



THE EVOLUTION INSTITUTE

2023

IMPACT REPORT

Applying science-based solutions to solve today's most pressing social issues

TABLE OF CONTENTS

03	Reflections
04	Mission
05	Elevating Quality of Life
07	East Pasco Academy
09	East Tampa Academy
11	Project Spotlight: Sister Schools
13	Project Spotlight: Cambridge Elements Series
14	Partnerships
15	Partner Spotlight: Warsaw Summit
18	Looking Forward

Reflections

Dear Friends of the Evolution Institute,

We are especially pleased to report that this year's Impact Report significantly reflects what we highlighted and emphasized would be our focus and action plan in last year's Looking Forward preview. "Combating authoritarianism" was a primary goal, and the Evolution Institute cosponsored the Warsaw Summit last June. Executive Committee members Nina Witoszek and Jerry Lieberman actively participated in both the planning and the program of the summit. A related consideration was the need to address growing authoritarian trends in the United States, which EI has been and is doing within the State of Florida.

The unprecedented event last June in Poland, Democracy Bottom-Up: Building a Dialogue between Civil Society and Politicians, exceeded our objectives on a national scale with positive implications for the European Union and the United States. The Evolution Institute demonstrated, on several levels, how best to engage citizens and highly diverse community service organizations to cooperatively reinvigorate and restore democracy and the rule of law.

EI has the scientific foundation and tools, and theoretical understanding, that can be applied with incentives to actualize cooperation within and between groups for the purpose of improving and extending quality of life on virtually any scale under the right conditions. When science incorporates strong humanistic

ethics, best practices, and a profound emphasis on extending quality of life, we can achieve robust and healthy outcomes. Humans are much more likely to cooperate when the benefits of doing so are crystal clear and a strong foundation of trust is maintained. Accomplishing this is intentional and based on the cultural evolutionary theory of reciprocal altruism.

Although the dramatic and unpredicted election victory in Poland last October that followed the Warsaw Summit was not causally connected to EI's co-sponsorship and role in the planning, organizing, and implementation of the Warsaw Summit, its efforts to strengthen democracy were/are part of broader developments in Polish Society, and EI made a significant contribution and added real value to the democratic coalition-building processes. Other cosponsors of the summit have remained in touch with EI for future planning purposes: the European Union, European Movement International, Collegium Civitas, and the Robert Schuman Foundation.

In our 13th year as a nonprofit, science think tank, two organizations that rank charities based on transparency and merit awarded EI with their highest ratings: GuideStar, a Platinum, and Charity Navigator, Four Stars.

With gratitude,
Rafael Wittek, President
Nina Witoszek, Vice President
Jerry Lieberman, Co-founder & Treasurer

MISSION

Our mission is to apply science-based solutions and use evidence-based best practices to solve today's most pressing social issues and improve quality of life.

We bring science experts and practitioners together, resulting in a new agenda for research, policy formulation, and policy implementation. Many of our projects are focused on serving underserved neighborhoods in Tampa Bay and Pasco County, Florida with the aim to develop innovative yet practical approaches that meet the specific needs and opportunities of communities.

VISION

Our vision is to apply research, knowledge and expertise in order to elevate quality of life, advance social justice and human equality, and add value to issues affecting humanity for the benefit of all people.

VALUES

We are committed to being part of the solution.

- We believe in a just and fair society. Everything we do is oriented toward the welfare of others and society as a whole.
- We believe in the importance of scientific knowledge, research, evidence and facts and the importance in applying these to help others and improve the world.
- We value quality of life for humans, and the environment that sustains them, now and for future generations.
- We value diversity and have respect for all communities and cultures.
- We value democratic practices, secular education, free inquiry, and humanistic philosophy and ethics.
- We value cooperation and collaboration and believe in working together to help others and to improve the world.
- We value inclusivity and believe that first and foremost every human being deserves the same rights and respect.
- We value an understanding of cultural evolution and believe we can learn from our history, to improve our future.
- We value innovation and creativity and believe that we can all contribute to improving the world in which we live.
- We value integrity and professionalism and operate within a framework of accountability, transparency and fiscal responsibility.

