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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**SELF Receives Grant for “Impact Polk 2021”**

*A grant from the George W. Jenkins Fund within the GiveWell Community Foundation will help rebuild underserved communities in Polk County*

**POLK Co, Fla., July 1, 2021** – The SELF (Solar and Energy Loan Fund) organization has been awarded a $5,000 Impact Polk grant from the George W. Jenkins Fund within the GiveWell Community Foundation. Impact Polk is an annual competitive, donor-directed grant program of the GiveWell Community Foundation with the goal of addressing community needs throughout Polk County. With this grant, SELF will have enhanced capacity to work within Polk County to assist families and neighborhoods one home at a time.

“We are pleased to award this Impact Polk grant to SAFE's 'Rebuilding and Empowering Underserved Communities in Polk County' program on behalf of the George W. Jenkins Fund,” said John Attaway, GiveWell Community Foundation’s President/CEO.

SELF is a nonprofit community lender that provides small unsecured microloans for home improvements, with a focus on low- and moderate-income (LMI) homeowners. SELF has already helped over 60 households in Polk County finance over $500,000 of home renovation projects, including new roofs, high-efficiency air conditioners, windows, hurricane shutters, and more.

SELF’s Gulf Coast Regional Manager, Ann Vanek-Dasovich, said, “SELF appreciates the generosity of the George W. Jenkins Fund within the GiveWell Community Foundation. We are excited to enhance our lending activities in LMI neighborhoods of Polk County and to help more working-class families and retirees on fixed incomes complete much-needed home repairs and improvements.”

A retired couple in Lakeland was referred to SELF by their roofer, Honest Abe Roofing, and they said, ”It was a great experience from beginning to end and we are truly grateful and blessed!” Another family in Davenport turned to SELF after being turned down for a traditional bank loan. Stephanie H. had poor credit associated with medical expenses related to breast cancer. SELF financed her loan to replace a broken air conditioner, which resulted in cutting her monthly electric bills in half, down from over $300 a month to about $130, as [reported in The Lakeland Ledger](https://www.theledger.com/news/20160618/solar-and-energy-loan-fund-helps-davenport-family-keep-cool).

According to the [United Way ALICE report for Florida](https://www.unitedforalice.org/county-profiles/florida), there are tens of thousands of local homeowners who need emergency repairs but simply do not have sufficient savings and do not qualify for traditional financing. Without equitable and accessible financing, such as SELF’s low-cost microloans, many low- and moderate-income (LMI) homeowners must either suffer the consequences of a leaky roof or broken AC or rely on predatory lenders or credit cards with 20-25% interest rates. SELF’s interest rates start as low as 5% and loans are approved based on the applicant’s ability to pay, not credit scores or equity.

**About the Solar and Energy Loan Fund (SELF):**

SELF’s mission is to rebuild and empower underserved communities by providing access to affordable and innovative financing for sustainable home improvements, including energy efficiency; renewable energy; wind-hazard mitigation; water quality and water conservation projects; and more. SELF has financed over $18 million of projects, benefitting close to 6,000 people, with 73% of the lending to LMI homeowners and a default rate below two percent.

SELF finances the following types of home improvements:

* Energy Efficiency: high-efficiency HVAC, weatherization, insulation, LED lights
* Solar: solar PV panels, solar water heaters, solar attic fans, solar A/C systems
* Water and Sewer: septic-to-sewer conversions, lateral line replacement, potable water hook-up, and plumbing repairs
* Wind-Hazard Mitigation: roof repairs and replacement, impact windows and doors, hurricane shutters
* Disability Products: wheelchair ramps, walk-in-showers, accessibility

To learn more visit: [www.SolarEnergyLoanFund.org](http://www.solarenergyloanfund.org)

**About GiveWell Community Foundation**

The mission of the GiveWell Community Foundation (GWCF) is to champion charitable giving to improve the quality of life in the areas we serve, both now and for future generations. We accomplish this by working with individuals, families, businesses, and nonprofits to build stronger communities in Polk, Hardee, and Highlands counties through charitable funds and competitive grant cycles. Since its founding in 1997, the community foundation has awarded more than $230 million in grants. Today, GWCF is home to more than 300 charitable funds and the Impact Polk and Empower Polk grant cycles. To learn more about GWCF, visit [givecf.org](https://www.givecf.org/).

**Media Contacts:**

>>> To interview someone at the Solar Energy Loan Fund, contact Melissa Baldwin at (727) 743-3778 or Melissa@MyChaseMedia.com.

>>> To interview someone at the GiveWell Community Foundation, contact Dave Walter at (863)-683-3131 or dwalter@givecf.org.

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