts in coral reef restoration from across the U.S. and its territories.

The delegation to the UAE is hosted by the United Arab Emirates embassy in Washington, D.C., and led by Dana Al Marashi, Head of Cultural Diplomacy at the UAE embassy.

“We are excited for this opportunity to share knowledge, experiences, and ideas with our counterparts in the UAE,” said Tiffani Mensch, President and CEO of UWCK. “This exchange will support our mission to revitalize coral reefs in the Florida Keys and further strengthen our international collaboration with the UAE.”

The focus of the exchange will be learning opportunities, cultural experiences, and hands-on engagement related to reef restoration. The week-long trip will include meetings and site visits in Dubai, Fujairah, and Abu Dhabi.

The collaboration between UWCK and the UAE has been ongoing for five years, centered around the “Revitalizing the Florida Keys through Reef Restoration and Beyond” initiative. The project is critical to restoring and maintaining a healthy, sustainable reef ecosystem, which supports the livelihoods of over 60% of residents in the Florida Keys.

Partnership History

In February of 2020, UWCK announced a \$3.5 million gift from the UAE to fund groundbreaking reef restoration and educational projects. This donation was the first major contribution to Mission: Iconic Reefs, a bold initiative designed to restore and protect seven iconic reefs in the Florida Keys. The UAE’s gift was part of a broader commitment of \$10 million in assistance to the state of Florida following the devastation of Hurricane Irma in 2017.

“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. “We’ll introduce exceptional people and organizations who share common interests and similar stories. I’m confident this trip will be an eye-opening experience, fostering long-lasting connections and creating valuable opportunities.”

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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.