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FirstBank Florida is proud to recognize and celebrate Miami Today’s Best of the Best honorees: individuals and organizations chosen by their peers for their outstanding contributions to our great city.

Dedication, hard work, creativity, passion and vision are but a few of the words which describe what it takes to be the best. You inspire us and we share with you the common goal of building a better community for all.
Notable Miami attorneys play vital roles in the civic arena

By John Charles Robbins

For attorneys, it’s high praise when you’re recognized for your skills and professionalism by a lawyer who has worked against you on the other side of the aisle.

Miami has plenty of notable attorneys who play traditional legal roles in the civil arena, from wrestling complex development issues to maritime law to tax matters and beyond. Some stand out for their work.

John Shubin is one of those, and has been selected for Best of Miami as a legal leader, an individual who’s earned respect from many in the collective legal community.

Mr. Shubin, a founding partner of the firm Shubin & Bass P.A., represents companies, individuals and public entities in litigation and administrative proceedings related to real property and its entitlement.

Mr. Shubin has practiced throughout Florida and possesses a combination of experience as both a trial lawyer in state and federal courts and as a representative of client interests in quasi-judicial proceedings.

Mr. Shubin was nominated by Iris Escarrá, an attorney with the firm of Greenberg Traurig. She specializes in land use and zoning matters in Miami-Dade County and its municipalities.

“I think he brings a sense of reason and calm to the issue at hand. I think he’s a legal leader in our community. He is highly skilled in working with him,” she said.

T. Spencer Crowley III represents some of the biggest players in the growth and development arenas.

“He is an excellent attorney who is highly skilled in working through complex cases and finding solutions that are fair for all parties involved,” said Ms. Escarrá.

“John and I have been co-counsel representing the same client and adversaries representing different sides, and in each case it has been a pleasure to work with him,” she said.

“Mr. Shubin’s practice focuses on development, planning, zoning, growth management, land use, real estate, water and environmental permitting, transportation, sovereignty submerged lands, coastal regulation, marine permitting, wetlands and water resources. He has worked with the Governor’s Commission for a Sustainable South Florida, the South Florida Water Management District, and Duke University’s Wetlands Center in the Florida Everglades. For attorneys, it’s high praise when you’re recognized for your skills and professionalism by a lawyer who has worked against you on the other side of the aisle.

Mr. Shubin attended Harvard College (A.B., cum laude, 1983), and St. John’s College, Oxford University, Oxford, England (B.A., with high honors, 1985). He earned his law degree from the University of Miami Law School in 1988. Locally, his work has included public service. He served as a trustee on the board of Ran- som-Everglades School, including two years as vice president, and as a member on the Miami Light Project and the Dade County Charter Review Advisory Board. Mr. Shubin also had a brief stint as a legal commentator for NBC/MSNBC several years ago.

Another Miami attorney earning praise is T. Spencer Crowley III. Mr. Crowley is often in the thick of things as a legal representative for some of the biggest players in the growth and development of the community.

“Mr. Crowley’s practice focuses on large-scale land use and environmental permitting, including zoning, growth management, transportation, sovereignty submerged lands, coastal regulation, marine permitting, wetlands and water resources. He has worked with the Governor’s Commission for a Sustainable South Florida, the South Florida Water Management District, and Duke University’s Wetlands Center in the Florida Everglades.

He has assisted in the land use permitting of major projects such as the Babcock Ranch, Midtown Miami, Village at Gulfstream Park, Miami Worldcenter and Brickell City Centre.

Attorney Thomas Eagan was also tapped for the Best of Miami as a legal leader.

“He’s a serious man with a great sense of humor, and he’s a great lawyer,” said Mr. Blazejack, who owns and operates a commercial real estate appraisal and consulting business.

In an extremely complicated case that required an understanding of historical preservation and the transfer of development rights, Mr. Eagan was instrumental in reaching a successful conclusion, said Mr. Blazejack.

In the end, the unique Bacardi Tower in Midtown Miami, the former headquarters of Bacardi USA, was saved. In October 2012, the National Young Preservationists Foundation acquired the iconic landmark Bacardi Tower and Museum Buildings and is converting them into the organization’s first national headquarters.

With Mr. Eagan’s legal knowledge and skills, a very special older structure was saved and given renewed purpose, Mr. Blazejack said.

“It could have been the loss of an historic building, if not doing something like this (bringing in the foundation). He was the guiding light on the legal side of it,” said Mr. Blazejack.

“He’s a very unique person,” said Craig Welcher, a business acquaintance of Mr. Eagan’s for about 20 years.

“He’s phenomenally sharp and extremely credible,” Mr. Welcher said.

In addition to his legal practice, Mr. Eagan has lent his support to a number of institutions that benefit youths.

Also nominated by Mr. Bibeau for Best of Miami as a legal leader was Jose Felix Diaz, an attorney and a state lawmaker.

Mr. Diaz goes above and beyond in his work for South Florida, Mr. Bibeau said.

