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Release Date

For Immediate Release

GROW CENTRAL FL LEADS ITS 5th ANNUAL SUMMER COMMUNITY BALL DRIVE TO INSPIRE POSITIVE INTERACTIONS BETWEEN COPS & KIDS

MAITLAND, FLORIDA (May 10, 2022) —GROW Central Florida, a 501(c)3 tax exempt nonprofit organization, is leading its 5th Annual Summer Community Ball Drive benefiting 29 law enforcement agencies in Orange, Seminole, Osceola, Lake, Marion, Volusia, and Brevard County. The nonprofit will be delivering community donations to Law Enforcement on Thursday, May 12th at the Oviedo Mall. The 5th Annual Summer Community Ball Drive resulted in over 3,500 sports balls being donated to the nonprofit.

GROW began collecting donated sports balls through local partner locations on April 24th. Volunteers have processed and packaged the donated balls with resources from the Florida Department of Health, Florida Department of Pedestrian Safety, Action for Healthy Kids and information about 211. GROW volunteers and our presenting sponsor, Academy Sports and Outdoors will gather at the **Oviedo Mall parking lot May 12th at 3:15pm** to distribute the supplies to law enforcement at 4pm.

All Seminole and Orange County law enforcement agencies will be present as well as the following sheriff's offices: Osceola, Lake, Marion, Volusia, and Brevard Counties.

The media is **encouraged** to attend this event. GROW leaders and police behind this project will be available for interviews from 3:15p.m. to 3:55 p.m. The event is set to start at 4 p.m. and will end no later than 4:15 p.m.

The new sports balls collected from the community are more than just a ball. Access to sports balls encourages children and families to be physically active, promotes a wide range of basic social skills, helps kids reduce stress and helps foster positive relationships between law enforcement and youth. By participating in GROW's 5th Annual Summer Community Ball Drive, citizens have helped "GROW the good" and contribute to fostering positive interactions between cops and kids.

"For years, GROW has provided the members of the Seminole County Sheriff's Office sports equipment to carry in their vehicles," Sheriff Dennis Lemma said. "These are all pivotal tools that help us connect with the youth in our community and encourage them to get out and be active. We are so grateful for this continued partnership and for helping us build meaningful relationships with the children and teenagers in our community."

"The Orlando Police Department remains committed to increasing opportunities to engage with our youth through efforts like the GROW initiative, so that we can build meaningful relationships between law enforcement and youth in the City of Orlando," Police Chief Orlando Rolon said.

The Orlando City Foundation and Orlando Magic are also excited to help GROW. Orlando City is one of GROW's gold sponsors this year as well as the Oviedo Mall.

"Orlando City SC and Orlando Pride are excited to once again support the GROW CFL Annual Community Ball Drive," Kaia W. Forget, Senior Director of Community Outreach from the Orlando City Foundation, said. "We believe that sports have the power to inspire and unify, and by providing soccer balls to youth in our communities through positive interactions with law enforcement, we are sharing and growing the love of The Beautiful Game and encouraging healthy, active lifestyles."

This project originated in Seminole County five years ago by a group of student leaders at Lyman High School's *Problem Solving Incubator Class*.

Please help us bring this community effort to light and establish a Central Florida Tradition, come see our community in action on May 12th!

For more information on GROW Central Florida visit www.GROWCentralFlorida.org or check our Facebook GROW Central Florida, Inc. for regular updates.



About GROW Central Florida

For more than six years, GROW Central Florida has been providing support for volunteer driven cross-country running programs, shoes for students in need, recess toys for teachers & schools, and has revitalized depressed playgrounds. GROW Central Florida is driven by its mission to make a positive difference in children's lives by increasing opportunities for physical activity and healthy living. GROW Central Florida "grows the good" by focusing on promoting environments for running, sports, and play. The combined efforts of GROW Central Florida staff, students, volunteers, school health and wellness leaders, and community partners push the organization closer every day to its vision to GROW healthy kids and GROW healthy communities.