



BUILDING HOPE CELEBRATES IMPACT SUMMIT SUCCESS AND AWARDS \$188,500 IN GRANTS

Charter School Leaders Gathered in Miami for Two Days of Inspiration, Innovation, and Celebration

WASHINGTON, DC (May 9, 2025) – [Building Hope](#), the non-profit leader in charter school facilities, financing, and services, successfully concluded its fourth annual IMPACT Summit and awarded \$188,500 in grants in recognition of outstanding charter school contributions in community engagement, educational innovation, student empowerment, charter school leadership, and volunteerism. The Summit brought together hundreds of charter school leaders from across the country to celebrate excellence in education and honor 14 trailblazing charter schools and one parent volunteer.

“For four years Building Hope has been proud to create a space where charter leaders and the charter community may connect, innovate, and fuel the future of education. It is a transformative gathering of minds and missions,” said President and CEO of Building Hope William D. Hansen. “Every IMPACT grant winner is a blueprint for what is possible in education when vision and action meet. All of us at Building Hope are inspired by their dedication to uplifting students and communities through high-quality, empowering, innovative, and engaging education.”

The Building Hope IMPACT Summit is a national gathering that brings together charter school leaders, educators, authorizers, and education advocates to spark collaboration, celebrate excellence, and address challenges in K–12 public education. The 2025 IMPACT Summit featured inspiring presentations from the winners, solution-focused sessions, and dynamic networking opportunities designed to inspire and elevate innovation and equity in education. At the heart of the event are the IMPACT Awards, where Building Hope honors visionary charter schools making a meaningful and lasting difference in their students’ lives and school communities.

The 2025 IMPACT Award winners represent ten different states from across the nation:

S. Joseph Bruno Charter Leadership Award

The \$20,000 grant award winner is:

Sallie B. Howard School of Arts & Science, Wilson, North Carolina
Sallie B. Howard School of Arts & Science serves 1,251 students in Kindergarten–Grade 12 using a rigorous educational model both based on Howard Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences and rooted in a performing arts-focused curriculum. To accomplish its mission to nurture students’ gifts and talents, enabling them to become more than they ever thought they would be, Sallie B. Howard offers specialized programs including biotechnology training and study abroad opportunities. Its core value system—Perseverance, Respect, Integrity, Discipline, and Excellence (PRIDE)—shapes a high-expectation culture for both students and educators, delivering an engaging and equitable learning environment for all children in the community.

The \$10,000 grant award winners are:

[East Mountain High School](#), Sandia Park, New Mexico

East Mountain High School (EMHS) was among the first charter schools authorized in New Mexico and is known for its exceptional educational outcomes, including the highest attendance and graduation rates in New Mexico. Serving 402 students in Grades 9-12, EMHS' mission focuses on engaging a diverse community of learners through transformative experiences and creative problem-solving to shape forward-thinking leaders. The school offers a rich high school experience with state champion Speech & Debate and baseball teams, a competitive robotics program, and a unique music initiative where students produce their own album. Its college-preparatory curriculum has been recognized as a National Blue Ribbon School, the highest designation awarded by the U.S. Department of Education.

[SouthTech Schools](#), Boynton Beach, Florida

SouthTech Schools comprise SouthTech Preparatory Academy (Grades 6–8) and SouthTech Academy High School (Grades 9–12), serving students with a strong focus on Career and Technical Education (CTE). With a mission to build the next generation workforce in partnership with community businesses, SouthTech Schools offer hands-on learning through advanced facilities like a cosmetology lab, commercial kitchen, cybersecurity, nursing, auto tech bay, and expanding agri-tech offerings. Students engage in real-world, career-focused training daily, and leave prepared to enter college or the workforce with relevant skills and professional experience.

Student Empowerment

The \$20,000 grant award winner is:

[Northeast Academy for Aerospace and Advanced Technologies](#), Elizabeth City, North Carolina

Northeast Academy for Aerospace and Advanced Technologies (NEAAAT) is a public charter school serving students in Grades 5–12, from eight surrounding counties, with a focus on equipping students with the critical thinking, leadership, and problem-solving skills they need to thrive in tomorrow's workforce. Students lead the school's collaborative culture by creating robust mentorship and leadership programs, evolve their school assessments with a Learning Mastery Feedback system and have become the school ambassadors who are actively designing and promoting the future of NEAAAT in and outside the school.

The \$10,000 grant award winners are:

[Avalon School](#), St. Paul, Minnesota

Avalon School is committed to establishing a more just world by nurturing an equitable school community for students in Grades 6-12. For more than 20 years, the school has offered a project-based learning model within an advisory setting, guided by a teacher-led collaborative governance structure that decentralizes decision-making and promotes student agency. Through individualized projects, teacher-led seminars, and real-world experiences such as internships and volunteer opportunities, Avalon students chart personalized pathways to graduation while building the skills to become engaged, hopeful citizens.

[Polaris Charter Academy](#), Chicago, Illinois

Polaris Charter Academy is redefining K–Grade 8 urban education by integrating rigorous, project-based learning with a strong emphasis on character development rooted in students’ own community. With innovative approaches like Cognitively Guided Instruction, Polaris empowers students to think deeply and creatively. As a result, 100% of Polaris graduates go on to attend their high school of choice as thoughtful, critical thinkers and engaged citizens ready to lead with integrity.