Mr. Diaz professionally practices Land Use and Local Government Law with the Akerman firm, which represents a number of public waterfront issues, and volunteers for the CHARLIE Homes, which provide free permanent homes for abandoned, neglected and abused children.
Officials star in arts, solid waste, parks, public works, managing

By John Charles Robbins

More and more, arts and culture are seen as key elements in a city’s standing to be a world-class destination. Ensuring our area has a rich tapestry of art and culture available to folks from all walks of life is Michael Spring, director of the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs.

Mr. Spring was nominated for the Best of Miami as one of the hundreds of people who work tirelessly in the local government rank-and-file who make a difference. He was nominated as a star of government by Monty Trainer, a restaurateur and champion of the local arts scene.

“Michael is really fantastic,” Mr. Trainer said. “He’s such a careful negotiator… He’s got the patience of Job – it’s absolutely unreal.

The biggest thing is, Michael has tremendous knowledge of the arts… he remembers everything about every art group,” he said.

Mr. Trainer is a vice chair of the New World School of the Arts, and also serves on the executive board of the Coconut Grove Chamber of Commerce, the Coconut Grove Business Improvement District and the Miami-Dade County Cultural Affairs Council.

Spring works with the cultural affairs council, which among its many duties oversees hundreds of non-profit agencies in the county, including the Actors’ Playhouse in Coral Gables, dance studios and dance facilities, New World School of the Arts, and many more.

The council also runs a summertime arts program for children. As far as county government goes, “because of him, they invented the cultural affairs department,” Mr. Trainer said about Mr. Spring.

“He’s very stealth on this, he doesn’t seek out publicity,” even though he’s responsible for a multi-million dollar agency, said Mr. Trainer, who has known Mr. Spring more than 20 years.

Mr. Spring supervises a public arts agency with an annual budget of more than $30 million and a staff of 60. He represents the department on numerous cultural and civic committees, including service as secretary of the board of directors of Americans for the Arts, considered the nation’s leading nonprofit organization for arts advocacy.

Mr. Spring has been responsible for establishing policies and programs that have helped build the organizational growth and financial stability of the county’s cultural community into a $922 million annual industry, comprised of more than 1,000 non-profit cultural groups and thousands of individual artists.

He has worked on legislative issues at the local, state and federal levels and was successful in leading the initiative in 1993 to secure $7.3 million from the state’s Hurricane Andrew Recovery and Rebuilding Trust Fund for the recovery of Miami-Dade’s cultural community.

In 2004, he helped lead the work to pass a referendum for the Building Better Communities bond program, dedicating more than $40 million for building the next generation of Miami-Dade’s cultural facilities, ranging from major new art and science museums to theaters and neighborhood arts centers.

In 2007, Mr. Spring assumed the additional responsibility of leading Miami-Dade County’s Art in Public Places program.

“Every meeting we vote on different art and the public places program,” he said of the council. The department is so successful it’s become a model for art in public places around the country, Mr. Trainer said.

“I think he’s so good, as far as staff is concerned, his staff is well-trained and focused… Whenever I serve as chairman of a panel, they make me look good,” Mr. Trainer said.

Mr. Spring was valedictorian of the class of 1970 at Miami Edison Senior High School. He is a graduate of the University of Miami with B.A. degree, magna cum laude, in the arts and a minor in literature.

Also recognized as a non-elected government doer of note is Keith Carwell, director of the City of Miami’s Solid Waste Department. He was nominated for the Best of Miami by community leader and businessman Horacio Stuart Aguirre.

“One of the most important roles in government, from an environmental and aesthetic perspective, is the massive amount of solid waste disposal. City of Miami Solid Waste Director Keith Carwell, and his entire incredible department including Cindy Baez and Robert Williams, provide excellent timely service, and new innovations such as the easy to use rolling recycling containers,” said Mr. Aguirre.

Another government official whose work for the public good stands out is Kevin Asher, special projects manager for the Miami-Dade County Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces Department. He was nominated as a star of government by John Blazejack, who runs a real estate appraisal company in Miami.

“Kevin Asher is very thoughtful in how he handles his assignments,” said Mr. Blazejack.

Mr. Asher works tirelessly for the county, negotiating the best deals he can when hammering out lease agreements for public spaces, Mr. Blazejack said.

This work included leasing spaces for restaurants at the county’s popular Haulover Park, at 10600 Collins Ave. The county manages this area near Bal Harbour for park and recreational use.

“He really knew all the facts,” said Mr. Blazejack. “He asked all the hard questions.”

Mr. Asher handled complicated lease contracts with ease.

“He was all over it,” said Mr. Blazejack. “Making sure it was the very best use of public land, said Mr. Blazejack.

The City of Miami Public Works Department has an assortment of duties and responsibilities that basically deal with the look of the city. Recognized as a star in government for the Best of Miami is Nzeribe Ihekuba, a public works director. He was nominated by Miami River Commission Managing Director Brett Bibee.

