The Multicultural Health Institute (MHI) and Know No Bounds (KNB) committee would like to thank you for supporting our Summer Tech Program. Your recognition of the great group of students engaged in learning Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math and Health fields through APP development was so important and inspiring.

As you are aware, there are significant achievement gaps and health disparities due to complex psychosocial factors that adversely affect students of color and their families in the Manasota region. This leads to increased absenteeism and or more limited capacity to fully attend to academic issues; as well as lowered literacy and graduation rates for them and their families of origin and concomitant cultural and linguistic hurdles navigating the educational process.

The academic achievement gap has narrowed between Whites and students of color, however, career awareness and full college readiness remains lacking among these at risk groups from vulnerable communities. According to the Florida Department of Education high school statistical analyses, the Sarasota school district total number of graduates by race in 2015-2016 was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Number of Graduates</th>
<th>Graduation Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>1,949 out of 2,214</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>408 out of 520</td>
<td>78.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>191 out of 248</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Improvement in graduation rates may be due in large part due to collaborative efforts of organizations such as MHI, Unidos Now, Boule, New College Florida, and several other organizations working closely with the innovative leadership of Dr. Rachel Shelley at Booker High School, which has the highest number of AA and Hispanic High School students in the district. In addition, ongoing community based interventions have been supportive such as Ms. Paulk’s SOAR academy, Ms. Jones after school program, Brotherhood of Men and ongoing educational programs at Emma E Booker Elementary and Booker Middle schools. There remains concern that the total cohort may not fully reflect students lost in 9th grade or earlier, and there remains a need to reduce attrition while continuing to boost overall graduation and college readiness rates. Thus focusing on middle school students is crucial.

The MHI-KNB Committee is a community-based coalition working in collaboration to uplift minority and vulnerable youth in the community. It is the only community driven technology/entrepreneurship/academically focused collaborative led by members of the underserved communities frequently targeted for outside interventions. Each Board member within its own organization has the experience and similar core values from serving the community and developing youth capacity in underserved and minority communities. It is our hope that additional funding can be identified for our ongoing collaborative and individual efforts. The goal of MHI-KNB committee is to continue programs of learning and host an after school program and to continue the Summer Tech program annually. With support from leaders like you, we will continue to uplift our communities’ youth and inspire a future generation of STEAMH leaders.

Your support is deeply appreciated.

Dr. Lisa Merritt  
MHI-KNB Committee Chair  
Daje Austrie, Teacher  
Neirda Lafontant, Teacher  

677 North Washington Boulevard  
Sarasota, FL  34236  
Tel: 941.225-8198  
www.the-mhi.org