Loving Ingrid series inspires strangers to act

"It broke my heart. It could be any of us," Fulk said. "She helped so many people. Somebody has to help her. She deserves that."

The Brain Injury Association of Florida and Keiser University in Fort Myers are working on an annual fundraiser and awareness campaign for those affected by traumatic brain injuries.

The association plans to use the series in its advocacy efforts to better serve people with brain injuries.

The Ingrid Martinez Rico Women’s Leadership Initiative received about $8,500 in donations, including $7,500 from a survivor of traumatic brain injury, Heller said.

Heller started the initiative with friends and former students to carry on the couple’s work with women and children.

"People were writing and calling who were so moved by it and wanted to do..."
something for a total stranger," Heller said. "It's wonderful."

The Ingrid Initiative aims to raise $15,000 to run tutoring centers for impoverished children in the Dominican Republic.

Part-time Cape Coral resident, John Prosser, gave a $7,500 donation.

Ten years ago, Prosser was skiing in Maine when he slammed into a tree. He was in a coma for 10 days, and a neurologist later told his wife and one of his daughters he'd likely never work again.

Less than a year after the accident, the businessman was working and skiing again, albeit with a helmet.

He knows he is lucky.

"What touched me in particular about the story regarding Ingrid and Craig is just that it was the reverse of my situation ten years ago," said Prosser, 71, who chairs a large organization that helps people with disabilities in Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

Prosser also appreciated the couple's work with needy children.

Jim Brock, an FGCU professor and friend of Heller and Martinez Rico, has heard from people across the country.

He has fielded requests to help and visit from former students, a former colleague and strangers.

"We get so caught up with the dailyness of our lives," he said.

"If someone snaps out of that routine to even send a thoughtful note to Craig or even an offer to visit, that's a wonderful, generous thing."

After the series, Fulk woke up one night thinking about something from one of the stories that Martinez Rico said: "Don't abandon me."

She decided to visit. "I just can't bear to think of her feeling abandoned," Fulk said.

She plans to try to see Martinez Rico weekly.

Told people were inspired by stories about her in the newspaper, Martinez Rico said: "Really? That's incredible."