Community Engagement

The \$20,000 grant award winner is:

[Island Montessori](#), Wilmington, North Carolina

Island Montessori serves 214 students in Kindergarten–Grade 8 using a Montessori model that emphasizes hands-on, student-led learning in multi-age classrooms and individualized learning. The school’s mission is to enable children of diverse backgrounds to learn and grow at their own pace by providing a developmentally appropriate and challenging academic Montessori environment that models grace and courtesy and fosters a peaceful community of lifelong learners. Island Montessori incorporates a strong service-learning program in partnership with local nonprofits such as the Humane Society and Salvation Army. This model supports academic growth while nurturing empathy, leadership, and a lifelong commitment to community.

The \$10,000 grant award winners are:

[Chattanooga Girls Leadership Academy](#), Chattanooga, Tennessee

Chattanooga Girls Leadership Academy (CGLA) is Tennessee’s first single-gender public charter school, serving 337 students in Grades 6–12. The school offers a STEAM-based, project-driven curriculum and is deeply embedded in its community, providing resources like an on-site medical clinic, food pantry, and a park accessible to families. Corporate mentoring and a strong emphasis on leadership development are integral parts of the student experience. CGLA serves as a true neighborhood hub, fostering academic excellence while promoting health, service, and wellness.

[Middleburg Community Charter School](#), Middleburg, Virginia

Middleburg Community Charter School (MCCS) serves 137 students in Kindergarten– Grade 5 and plays a central role in its hometown, with support from local leaders and businesses. The school embraces a DaVinci-inspired model that emphasizes exploration, innovation, and creativity through personalized learning and a progressive whole-child approach. In addition, MCCS is evolving toward Place-Based Education, which is based off the idea that students are active participants in their immediate community with the ability to identify problems and solve them. MCCS is deeply community-oriented, hosting events that attract hundreds of town residents, including the popular Courage Karaoke Chili Cook-Off. Its educational approach combines academic rigor with a strong sense of civic and cultural engagement.

Education Innovation

The \$20,000 grant award winner is:

[Mālama Honua Public Charter School](#), Waimanalo, Hawaii

Mālama Honua Public Charter School offers K-8 students an educational journey grounded in Native Hawaiian values of environmental and community stewardship. Through a curriculum that integrates culture-, place-, and land-based approaches, students engage with both ancient and contemporary indigenous knowledge, applying it to real-life challenges that promote civic responsibility and global perspectives. Encouraging initiative, risk-taking, collaboration, and communication, Mālama Honua empowers students to become responsible stewards of their community and beyond.

The \$10,000 grant award winners are:

[Le Monde International School](#), Norman, Oklahoma

Le Monde International School brings a French and Spanish immersion, International Baccalaureate Primary Years program for PreK-8 students. Through rigorous instruction, multilingualism, and a commitment to cultural awareness, students are prepared to thrive as critical thinkers and global citizens. By fostering a spirit of inquiry, service, and continuous improvement, Le Monde ensures that its mission of developing globally minded, multilingual learners becomes a lived reality for both students and staff.

[Reaching All Minds Academy](#), Durham, North Carolina

Reaching All Minds Academy is a STEM-focused school serving K-8 students with a curriculum that emphasizes project-based learning, critical thinking, and positive social competencies to prepare students for success in a global society. Students are guided by a bold mantra: Believe they can achieve their goals, Own their success and failures, Love what they do, their school, and community, and Do the work to reach their goals. With a commitment to fostering a safe and nurturing learning environment, Reaching All Minds Academy aims to develop responsible citizens equipped to solve complex problems and contribute meaningfully to their communities.

“Our 2025 IMPACT Winners provide students with innovative and empowering learning environments and prove great education isn’t one-size-fits-all,” said Building Hope’s Chief Impact Officer and Chair of the IMPACT Selection Committee Sherilyn Moore. “It’s our honor to shine a light on their work.”

In April, Building Hope honored Crystal Williams, “Grandma Crystal”, with the \$5,000 Shellie-Ann Braswell Shine Brighter Award for her heartfelt dedication as a parent volunteer at North Central Academy in Mancelona, Michigan. Grandma Crystal is loved for bringing the community together and creating a brighter future for all. She has made a lasting impact at the school by rallying community support to provide classroom supplies and weekend food bags for students in need. Building Hope also awarded \$3,500 to North Central Academy.

In a new addition to the IMPACT Program this year, Building Hope joined with [American Student Assistance](#)® to highlight schools that encourage students to explore what they love, what they are good at, what the world needs, and what they can get paid for. [Latitude High School](#) from Oakland, Calif., and [Liberty STEAM Charter School](#) from Sumter, S.C., each received the inaugural \$10,000 ASA Career Education Champion Award and were recognized by Bill Shaw, Chief Strategy Officer, American Student Assistance. The two charter schools were chosen from hundreds of applicants to the 2025 Building Hope IMPACT Awards program.

Since 2021, the Building Hope IMPACT program has awarded \$668,500 to 47 charter schools and nine volunteer leaders in 21 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico.

Building Hope wishes to thank the sponsors of the 2025 IMPACT Summit:

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About Building Hope

Building Hope is a national nonprofit that empowers advancements in education through our work with charter schools providing unparalleled facility financing, real estate development, and operational services. We believe a facility should never be the barrier preventing a child from attending a great school. During our 21-year history, Building Hope has supported over \$1 billion in the development of school facilities. For more information, visit www.buildinghope.org.

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