“Nzeribe Ihekuba is a star director of the City of Miami’s fantastic Public Works Department. With strong support from wonderful staff such as Lee Wilkins and Elyrosa Estevez, Director Ihekuba’s hard-working Public Works Department keeps our city clean, beautiful and running smoothly,” said Mr. Bibee.

“The City of Miami’s Public Works Department is always there to help with maintaining our public realm and keeping our waterways clean, via the Scavenger 2000 Water Decontamination Vessel, servicing storm water drainage systems, land-scaping, picking up litter, and much more,” he said.

Also nominated as a star in local government was Alice Bravo, deputy city manager in Miami. She is a leader, engineer, mother, wife and an advocate for the City of Miami’s future.

Ms. Bravo was recognized in this category in last year’s Best of Miami edition.
The Miami Cancer Institute at Baptist Health South Florida is committed to bringing world-class cancer care to our community. Slated to break ground this summer, the architecturally stunning $400 million facility will transform cancer care in our community and across the globe – featuring the first proton therapy center in South Florida and consolidating all Baptist Health cancer services under one roof. Scheduled to open in 2016, the Miami Cancer Institute will also feature a cutting-edge research facility designed to give patients access to groundbreaking treatments and advanced clinical trials. That’s a healthy step forward in the fight against cancer.
Gallogly, Moss credited for broadened trade perspectives

By Lidia Dinkova

South Florida’s trade ties no longer extend only to South America and the Caribbean as Miami-Dade’s commerce has diversified to reach Europe and Asia.

About $3.5 billion has been generated in reported sales since the 1980s, when the region relied on one-way commerce, mainly from international trade shows, about 75% of that staying in the US, according to a nonprofit that organizes such trade shows, World Trade Center Miami.

That growth is largely credited to Charlotte Gallogly, World Trade Center Miami president and co-founder. “She has brought more international business people together than probably anyone in South Florida and very possibly the United States,” said Lenny Sandler, Travis & Rosenberg P.A.’s Miami office, who nominated Ms. Gallogly for her work linking Miami-Dade to international commerce.

Ms. Gallogly told Miami Today. “We feel good about opportunities,” Commissioner Moss told World Trade Center Miami. “She has devoted her life to this and has been extremely successful, and we should feel honored to have her in the community.”

Mr. Feldman is World Trade Center Miami board chair, a position selected by former board chairpersons. “She has the food and beverage show, so you get business executives who come from around the world to Miami to do business here,” he said.

The upcoming 18th annual Americas Food and Beverage Show & Conference will host about 500 domestic and international companies Oct. 27 and 28. “This is the largest and most important show in the Western Hemisphere to increase trade,” Ms. Gallogly told Miami Today.

Despite the rise of online shopping, trade shows remain a vital part of international commerce. “They are your first contact with what is the latest customs regulations, you are going to go to a trade show,” Ms. Gallogly said. “It’s the most effective platform for buying and selling.”

Last year’s food and beverage trade show generated $205 million in actual and projected sales and hosted nearly 11,000 buyers, 24% of them international, according to World Trade Center Miami.

Air Cargo Americas International Congress and Exhibition, now in its 22nd year, is a product-marketing opportunity as well as a forum to exchange ideas and strategies to grow the air cargo industry; and SeaCargo Americas Conference, now in its seventh year, is an ideas-exchange forum on how to grow the maritime and logistics industry.

World Trade Center Miami owns and organizes the Americas Food and Beverage Show & Conference as well as the air cargo and sea cargo events. Another conference on the horizon will bring together traders and regulators to shed light on the latest trade regulations.

“We will focus on the people who are intermediaries in the trade industry,” said Ms. Gallogly, who is a board member of the World Trade Centers Association, the umbrella nonprofit organization representing domestic and international world trade centers.

A World Trade Center, she said, “is like a rifle. It’s a very targeted business development approach.”

Licensed in the 1980s, when trade with South America was down, World Trade Center Miami’s ultimate goal is to grow Miami-Dade as a trade-logistics hub and to diversify the region’s trade to reach Europe and Asia.

A more recent push has called for South Florida to reach a largely untapped market: Africa.

“West Africa, it’s about 400 million people,” said Anthony Okonmah, executive director of The Foundation for Democracy in Africa, a nonprofit. “That’s a consuming market we can’t ignore.”

Mr. Okonmah nominated County Commissioner Dennis Moss for his efforts to foster trade between South Florida and Africa.

“It took time to start to sensitize people to look at the potential of Africa,” Mr. Okonmah said. “There was lack of interest because Africa is far, and people didn’t see the potential that Africa can offer.”

But Commissioner Moss did see that potential.

“We positioned ourselves to become the gateway to Latin America and the Caribbean,” he said. “And the same opportunity now exists with Africa.”

