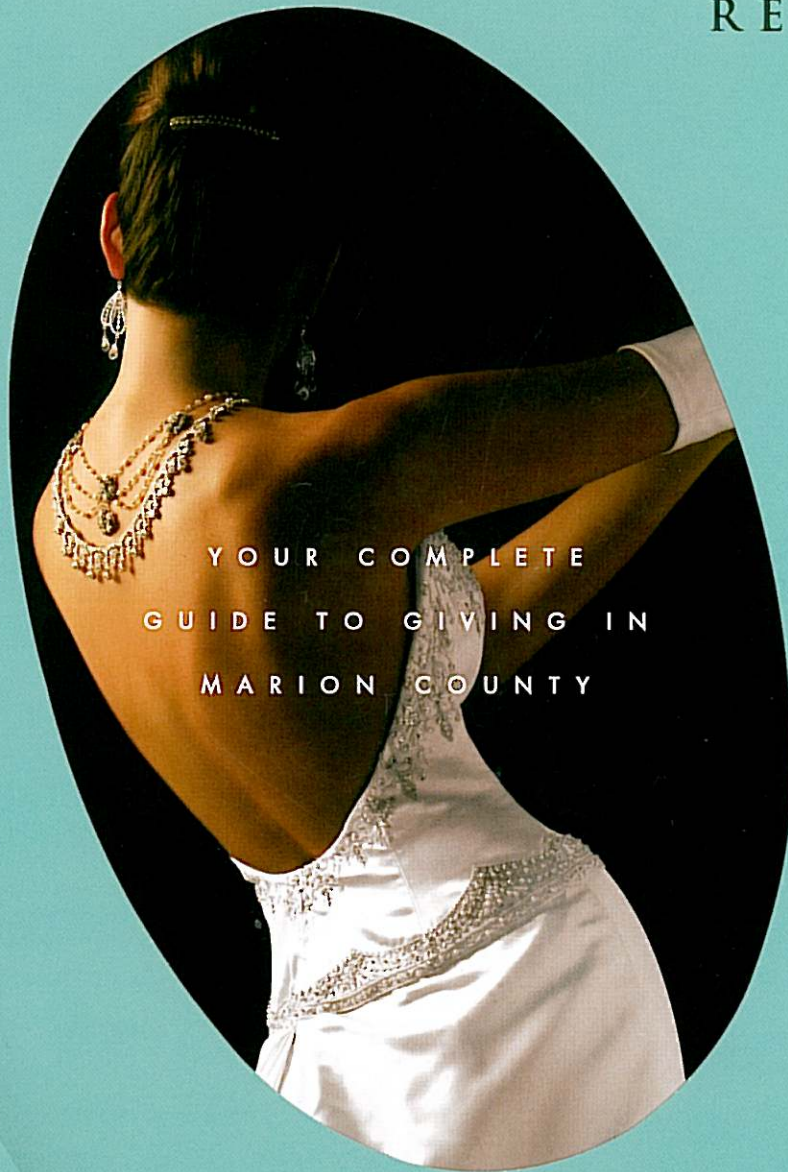


# THE Ocala Charity REGISTER



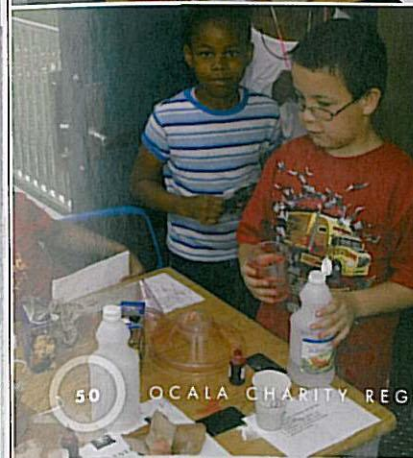
YOUR COMPLETE  
GUIDE TO GIVING IN  
MARION COUNTY

FROM THE PUBLISHER OF  
OCALA MAGAZINE



# LIFE IN MICRO

COLLEGE PARK ELEMENTARY IS CHANGING THE FACE  
OF FUTURE GENERATIONS — TODAY.



