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## NEWS RELEASE

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### COMMUNITY TAKES A STAND FOR CIVILITY

VENICE, FL (October 3, 2007) – What if you received a smile with every sales transaction and smiled back? What if your neighbor picked up your trash can lid rather than watching it blow down the street? What if you didn't shake your fist at the driver who wouldn't let you merge into traffic? Research tells us that those actions would make us feel good. And emotions are contagious. When humans feel good, those good feelings extend to the next person we encounter. Human brain chemistry signals us to feel better about the world around us. That is the essence of *Because It Matters*, the civility initiative announced today by Gulf Coast Community Foundation of Venice (Florida).

“When we communicate in a more respectful and effective way, we feel better about the world around us, and we pass it along,” said Foundation President and CEO Teri A. Hansen. “*Because It Matters* gives all of us an opportunity to improve the quality of life in our region, one encounter at a time.”

*Because It Matters* is the culmination of an effort begun several years ago by the Foundation with the appearance of Robert Putnam, the author of the groundbreaking

book “Bowling Alone.” Putnam’s premise is that the opportunities for creating social capital have diminished over the past few decades and civility has suffered. Last year, the Foundation invited Daniel Goleman, best-selling author of “Emotional Intelligence” and “Social Intelligence,” to address the community about social neuroscience, which stresses the importance for individuals and communities of making effective connections. Following Goleman’s presentation, more than 100 individuals in the community volunteered to continue the discussion about civility, and *Because It Matters* was born.

“Our community volunteers are our unsung heroes,” said Hansen. “They responded immediately to these concepts and encouraged us to use our resources to make the region aware of civility and how it improves quality of life. Introducing *Because It Matters* to our region is a wonderful testament to their dedication to making a difference.”

The volunteers were instrumental in developing *Because It Matters* programs for the workplace, neighborhood and civic organizations, and schools through Community of Caring. All of these programs are available at *BecauseItMatters.net*. Materials created for the initiative also include handy cards that community members can pass on to others to recognize good deeds they witness. Promoting the concept of “paying forward” such acts of kindness to make our world a better place, the cards will encourage community members to share their stories and read those of others at *BecauseItMatters.net*.

### **Media Campaign to Support *Because It Matters***

*Because It Matters* will be supported by a media campaign featuring prominent celebrities, each embodying and championing a “Key to Civility.” One of the underlying premises of *Because It Matters* is that by practicing the keys to civility, behaviors will change and our quality of life will improve. Some of the celebrities who have lent their support are NFL Hall of Fame football great Lee Roy Selmon, renowned ESPN basketball analyst and announcer Dick Vitale, Master’s golf champion and current PGA Senior Tour member Mark O’Meara, world-renowned landscape photographer Clyde Butcher, and one of the greatest tennis professionals in history, Martina Navratilova.

“We are a culture that responds to icons,” said Hansen. “These icons have generously donated their time to communicate their values in the hope that we send a message about making a difference. We are honored to have them on our team.”

Gulf Coast Community Foundation of Venice builds strong communities through leadership, partnership, and endowed philanthropy. A public charity committed to improving the quality of life in the communities it serves, it is the largest community foundation in Florida with assets of \$260 million. The Foundation was founded in late 1995 and has awarded nearly \$70 million in grants in the areas of arts and culture, health and human services, education, civic affairs, and the environment.

The Board of the Foundation envisions a region known for endowed philanthropy, a vital nonprofit community, and the ability to address emerging issues.

For more information about the Foundation, visit [gulfcoastcf.org](http://gulfcoastcf.org).

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