The Foundation for Democracy in Africa hosted the fourth U.S. Africa Air Transportation Summit/Expo in Miami-Dade in late May hosting delegations representing the public and private sectors from Senegal, Sierra Leone, Djibouti, South Africa and other countries, with the ultimate goal of increasing tourism and trade between South Florida and Africa.

“We are one of the very few communities in the US that are hosting these kinds of events in trying to basically create a spark that would open up those opportunities,” Commissioner Moss told Miami Today. “We feel good about our pursuit of this opportunity. We just need to stick with it.”
Million Orchid Project set to bloom all over Miami-Dade

BY NINA LINDSEY

There are around 50 species of orchids native to South Florida, but spotting even one of those 50 outside of a home, nursery or botanic garden today is difficult.

That was not the case more than a century ago, when orchids were plentiful, clinging to almost every oak and mahogany tree along Biscayne Bay. But development in the late 1800s ripped orchids from their homes and the result is that now, orchid populations have dwindled.

The Million Orchid Project at the Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden is hoping to change that, starting with four species native to Miami-Dade County.

Over a five-year period, Fairchild staff and local volunteers at the Fairchild’s new Micropropagation Laboratory will cultivate four target orchid species. They are Florida butterfly orchid, cowhorn orchid, dollar orchid and cockleshell orchid – for reintroduction to the urban environment.

The goal is that in five years, these four orchid varieties which have been carefully nursed and grown at the Fairchild lab will be able to propagate and flower on street trees, in neighborhoods and around schools in Miami-Dade County. Orchids are remarkably resilient, but to blanket the streets of Miami-Dade, there need to be enough flowering and seed-producing orchids to grab hold.

An individual orchid seed pod contains millions of light, delicate seeds that in nature are distributed far and wide by the wind. Best case scenario is that one of those millions takes hold of an oak or mahogany tree and produces seeds of its own.

Right now, there simply aren’t enough orchids in Miami-Dade to tip the seed scales in the flowers’ favor. And that’s where the Fairchild’s Million Orchid project comes in, creating an environment where South Florida’s natural orchid species can flourish in a post-development landscape.

“It’s for these efforts that Coral Gables Vice Mayor Bill Kerdyk Jr. nominated the Million Orchid project and Fairchild Director Carl Lewis for best at environmental advancement, turning green.

“The Million Orchid Project is special. The only other one that I know about is in Singapore, which is not as ambitious a program as the one that the Fairchild is embarking on,” Mr. Kerdyk said.

Part of the success of the project hinges upon outreach to the community and getting residents of all of Miami-Dade invested in seeing orchids line the streets.

“Fairchild, even though it sits in the city of Coral Gables, within its borders, is part of this whole community and Fairchild has done an extremely great job of reaching out to the entire community,” Mr. Kerdyk said.

The project began about a year ago, so if it is successful, by 2018 or 2019 seeing an orchid on a tree in the street should be a common sight. Two of the four species being cultivated at the Micropropagation Lab are only found on Fairchild’s grounds, while the other two are found in Miami-Dade. Eventually, the program hopes to add additional orchid species.

“Right now in the lab we’re working with four different target species. There are about 50 species of orchids native to South Florida, and we have many others we could choose from,” Mr. Lewis said. “But we’re starting with four, and we plan to add more.”

It should be no surprise to anyone that Miami-Dade has changed over the past century, or really even over the past decade. For residents, that change has allowed for greater development and an urban living environment. What the Million Orchid project is attempting to see is whether native orchid species can adapt to that changed environment. And the Fairchild thinks it can, with a little help.

“We are planting these orchids in urban environments, not in areas that are being managed as natural areas like the Everglades National Park,” Mr. Lewis said. “We’re putting them in street trees, around schools, and trying to get them in places that people will see them.”

“It’s an experiment. We don’t know in exactly what kinds of situations will be optimal for these orchids because the environment has changed so much. Originally, when there was a forest here the orchids would have had a really extensive habitat,” he said. “Since the trees were cut and orchids were specifically taken, pulled from trees, we’re starting from pretty much zero.”

While the condo buildings and city centers going up around town may seem to imply otherwise, now is as good a time as any in the past century to try an orchid reintroduction project. Since Hurricane Andrew, there has been a concerted effort to plant more trees around the county and now there are more available habitats for these orchids to take hold, Mr. Lewis said. “It’s all about tipping the numbers in our favor.”
Rising leaders building support scaffolding for tech growth

By Nina Lincoff

On the heels of Miami’s first annual eMerge Techweek, which wrapped up in early May, there’s no denying that the technology industry in Greater Miami is going through Renaissance.

But supporting that boom and helping to ensure that it doesn’t go the way of the late ’90s tech trend are local players from across all industries. By providing the legal, financial and civic scaffolding for Miami’s tech sector, these local leaders are showing that the area’s current tech boom is being built to last.

Jaret Davis, co-managing shareholder of Greenberg Traurig Miami, has been involved with the tech scene in South Florida for over two decades, which is astonishing considering that he was still in college at the University of Miami in the late ’90s. But Mr. Davis got his start in tech like so many others in the industry – early.