OVERARCHING PROJECT

ELEVATING QUALITY OF LIFE

It greatly helps to know where we started, what was done, and has resulted. Our quest to learn as much as possible about “quality of life” and how it is defined and measured began in 2011 with a workshop at the University of Memphis. There we considered which nations received consistently high ratings on the United Nations Human Development Index, learning that Norway was repeatedly the highest - with the least inequality according to the UN Gini coefficient.

After careful preparation, the Evolution Institute hosted a 2013 workshop in Oslo with Norwegian humanists, historians, and members of the University of Oslo faculty, and ten years later maintains many of these relationships for the purpose of mutual learning.

More recently, we have built a partnership with Mondragon Corporation in the Basque region of Spain. Despite differences in their culture and history, residents of both Norway and Mondragon enjoy a very high quality of life. People’s basic needs are met with little income disparity in both places. Workers in Mondragon have democratic control of their cooperative workplaces, and early public education and lifelong learning is valued and promoted.

We have learned about early childhood care and education in both Norway and Mondragon and implemented these findings in our two early learning centers. Such understandings complement our original research for literacy learning and social-emotional development.

Our early childhood learning centers are more than day care centers and pre-kindergartens for children. East Tampa Academy and East Pasco Academy VPK’s serve as community hubs for the families of our children - working with other nonprofit organizations to meet the unmet needs of families in impoverished and marginalized neighborhoods.

This history not only contextualizes what appears in this 2023 Impact Report, but demonstrates how EI’s modus operandi has real credence, continuity, and sustainability. Put differently, EI has the ability to apply evolutionary theory to real-world problems and provide viable long-term solutions.

We came to the realization in 2023 that many Americans found it challenging to think in terms of how to achieve an international perspective that was not culturally biased and/or ethnocentric. After all, half of the American population last year did not have a US passport, which was at a historic high. Additionally, while good rapport and cooperation generally exists between the European Union and the US, a war between Ukraine and Russia continues, and how the US responds can be of critical importance in the outcome. What prevents a global solution and cultural maturation? Are Europeans and Americans in parallel universes, stalled in cultural evolution?

OVERARCHING PROJECT CONTINUED...

The Evolution Institute's premise is that elevating quality of life requires a largely bottom-up approach and a high-quality education that advances universal cooperation and critical thinking. We find this premise applicable to the European Union and the US, whose members generally have a high quality of life and substantial resources that enable them to cooperate most of the time quite well.

Consequently, we have determined to focus on some of the obstacles that impede further progress and reverse the trends that are dysfunctional: growing inequality, authoritarianism, privatization,

and hostility toward immigrants and people fleeing tyranny and poverty. It is our view that it is not for a lack of resources that massive problems exist, but how they are expended and allocated.

In approaching this paradox, EI has deliberately sought out critical partners in Poland and the US that have transcended parochialism and pursuing objectives that are myopic and largely self-serving. EI has maximized its own resources to incentivize collaborative enterprises in Poland and Florida, where transformative results are greatly needed, and the potential for transformation is improved.



East Pasco Academy, 2022

PROJECT

EAST PASCO ACADEMY

Together with our partners in Tommytown, Farmworkers Self-Help, and Resurrection House, we opened East Pasco Academy in Fall 2020 – the community's first early learning center that provides a quality, bilingual, culturally sensitive education for a diverse group of low-income families.

HIGHLIGHTS

At the close of 2023, EPA had 3 infants, 7 toddlers (1-2-year-olds), 9 preschoolers (2-3-year olds), and 15 VPK students (4-year-olds). We graduated 11 VPK students in May of 2023 and at the close of 2023 had 16 VPK students enrolled to graduate.

We received some plant donations from the University of South Florida and will be planting a guava tree and blueberry bushes, as well as receiving some equipment donations to help start a garden with the children. We will be starting our garden project in the new year and look forward to updating you as we progress.