**IT'S NINE IN THE MORNING** and downtown Huskyville is bustling. Citizens, young and old, are shopping, selling, keeping the peace. The door to the quilt shop is wide open and a peek inside reveals a dozen or so seamstresses and tailors working hard, singing, "Let it sew, let it sew, let it sew," while creating one-of-a-kind pillows guaranteed to be big sellers for Mother's Day, which is right around the corner.

Down at Husky Union Bank, a steady flow of customers keeps the calculators humming. Clients wait in line for tellers, depositing paychecks, changing bills, and more. Behind the tellers' long counter sit accountants, balancing books, issuing overdraft notices, checking and rechecking the numbers of commercial life.

Further down Huskyville Square, past the gazebo where citizens sit reading and playing, is the very popular specialty shop that caters to the town's pets. The cleverly named "Barkery" is doing steady business, selling its unique puppy treats to all the dog owners in town.

And earlier in the day, Judge Shawn, appointed about a month ago, presided over a theft case in Husky Court, with no less than four witnesses testifying. As the Judge himself acknowledges, even in quaint Huskyville, "there is always a certain amount of drama going on."

It looks like just another day in the bustling life of small town America. In many ways, it is. Then again, in many ways, it's not. You see, every citizen of Huskyville, including Judge Shawn, happens to be a student at College Park Elementary School. Husky currency, while valuable, is not minted by the U.S. Treasury. The storefronts on the square are not stores at all, but portable classrooms. Huskyville may not be a "real" town, but it is something very, very close: a *MicroSociety*.

**IT WAS IN 1967** that teacher George Richmond created the very first *MicroSociety* for his 33 at-risk, "war-torn" fifth graders in a Brooklyn, New York, elementary school. Like teachers everywhere, then and now, he struggled with not just educating his children, daily answering their "Why do I need to know this?", but maintaining a sense of order and discipline in the classroom, enabling them so that they *could* learn.

One day, the exhausted Richmond hit on a visionary idea. He imagined a place where children would be "taking charge of their own education, acquiring the skills, confidence, and creativity they would need to become productive and responsible citizens of the adult world." Indeed, these are the very lines that later appeared in his

Harvard doctoral thesis, published in 1973, entitled *The MicroSociety School: A Real World in Miniature*.

But back in 1967, he realized that not one of the elements of adult civil society existed in the classroom — no freedom, no private property, no private wealth. He, the teacher, was the judge, the jury, and the "executioner." This paradoxical recognition was a breakthrough. *Just how do we teach our kids to be successful adults when nothing in the classroom reflects the adult world?*

From that realization blossomed a small market economy, based on the exchange of goods and services initially driven by students earning money through homework and good test scores. From the very first day, Richmond realized that his micro-economy would be a revolution inside the classroom and out. As a teacher, instead of the tyrannical despot he saw himself becoming, he became more of a governmental entity, setting some rules, letting his pupils make others. What he had done was simply

turn to one of the founding ideas of this nation — the free market. It just so happens that enveloped in this capitalist notion are parallel ideas of personal responsibility, freedom, choice, rewards for hard work and intelligence, and so on — all of which he unleashed upon his classroom.

The power and benefits of the microcosm he had created overwhelmed even him.

**IN A REGULAR CLASSROOM**, the value of good grades is dependent on the reward system a student encounters at home. Within a *MicroSociety*, however, rewards are immediate and tangible.

*MicroSocieties* pull learning out of a passive mode, into an active and involved one. As Richmond wrote of his first micro-experiment, "a curtain was being drawn aside, admitting the world to the classroom," including the world's moral and ethical lessons. In *MicroSocieties*, students internalize a positive ethic about work, responsibility and citizenship in a democratic society.

What regular elementary school students might term "abstract" mathematics — from geometry to square roots — takes on a whole new meaning in a *MicroSociety*. They use math in their "careers" as bankers, entrepreneurs, and builders of innovative products, and even at tasks they wouldn't ordinarily learn until later in life, like balancing their checkbooks.