At the University of Miami, where Mr. Davis completed his undergraduate and law degrees, business was his primary discipline, but he always maintained an interest (and a minor) in computers.

“Part of it was for the geek factor. I enjoyed doing code, enjoyed being able to solve problems and I enjoyed everything about computers,” Mr. Davis said. “But the other part of it was that although it was the late ’90s, the web was just coming out, and seeing it develop was exciting.”

“By the time I was raring to go out, and seeing it develop, it was the web was just coming out. But Mr. Davis said, “It’s right there about at 70%. It’s right there about at 70% of my client base is comprised of those companies and that’s my practice right there,” Mr. Davis said.

A tech endeavor can start with a great idea, but business and legal support are necessary to take that great idea and develop it into a company with longevity. That’s where Mr. Davis comes in, and why Xavier Gonzalez, executive director of eMerge Americas, nominated him.

For Mr. Davis, now is the time for tech to take hold in Miami, and events like eMerge just serve to bring the bubbling tech sector in the area to a boil.

“It’s analogous with Art Basel. There was always a strong arts community in Miami, and Art Basel acted as a catalyst to explode the value,” Mr. Davis said. “Now, there’s always been pockets of tech innovation in Miami, and the key was to bring them all together.”

Following eMerge, where those pockets did get a chance to coalesce along with many others from around Latin and North America, there is a need to capitalize on the momentum created in those first weeks of this May.

“What I am seeing in South Florida is incredible in terms of tech innovation. It goes across multiple sectors. We’re seeing pioneers in infrastructure, cyber security and certainly social media,” Mr. Davis said. “The entrepreneurship is there, the innovation is there. What we need now is the capital.”

Where Mr. Davis can help provide business and legal support, Susan Amat, founder of Venture Hive, can help provide a home and a competitive environment where startups from around the world can grow and learn from one another in a Miami-based startup accelerator and incubator.

“Susan Amat comes to mind immediately,” said Melissa Mediavilla, vice president of strategic engagement for the Technology Foundation of the Americas and president of the Medina Family Foundation. “She is at the forefront of the tech movement in Miami. She runs Venture Hive and she just announced that they will be opening their first ever Innovation Center in the US based out of her office,” Ms. Mediavilla said.

Venture Hive, however, didn’t come about without institutional support. The startup accelerator is able to provide an environment for different ideas, entrepreneurs and innovations because it itself received support from different organizations.

“The incubator wouldn’t be where it is today – providing tech education in places as far flung as Nairobi and being included in tech leadership with organizations like the World Bank and US State Department – without the help of local government. Miami-Dade Mayor Carlos Gimenez, City of Miami Commissioner Marc Sarnoff, the Miami Downtown Development Authority and the Miami World Center were all instrumental to Venture Hive’s success, Ms. Amat said.

“When the World Bank and the US State Department and USAID are flying in startups from different parts of the world to Miami for training and mentorship, that speaks volumes to Miami for training and mentorship,” Ms. Amat said.

Susan Amat built a home and competitive environment for startups.

“Don’t be a jerk,” Ms. Amat said. “While the spirit of innovation is going around the Greater Miami area, moving forward and maturing as an industry takes leaders who show up when they say they will, deliver what they say they will and behave professionally and ethically. One of the biggest faults of a startup can be promising something too big and falling short, Ms. Amat said.

As Miami’s tech sector continues to develop, growing past those faults will be the sign of a mature, world-class industry. Companies like Snapcore, RawShorts, Soccer Without Limits (SWOL), Criptext and Hair Construction are all leading the charge, Ms. Amat said.

For those that follow, they’ve got the advantage of institutional support, whether it’s from business and law, accelerator and incubator programs or local government. With that foundation, reaching skyscrapers should be all the easier.
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By Scott Blake

Top entrepreneurs embrace change

Jack Karabees of 2-year-old firm itopia has worn many hats in his career, most of them in the tech field.

Ask people in Miami’s business circles about local entrepreneurs and Manul “Manny” Medina is usually among the first, if not the first, mentioned. If you measure entrepreneurs by those who aren’t afraid of change in developing a viable business enterprise, he’s in the upper echelon in Miami.

That’s why Mr. Medina has been named to Best of Miami for forging a career as one of South Florida’s most successful entrepreneurs. He was nominated by Bob Fitz, president of the Gold Coast Venture Capital Association.

By now, Mr. Medina’s story is familiar: Born in Cuba; came to Miami as a boy with his parents; earned an accounting degree; worked as an accountant. Then he broke away, started a consulting firm, and later founded another company – Terremark Worldwide – in 1980. And the rest is business folklore.

Terremark was a commercial real estate company that constructed office buildings and did infrastructure projects. Under his leadership, the firm didn’t shy from change, transitioning some 15 years later to the tech sector.