Through a grant from the Early Learning Coalition, we were also able to update the curriculum for all classrooms to Frog Street Curriculum this school year. Frog Street was created with Dr. Becky Bailey's Conscious Discipline already integrated, and it has been great in really engaging the children this year as well as implementing some great practices for their social emotional development and academics. Both our children and families are responding very well to the change, and it has helped increase our Parent Engagement this year, too.





East Tampa Academy, 2023

PROJECT EAST TAMPA ACADEMY

We launched East Tampa Academy in 2017, which added grade levels to include VPK – 2nd until May, when we closed the charter school to focus on VPK and younger children.

HIGHLIGHTS

In our East Tampa Academy Early Learning Program, we currently serve a total of 50 children, nine 4-year-olds, six 3-year-olds and six 2-year-olds. An additional 29 children come for after-school care, and they are school readiness students. All of the children in both the morning and afternoon programs are Black/Non-Hispanic and come from families with lower socioeconomic status.

There are no scholarships, but there is some funding for children. Nine children receive VPK vouchers, those are the 3-4-5-year-olds. A total of 29 children

receive school readiness and attend after-school, they are the 5 to 12-year-olds. Six of the 2-year-olds (all of them) receive school readiness funding.

Parents say the center is a “Life-saver.” They are able to leave their children in care of reliable, respectful, honest, and caring staff members.

In October we had a Story Book Parade! Parents and children selected a costume to go with the story book character the child chose. This activity helped to connect the children to the stories and make the experience more meaningful.

“Parent engagement is an important part of the school’s success.”

A parent volunteer prepared the treats for the children who participated in the Story Book Character Parade. On that day, there were 12 parents who volunteered in total.

There is a very high turnout for parent events, and parent engagement is an important part of the school’s success. When parents attend the engagement events, books are donated by the Coalition for their home libraries.

Check out just a few of these events from this year:

- On Earth Day children planted seedlings and learned the parts of the



plant. A parent volunteer assisted the children with the science lesson.

- The East Tampa District 3 Police Officers collected backpacks and school supplies for our students!
- “Dice with Dads” is how East Tampa Academy Early Learning Program helps children to connect with numbers in positive ways. Eight fathers came to support their children during the math game hour.

The Early Childhood Coalition of Hillsborough County is collaborating with ETA. They gave the school toys and equipment for the new infant and toddler initiative program. Construction was also recently completed for the 1-year-olds’ and 2-year-olds’ classrooms.



Preparing for the Story Book Parade. The parents and children select a costume to go with the story book character the child chooses. This helps to connect children with the stories they read. It makes reading meaningful to them.

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Combined VPK Academy Sister Schools are Expanding

The year 2023 saw major growth between our two “sister” schools. Using our success at East Pasco Academy as a springboard for expansion, East Tampa Academy was able to open three new classrooms in the Fall – infant, 1’s toddlers and 2’s toddlers. EI provided the resources for physical expansion, while dollars for training and classroom equipment were made available through a \$45,000 HITI grant (Hillsborough Infant and Toddlers Initiative). We currently have enrollment in all three new classes!

We have found that a system able to provide a safe and stimulating educational experience for all siblings greatly increases the quality of outcomes for both the family and the individuals. The “whole family” approach is being expanded in

both programs to also provide access to other “gaps” in service – nutrition, family health, etc.

Both schools also saw improvements to their playgrounds, curriculum and technology as a result of funding through coalition grants and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) fund distributions. These opportunities for expansion have served as a catalyst for both physical and intellectual stimulation.

Through the diligence and tenacity of our Directors, our total grant funding for 2023 was in excess of \$200,000! These grants and funding resources have enabled us to greatly improve our ability to serve our children in new and exciting ways.