"They reveal themselves to be quite shrewd businessmen and women," says Gregg Dudley, Principal of College Park. Language skills, mastering oration, and so on lend themselves to effective public speaking and

## WE TEACH OUR KIDS HOW TO BECOME SUCCESSFUL ADULTS ONLY WHEN THE CLASSROOM REFLECTS THE ADULT WORLD.

## The Huskyville Directory

Become involved with our nation's future leaders by promoting, encouraging or contributing to any one of College Park's civic and commercial endeavors:

4U2C Art Gallery	Flowers Grow	Math Mania
Bags to Go	Game Day Live	Multicultural Playground
Bureau of Census and Statistics	Gobs of Goo	Nature's Bounty
Busy Bee Button Factory	Hattitudes	New for You
Cards Galore	Husky Bell Ringers	Pet Rocks
Chamber of Commerce	Husky Communications	Puppet Mania
Court	Husky Farm	Quilt Shop
Crafty Loopers	Husky Health and Fitness	Reading Rally
Crown Jewels	Husky Helpers	Recorded Books
Department of Economic Growth	Husky House of Supplies	Rent-a-Reader
Department of Education	Husky Patrol	Robin's Feeders
Discovery Cove	Husky Post Office	Say Cheese
Extreme Explorations	Husky Public Works	Science Explorium
Flower Power	Husky Recording Studio	The Barkery
	Husky Union Bank	Treasury
	Legislature	Wind Emporium

intelligent debate for MicroSociety citizens who work as lawyers, reporters — for the *Husky Herald* — marketers and elected officials. Social studies take on new meaning when students discover that history's lessons apply daily in their roles as legislators and judges. Hard sciences help students invent solutions to real-world issues like public green spaces (Huskyville Square) and recycling, and to develop marketable products, like the popular wacky goo sold by one creative vendor at College Park. But perhaps the most significant difference that occurs is, as Richmond himself discovered in 1967, that kids actually *want* to be in school.

"It builds great self-esteem and self-confidence," notes Luann Clark, College Park's MicroSociety administrator. "They are proud to be earning money."

As studies show, in nearly every school-wide MicroSociety, attendance statistics skyrocket. A Sioux City, Iowa, school reported a rise from about 70 to over 90 percent attendance. Attendance rates aren't the only changes. In nearby Brooksville, Florida, where Chocachatti Elementary implemented MicroSociety in 1999, office referrals dropped by 69 percent, suspensions dropped by 44 percent and the school earned an "A" from the Florida Department of Education. A 2003 study of schools revealed an average score increase of 14 percent in reading and 21 percent in math, far exceeding the requirements of "No Child Left Behind."

College Park Elementary is no exception. One of only 14 MicroSociety schools in Florida and now in its fourth year, the once "F" school initiated the concept to transform itself through a federal grant program. With the grant now expired, it's time to get the community involved to bring the now "C" school to an "A" level.

Lan and Oliver Plunkett, who heard about Huskyville through Beth McCall at the Public Education Foundation, were among the first to begin donating

their time, money and energy a couple of years ago. They even donated Huskyville's beautiful downtown gazebo, which the students then memorialized with a plaque in their honor.

"Education is the vehicle to a successful life," says Lan, who bubbles with excitement about Huskyville and its citizens. "The community should be aware of MicroSociety and the difference it makes in schools."

Oliver couldn't agree more: "Education is the high-way out of poverty." The Plunketts, themselves products of their own hard work, dedication and acumen, were honored with the "Businesspeople of the Year" award from National MicroSociety last year for their intense support of College Park, and were fortunate then to have met founder Richmond before he passed away late last year. His wife, Carolyn, who since establishing the non-profit consulting service MicroSociety, Inc. in 1991, has successfully encouraged expansion of MicroSocieties into 250 schools in 40 states, and continues to carry on the learning tradition her husband founded.

What Richmond noticed in 1967 is what Dudley, Clark, the Plunketts and all the teachers at College Park are noticing today: that kids are totally engaged and immersed in the experience of it all.

"You won't see kids misbehaving," says Dudley. "They're too busy participating to misbehave." Even when it starts to rain, around 11 a.m., there is no chaos in Huskyville. Vendors simply make their last sales, pack up their wares and close up shop for the day.

The Plunketts and everyone at College Park want the community and its businesses to take part in the successful transformation of the school through MicroSociety. After all, Huskyville is just a reflection of Ocala. Whether you donate supplies, mentor students, or help build up Huskyville Square, the real-world connection for the students is invaluable.

"Ideally, each venture will have a mirror in the real world, a real-world mentor to turn to," says Dudley.

*Become involved by calling Principal Gregg Dudley or MicroSociety Administrator Luann Clark at College Park Elementary School, 352.291.4040.*