During the “dot-com” era, Terremark morphed into an information technology company, including the NAP (Network Access Point) of the Americas, a big box-like building downtown that houses a large data center and Internet exchange point, handling online traffic for much of the world.

“In the mid ’90s, I started building the infrastructure of telecommunication companies,” Mr. Medina recalled in a 2009 interview, explaining the transition to tech.

“We built a building, and then we rented out the space to telecommunication companies. I started building more of those in the late ’90s and that is when the company’s focus started shifting to the telecommunications and Internet side of the business.”

By 2011, with Terremark’s stock publicly trading on the NASDAQ stock exchange and Mr. Medina running the business as founder, chairman of the board, and CEO, the company had caught the eye of telecommunications giant Verizon Communications.

Verizon bought the company that year in a deal valued at $1.4 billion. Mr. Medina exited the company, reportedly receiving $83 million from the acquisition.

Like any good entrepreneur, Mr. Medina didn’t stop there. He founded Medina Capital, a growth equity investment firm that specializes in helping information technology companies.

Based on Brickell Key, the firm’s management team and advisory board is loaded with former Terremark executives.

“We invest between $10 million to $20 million in each of our portfolio companies,” the firm’s website states. “We hold a majority equity interest in our target companies or, alternatively, a significant minority interest in target companies.”

One of Mr. Medina’s latest efforts is eMerge Americas, an annual tech conference in Miami that draws more than 5,000 people last month. The event featured speakers talking about everything from international entrepreneurship to emerging medical technologies.

Mr. Medina wants to boost the profile of Miami’s startup scene and position it as a place for Latin American firms seeking to get a foothold in the US.

“If you’re a Latin American company and you go to Boston or New York, there’s a prejudice,” he told the conference. “In Miami you feel more at home. You have the same culture.”

Another veteran of South Florida’s entrepreneurial scene is Jack Karabees. His career hasn’t been as high profile as Mr. Medina’s, but he’s worn many hats and worn them well – mostly in the tech field.

For his record of managing, marketing, raising money and making sales for a variety of innovative businesses through the years, he was nominated by Mr. Fitz.

Today, Mr. Karabees is executive vice president of sales and marketing for itopia, an information technology management and services firm based downtown and founded in 2012 by Jonathan Lieberman, the firm’s president and CEO.

Mr. Karabees was recruited to join itopia last year – the latest stop in a colorful career that began in South Florida in 1979 and later led him to Southern California and back.

“If there’s a thread through everything I’ve done, it is disruptive technology,” he explained. “By disruptive technology, I mean it’s something that fundamentally changes the way people do something.”

Early in his career, Mr. Karabees was vice president of sales and marketing at DataNet in Miramar, where he worked for 12 years. In 1999, he joined elabar, a workforce management services company in Los Angeles, where he also had the title of senior vice president of sales and marketing.

Later, Mr. Karabees joined Hudson Capital, a $1 billion-plus investment and development firm in Miami, where he was executive vice president.

Beginning in 2008, when he returned full-time to South Florida, he had a stint in the investment banking arena as principal and managing director of corporate finance for CP Capital Securities, a technology and health care-oriented investment banking firm with an office in the Brickell financial district.

“I was raising money for entrepreneurial startup companies,” he said.

In 2011, he joined Consult A Doctor, a health care technology and services company in South Florida specializing in “telemedicine,” which uses tele-communications and information technology to provide clinical health care from a distance.

He started as the company’s vice president of sales and marketing and became president and CEO before departing for itopia.

The key to selling a product or service to another business, Mr. Karabees said, is simple – it should make functioning easier or more profitable.

“It must be something that works,” he explained. “It must be something that’s real.”

Reflecting on his success, he modestly added: “It’s been a living.”

“What keeps him going onto new projects and challenges is something a bit more intriguing. ‘It’s the energy of it,’ he said, “the day-to-day excitement.”
Role models guided tourism growth, built artistic offerings

BY LIDIA DINKOVA

After years of being a tourism destination and now claiming its spot in the global scene as a home to art and culture, Miami-Dade’s success in these realms is largely owed to community role models who pushed for tourism growth and built up the area’s artistic offerings.

About 40 years ago, Arthur Hertz, now chairman and chief executive officer of Wometco Enterprises Inc., was among those who pushed for the private sector to have a hand in growing state tourism. And about two years ago, Lourdes Lopez came back to South Florida to lead Miami City Ballet as artistic director, not only bringing her 40 years of experience to the company but also introducing premier performances that challenge audiences and dancers alike.

“We talk a lot about the talent drain in Miami, so she is a great example of someone who was super talented, left Miami, had an amazing career and now is back investing her time, her passion, her energy in this community,” said Stephanie Ansin, Miami Theater Center founder and artistic director, who nominated Ms. Lopez.

