
Lead from Where You Are: Apply to Grow Your Leadership and Make an Impact!

Vision and Purpose of the Emerging Leader Program

The Suncoast is known as an attractive region that has seen continued growth over many decades. Over the past several years, the Sarasota/Manatee area has experienced a sustained population boom, bringing increased prosperity while also creating growing and complex community needs. Research shows that the wellbeing of a community largely depends on its [social determinants of health](#) (SDOH). To achieve “[social and physical environments that promote good health for all](#)”, the local health and human services sector must continue to develop compassionate and competent leaders.

Bill and Barbara Little have spent decades working in health and human services and in nursing education, respectively. They have watched ideas blossom into vibrant programs and networks that make our region unique. Together, they are committed to carrying forward a legacy of steady and innovative leadership, helping our community thrive amid continual growth and evolving challenges.

Bill and Barbara established the Emerging Leader Program to develop the future leaders who will shape Sarasota’s human services community in the coming years. The Emerging Leader Award recognizes and empowers emerging leaders in physical, behavioral, and environmental health; human services; and arts & culture.

“The quality of life in a community rests upon the quality of life of its people” – Dr. Kay Glasser

The Recipient’s Journey

Each recipient will receive a \$1,000 award to support an initiative where they can apply and demonstrate the leadership principles learned through this program. The award is for an initiative that benefits their organization or the community, while also helping the participant grow as a leader.

Projects may be new or ongoing, as long as the applicant can clearly describe how their role in the project will allow them to practice and strengthen leadership skills. The award is meant to serve as a catalyst, moving the initiative forward while fostering meaningful leadership development.

Each will also receive a copy of the book, *The Leadership Challenge*, by Kouzes and Posner, which outlines [The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership® Model](#) and will meet four to five times during the award year. Meetings will include discussions about how they are using their award, community leadership challenges they are facing, and lessons from the book, which will serve as a guide for discussion and growth. Sessions will be facilitated by Bill and Barbara Little, and the Caring Collective, with occasional guest mentors offering guidance and support.

Who Should Apply/Ideal Awardee

There will be four Emerging Leader Awards presented, at least one from each of the following three categories:

- Physical, Behavioral, or Environmental Health. Includes work that helps the health in communities, through mental health, counseling, addiction services, public health, community health outreach, environmental services, education and outreach, or related work.
- Human Services. Includes work in programs and services such as legal and social justice, housing insecurity, foster care, family services, early childhood, or supportive services for individuals with low or limited income.
- Arts and Culture. Includes work focused on education in the arts, cultural diversity and awareness, and programs that strengthen community wellness through the arts.

Candidates for the award can be nominated by their employers, supervisors, and/or peers. Nominees are not sector-specific, and can work in public service, community service, or nonprofits.

This program is for emerging leaders at new or mid-level, whether they currently hold a formal leadership role or are ready to lead from where they are. We are looking for individuals who are eager to develop their leadership skills, make an impact in their organization or community, and take initiative to create positive change.

The ideal awardee:

- Is actively building leadership skills and seeking opportunities to grow, whether in an entry-, mid-level, or informal leadership role.
- Demonstrates collaboration across teams, departments, or sectors, valuing diverse perspectives.
- Prioritizes the greater good and community impact, understanding how their organization contributes to broader goals.
- Thinks systemically and creatively to identify solutions and drive positive change.

Note: Applicants with long-standing executive experience or extensive leadership in other contexts may not be the best fit, as this program is designed for individuals who are still developing their leadership potential.

Nomination Process

Nominations will be due by December 5, 2025. A complete nomination includes:

- a letter from the supervisor/employer or peer, describing why their nominee is an emerging leader, and
- a letter from the nominee describing in 500-1,000 words
 - 1) what experiences, actions, or qualities demonstrate their ability to lead, influence, or make a positive impact, even if they do not currently hold a formal leadership role,
 - 2) areas for potential growth and
 - 3) initial proposal for use of their \$1,000 award for an initiative that benefits their organization or the community and allows them to practice and strengthen their leadership skills.

- This proposal can be adjusted during their award year and need not be the final use of the award.
- The award may be for a new initiative or improve/expand an existing effort and not necessarily cover the full cost of the initiative.
- The scope of the proposal should be achievable within the year.

Note: The \$1,000 award is meant to support your project, not for personal training programs, tuition, or conference fees.

A decision panel will determine the award recipients. Awardees will be announced January 5, 2026, and invited to receive their recognition at the Collaboration Celebration breakfast held on Thursday, March 5, 2026 by Caring Collective. During their award year, recipients will take part in a brief video presentation of their project that will be shown at the next annual Collaboration Celebration.

Key Dates

- November 3, 2025 – Applications open
- December 5, 2025 – Applications close
- January 5, 2026 – Awardees announced
- March 5, 2026 – Awards presented at the Collaboration Celebration breakfast

APPLICATION FORM

Nominee Category

- ☐ Physical, Behavioral, Environmental Health ☐ Human Services ☐ Arts and Culture

Nominee

Name _____ Job Title _____

Organization _____ Work Address _____

Email _____ Preferred phone number _____

Nominating Supervisor/Employer/Peer

Name _____ Job Title _____

Organization _____ Work Address _____

Email _____ Preferred phone number _____

Application Checklist

- ☐ Letter of nomination from the supervisor/employer or peer, describing why their nominee is an emerging leader.
- ☐ Letter from the nominee describing what has made them a successful leader, areas for potential growth and initial proposal for use of their \$1,000 award to benefit their organization or the community (500-1000 words).
- ☐ Completed application form
- ☐ Short bio of the nominee

Submission

Please email your completed application with all attachments in PDF or Word formats to: info@caring-collective.org

For questions, contact:

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