Pastor Bruce Edwards
EI Manager of Operations



Ms. Frankie Jones
East Tampa Academy Director



Cathy Fisher
East Pasco Academy Director



Londa Edwards
**East Pasco Academy
Administrative Assistant**

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

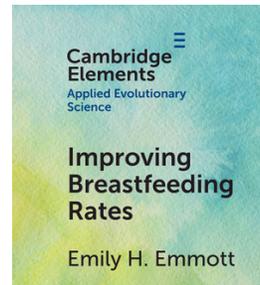
Cambridge Element Series

Half a century ago the biologist Theodosius Dobzhansky wrote that, “Nothing in biology makes sense except in the light of evolution.” Since Dobzhansky’s time, evolutionary thinking has made its way into the human sciences to the extent that many social and behavioral scientists today might say that “nothing in psychology, anthropology, sociology, child development, education, public policy, culture, medicine, and mental health makes sense except in the light of evolution.”

Consequently, evolutionary thinking now has a solid foothold in nearly all of the social and behavioral sciences, and not only does an evolutionary approach benefit scholars trying to understand all levels of human functioning, but it also can be applied to important real-world social issues. An important contribution that an evolutionary perspective can offer is the analysis and solution of practical and societal problems. An evolutionary perspective provides better guidance to the design and functioning of institutions because it has a more realistic micro-foundation – assumptions about how humans function – than other approaches to institutional design.

Cambridge University Press awarded EI a five-year contract to provide five Elements each year for its Cambridge Elements in Applied Evolutionary Science series. At 20,000-30,000 words (40 to 75 pages), Elements are significantly longer than journal articles but shorter than a typical book.

This hybrid format is in part a response to the frustration of authors in the social sciences with journal-article requirements that do not allow space to adequately contextualize and present research. By allowing greater freedom in word and page counts, the series enables authors to publish their work at its natural length.



Three publications are slated for 2024, and these five appeared in 2023:

“Improving Breastfeeding Rates: Evolutionary Anthropological Insights for Public Health,” by Emily H. Emmott; “The Hidden Talents Framework,” by Bruce J. Ellis, Laura S. Abrams, Ann S. Masten, Robert J. Sternberg, Nim Tottenham, and Willem E. Frankenhuis; “An Introduction to Positive Evolutionary Psychology,” by Glenn Geher, Megan Fritche, Avrey Goodwine, Julia Lombard, Kaitlyn Longo, and Darcy Montana; “Superorganism: Toward a New Social Contract for Our Endangered Species,” by Peter A. Corning; “Attachment; and Parent-Offspring Conflict,” by Sybil L. Hart.

The aim of Cambridge Elements in Applied Evolutionary Science is to become a leading reference publication in the field. Research and reviews are presented in ways that are engaging for a range of readers – from interested laypeople to students and research academics.

PARTNERSHIPS

Our mission to apply science-based solutions to solve today’s most pressing social issues and improve quality of life would not be possible without the expertise and dedication of our partners:

- Rainbow Heights
- Civic Association Kiwanis Club
- Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity
- Gamma Eta Chapter
- Bible Truth Ministries
- Early Learning Coalition Hillsborough
- Early Learning Coalition Pasco-Hernando
- Pasco County Community Development
- Cornerstone Family Ministries Child Care Food Program
- W.E. Davis Enrichment Center
- Farmworkers Self-Help
- Resurrection House
- Moore Mickens School
- Secular Student Alliance
- Catalyst Miami
- Equality Florida
- FL Service Employees International Union
- Lanki Institute of Cooperative Research
- Arne Naess Center University of Oslo
- Cooperative Development Institute
- Brain Expansion
- Saint Leo University
- Mondragon University
- Polish Robert Schuman Foundation
- European Movement International
- Collegium Civitas
- Ruchu Europejskie



Heather Parker, Saint Leo University, San Antonio, FL and EI; Gin & Jerry Lieberman, EI; Nagore Ipiña Larrañaga, Mondragon University and EI; and Rob Brown, Cooperative Development Inst, New England

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Warsaw Summit: Democracy Ground-Up

The Evolution Institute's participation in and co-sponsorship of the June 2023 Democracy Ground-Up summit in Warsaw enabled continuing partnerships with the other sponsors: European Movement International (EMI), The European Movement Forum (Forum Ruchu Europejskiego, FRE), European Union (EU), The Robert Schuman Foundation, Collegium Civitas, and EU Concilium Civitas. All of the Polish organizations have complementary missions.