Under Ms. Lopez’s direction during the 2013-14 season, Miami City Ballet premiered four performances: Ballet dancer and choreographer Nacho Duato’s “Jardi Tancat,” which barefoot ballet dancers performed to Spanish music; contemporary ballet choreographer Christopher Wheeldon’s “Polyphonia;” Jerome Robbins’ “West Side Story Suite;” and George Balanchine’s “Episodes.”

Mr. Hertz’s civic involvement is vast. Among his titles: chairman of the University of Miami Hospital board of governors, member of the University of Miami board of trustees, member of the Miami Parking Authority and Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce trustee.

His company, Wometco Enterprises, owner of Marine Exhibitions Corp., the Miami Seaquarium owner and operator, that this year sold all of its stock to a Spanish-based company.

Other leaders were also cited. Washington Economic Group President and Chief Executive Officer Larry Williams nominated both Ron Shuffield, president and CEO of Esslinger, Weston Maxwell Inc. Realors, and Jaret L. Davis, co-managing shareholder of Greenberg Traurig’s Miami office.

Once we get them [the audience] into the seats and the curtain goes up, I am so convinced that the art form can relate to so many people.”

After retiring as soloist and principal dancer at the New York City Ballet, Ms. Lopez was a cultural arts reporter for New York’s WNBC-TV, a full-time senior faculty member at New York’s Ballet Academy East and served on the dance faculty at Barnard College. She is also co-founder of New York-based dance company Morphoses, which fosters collaboration between dance and other art forms. She is the first artist elected to The Ford Foundation’s board of trustees.

Mr. Hertz, too, is a pioneer, but in different aspects. “Art Hertz was pushing, ‘We’ve got to increase tourism.’” said José K. Fuentes, senior government relations consultant at Becker & Poliakoff and chairman of the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce’s Government Affairs Group, who nominated Mr. Hertz. “There was always a pushback, because Miami wanted to be this quiet little place.”

But, Mr. Fuentes added, it was through the vision of people like Mr. Hertz that Miami-Dade became a tourism destination as well as a place where diversity is integrated.

“When the Cuban community came to this area, he embraced them getting involved in the business community,” Mr. Fuentes said. “I could say, ‘Oh, I like this politician.’ But you know what? Not one of these politicians would be here if it wasn’t for people like Art Hertz who changed the scene of Miami, making it more inclusive. Twenty or 30 years from now, I want to be someone like Art Hertz, who has made a difference in this community.”

Mr. Hertz is co-founder, past chairman and member emeritus of The Florida Commission on Tourism, a public-private organization that deals with tourism.

When Mr. Hertz got involved, tourism growth was handled by public entities, he said. Today, tourism is a vital state industry that, Mr. Hertz said, has kept Florida from introducing an income tax.

“The sales tax that tourism generates is sufficient to keep us from having an income tax,” he said.

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Developer, retired university president, mayor stuck with it

By Lidia Dinova

As Miami-Dade’s landscape shifts to multi-story luxury condominiums, the developers who restore the existing landscape — such as two-story Little Havana buildings — are people who have shaped the community over the years.

Miami Dade College history professor Paul George calls Bill Fuller, co-founder and co-managing partner of Burlington Group, “a developer with a conscience.”

“He has a real streak of idealism in him,” Mr. George said. "He has a vision, and his vision is he wants to bring back areas that are the oldest neighborhoods in Miami. ... He has a love affair with Miami and really wants to enhance it.”

Instead of developing condominiums on land where older structures used to be, Mr. Fuller buys and restores the older structures — and infuses the neighborhood’s history into the businesses that set up shop.

What’s now an 8,000-square-foot building housing 15 artists’ studios and artwork retail space used to be a hardware company’s foot building housing 15 artists’ studios and artwork retail space used to be a hardware company’s — it, and we created the concept of it, and people work for us and carry out our vision.”

Part of the building that houses the pizza place is rented out to a cake shop and a dance studio.

“We like to focus on drawing in the... entrepreneurs,” Mr. Fuller said.

Two tattoo parlors have set up shop in Little Havana, one on Southwest Sixth Street and 12th Avenue and another on South-west 26th Avenue and Eighth Street, he said.

“I love their presence in the neighborhood. We want to be a neighborhood that has something for everyone,” Mr. Fuller said, adding that the firm’s work in Little Havana started in 2002.

“Ultimately, it’s about creating a great community.”

The Burlington Group’s development also stretches to Brickell and downtown, Mr. Fuller said.

Aside from developers, education and political leaders have also helped shape Miami-Dade through the years.

Virginia Jacko, president and CEO of the Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired, said former Barry University president of 23 years Sister Jeanne O’Laughlin and Miami Mayor Tomás Regalado have shaped the community.

Mayor Regalado not only reaches out to everyone, “whether they are blind, whether they are rich, whether they are poor, whether they are disabled,” but he also pushes projects that sometimes get bogged down in permitting, Ms. Jacko said.

“He is proactive,” Ms. Jacko said. “He has personally gotten involved in zoning and permitting to see that the process doesn’t get bogged down.”

Sister O’Laughlin, too, is proactive.