EMI is a lobbying association, headquartered in Brussels and established in 1948 to promote peace, democracy and European integration by bringing together European civil society, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), political parties, employers, trade unions, local government and academia, to provide a platform to encourage and facilitate active participation of citizens and stakeholders from a cross-section of sectors in the development of European solutions to its common problems.

FRE, a member of EMI, is an NGO committed to promoting the integration of the European continent and renewal of democracy in Poland. The Forum is a platform for the exchange of ideas through debates, seminars or conferences covering current challenges faced by European societies. Its aim is developing civic initiatives designed to strengthen European and democratic Poland by promoting a dialogue between citizens and politicians and re-imagining education for democratic and ecological citizenship.

EU is an international organization, comprising 27 European countries and governing common economic, social, and security policies, that was created by the Maastricht Treaty and entered into force on November 1, 1993. The treaty was designed to enhance European political and economic integration by creating a single currency (the euro), a unified foreign and security policy, and common citizenship rights and by advancing cooperation in the areas of immigration, asylum, and judicial affairs.

The Robert Schuman Foundation was founded in 1991 after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Co-funded by EU, it works to promote the construction of Europe - developing studies on the EU and its policies and promoting the content of these in Europe and elsewhere in the world. It encourages, contributes to, and stimulates European debate. The Foundation's independence means that it can address all topical European issues in depth and objectively, and it organizes and participates in numerous European and international meetings and conferences including training sessions for young European decision makers.

Collegium Civitas is a non-public university located in Warsaw for the social sciences, which is open to new inventions in higher education: interdisciplinary approaches, closer lecturer-student relations, study abroad programs, internships, and the encouragement and supervision of individual student research projects.



“Following the Warsaw Summit, correspondences continued between EI Board Members Nina Witoszek and Jerry Lieberman, with representatives from European Movement International and the European Movement Forum, a second summit in Warsaw was envisioned, and the initiation of a similar summit in Hungary.”



Photos from Warsaw Summit: Leading NGO’s; Jerry Lieberman; Nina Witoszek & Sofia Chepil, Summit Project Coordinator; The Polish Robert Schuman Foundation

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT CONTINUED...

Concilium Civitas was established in 1997 under the auspices of five Institutes of the Polish Academy of Sciences -- Political Studies, Philosophy and Sociology, History, History of Art, and Slavic Studies -- and has relied extensively upon the teaching and research traditions of these institutions.

The idea of organizing the first congress of Concilium Civitas was coordinated by Jacek Żakowski -- head of the Department of Journalism at Collegium Civita. He assembled a group of the most outstanding Polish scientists in the field of social sciences, working outside of Poland at the world's best universities, such as Stanford, Harvard, Yale, and Oxford. The purpose of the informal, pro bono Concilium Civitas body is to initiate traditional social responsibility of the Polish intelligentsia. As a young democracy and market economy still struggling with the legacy of the 20th century, Poland is particularly sensitive to systemic challenges, and the place of Polish in the Western community may be more threatened than the places of other Western European countries.

Following the Warsaw Summit, correspondences continued between EI Board Members Nina Witoszek and Jerry Lieberman, with representatives from European Movement International (EMI), and the European Movement Forum (Forum Ruchu Europejskiego, FRE), a second summit in Warsaw was envisioned, and initiating a similar summit in Hungary -- which has not yet established its own EMI -- was also discussed. Joining the sponsors from 2023 for the September

2024 summit are additional partners impacting 2023: Society for Civic and European Education in Wroclaw, and Committee for the Defense of Democracy (Komitet Obrony Demokracji, KOD). The Society for Civic and European Education is a pan-European NGO that plays a crucial role in mapping and researching civic education across Europe, reaching out to civic education actors from 31 countries, both in non-formal and informal education settings. Its major goal is to empower citizens to understand democratic principles, engage in political life, and contribute to improving their communities and nations.

Mateusz Kijowski helped create a civil protest movement in 2016, which drew as many as 1.5 million people onto the streets of Warsaw to oppose the actions of the ruling, populist and antidemocratic Law and Justice party (PiS). He was previously instrumental in forming the KOD in anticipation of the Polish Constitutional Crisis, when Poland's top constitutional court ruled that radical changes to its procedures adopted by the PiS-dominated parliament violated the constitution. Krzysztof Dąb, a sociologist, declared: "Democracy is in danger. It shouldn't be that one person controls the whole country, and that's what Jarosław Kaczyński is doing." It was the fight over the independent Constitutional Tribunal that built KOD. Its goals include promoting the European values, especially democracy, rule of law, and human rights. The organization was awarded the 2016 European Citizens' Prize by the European Parliament for defending fundamental rights and democracy.

Looking forward

Jerry Lieberman with Nina Witoszek

Despite the abundance of pessimism these days, we forge ahead as optimists. Our species, and all others still in existence, have been through numerous cataclysms, and pessimism does not provide a solution. It is true that optimism, without substance, is nothing to build confidence on. So, what better time to take advantage of what the science of cultural evolution and technology have to offer as we look forward to 2024 and beyond? This is why the Evolution Institute was conceptualized, conducted a proof of concept, and became in September 2010 a legitimate, science-based think tank to apply its unique scientific perspective to provide real-world solutions to social problems and improve quality of life on a larger and unprecedented scale.

We learned from 2023 that we could, through cultural innovation and the latest technological means, connect people seeking an open society and a better future to increase and inspire greater cooperation and confidence for real human development. The June Warsaw Summit was a big step forward in unification for the greater good of restoring democracy and freedom. It contributes to a dialogue between civil society organizations (CSOs) and politicians, and sets developments in Poland in a broader context – including discussion of the current predicament in the US. Americans, living in the epicenter of emerging authoritarianism in the US, felt inspired to seek a better understanding of what was occurring in Poland, under even more harsh conditions, to take seriously what of value could be learned and applied in Florida. What may

have seemed unclear to some people about the work and value of the Evolution Institute began to become apparent in 2023 as a result of the Polish election following the Warsaw Summit.

Looking forward, we are most confident that there is a significant opportunity for a summit in Florida 2024. It will be comparable to the one we supported in Poland, whereby we engage a diverse group of community service organizations in overcoming an authoritarian threat. The project focuses on improving the capacity of CSOs to promote and strengthen democracy and citizens' participation in political decision making.

In particular, the project is designed to overcome one of the key challenges of the current modus operandi of NGOs in most countries: decentralized and fragmented actions carried out within one's own "commons," and lack of a coordinating center that would make civic initiatives talk to one another. Today, most CSOs that do important work in such areas as innovative educational practice, reform of the health system, improvement of citizen's working conditions, childcare, or environmental/climate transformation, are largely acting within their own boundaries.

To combat a democratic recession, we need a "civic ecosystem" that stems from a strong coalition of interrelated non-profit organizations that strive for the same goals – renewing democracy,

Looking forward, continued...

counteracting misinformation, forging a more inclusive society and building an informed public sphere. What we now need is to make them communicate and cooperate with one another within an interactive public sphere that is robust enough to exert pressure on power holders and stimulate effective social change.

Preliminary objectives for forging a Florida-based collaboration between the Evolution Institute with Equality of Florida and the Secular Student Alliance include:

- Ensuring there is a well-coordinated and sustainable approach that strengthens democracy, rule of law, pluralism, inclusion, and reduces polarization and divisiveness in the state
- Complementing all member's goals and objectives

- Facilitating positive synergistic outcomes that result in a tangible movement for positive human development for all

- Furthering prosocial development and mutual benefits

- Recruiting other organizations aligned with the collaborative objectives

- Supporting individuals and organizations, regardless of party affiliation, that identify and have a track record for cooperation and improving the quality of life in Florida

- Strongly encouraging a well-informed citizenry and measures to counter disinformation and alienation.



 THE EVOLUTION INSTITUTE



Evolutionary scientists have shown that altruism is deeply rooted in human nature, and we know that quality of life depends on people like you who care for others. With your support, we can make an impact in 2024 and for years to come.

Donate today and join us on our mission.

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