When the Detroit native assumed the university presidency, she earned the nickname “nun on the run” for her fundraising work, according to Barry’s website. Under her leadership, Barry University purchased and accredited its Orlando School of Law and initiated the Schools of Professional and Career Education, Computer Science, Biological and Biomedical Science, and Podiatric Medicine.

Now, she holds the title of Barry University president emeritus.

“She began as a high-school math and science teacher. Women back then, they usually weren’t math and science teachers,” Ms. Jacko said. “She grew and progressed and ultimately became a faculty member and president and chancellor of Barry University…”

She turned Barry University from a very small entity with a few thousand students to many thou-sand students.”

Bill Fuller, who “has a real streak of idealism in him,” in front of one current renovation, the Ball & Chain.

Mayor Tomás Regalado “has personally gotten involved in zoning and permitting” to keep them moving.

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The Children’s Trust is a dedicated source of revenue established by voter referendum to improve the lives of children and families in Miami-Dade County by making strategic investments in their futures.
Gables museum preserving culture

By Nina Lincoff

Although it’s a relatively new institution having just opened its doors in 2011, the Coral Gables Museum is taking a look back on the history of the city and the Greater Miami area.

By highlighting the play between historic and new architecture, working with schools throughout the county, partnering with sister cities around the world and featuring exhibits that play off of current events, the museum, at 285 Aragon Ave., is a new addition to a historic place, and is this year’s nominee for Best of Miami in preserving and promoting culture and history.

But exhibiting and highlighting the culture and history of Greater Miami within the walls of the museum isn’t the only reason for its nomination. The Coral Gables Museum and its staff do a great job of reaching out to the community through weekly walking tours and quarterly bicycle rides, as well as coordinating museum visits with Miami-Dade County schools.

“I’ve been working with the many museums through the Miami Museum Magnet program, and I’ve been working with the Coral Gables Museum since 2006, when they were still formulating the museum,” said nominator Rosemarie Wolfson, lead teacher at Miami-Dade County Public Magnet programs at Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

“I’ve been taking groups of kids there for three or four years, and I think it’s very beneficial because it enables the students to visit a historical building and focus on the historic site of an early fire station,” said Gerry Slattery, a first grade teacher at W.J. Bryan Elementary School. “They get to see the architectural elements of the building and they get a better understanding of what came before. That helps them to grasp the present day technological advances that they have today,” Ms. Slattery said.

The idea for a Coral Gables Museum developed in the early 2000s, when the private non-profit organization the Museum Corp. was founded. The museum itself leases its building from the City of Coral Gables. Ms. Rupp was hired as the first employee a few years later.

“The Coral Gables Museum, by presenting these exhibits that focus on much more than Coral Gables and by creating programs around those exhibitions, we’re able to explain what we’re about and our place in the world,” Ms. Rupp said. “Our mission is to focus on architecture, urban design and planning, and preservation, both architectural and environmental,” she said.

The focus of the museum is particularly interesting to children because of the building’s history, Ms. Rupp said. The museum leases in a city-owned space, taking advantage of its history. The museum is in the original police and fire station for the city, and remnants of the building’s previous use linger.

There are old jail cells to visit, old grates that have been repurposed, as well as ornamental sculpture that provides a history of place. When kids come to the museum, they learn how to read architectural symbols.

They also get to meet today’s firemen and policemen, and are sometimes shown the new stations. That contrast between old and new is invaluable.

“We engage the kids in a building, which gives them a sense as to why it’s important to preserve historic buildings,” Ms. Rupp said.

“It’s very important in today’s education community, especially with public schools, that you have this kind of support,” Ms. Wolfson said.

“The thing that is so unique about Chris is that she’ll find people in the community or organizations in the community that have a passion for historic buildings, and she’ll find ways to fund and make trips around them happen,” Ms. Wolfson said.

However, the museum doesn’t just cater to school children. Saturday walking tours invite anyone and all to walk around the city and highlight historic and new architectural gems. Each bicycle tour is centered on a certain theme like local flora. Bicycle tours range from 40 to 150 people depending on the weather, and while they aren’t for those looking to get a workout, they are a great family activity, Ms. Rupp said.

A few challenges, however, face the fledgling museum. At the moment, the museum gets around $100,000 in grants from the city and its operating budget is closer to $600,000. Typically, a museum is almost 50% funded by local government, Ms. Rupp said.

“Coral Gables is always thought of as a very affluent community, but that is incorrect,” she said. Moving forward, getting more robust funding will be a priority.

After just three years, however, people already think of the museum as being part of the city’s landscape.

“There is nothing that makes me feel happier than when we hear that people cannot imagine the city without the museum. And that just makes us smile, because that’s what we’re all about,” Ms. Rupp said. “It’s part and parcel of the community, and our job is to make sure that they’re proud of the museum.”

Helping ignite Miami’s startup culture

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Photo by Maxine Usdan
Photo (cc) by Aerostylaz on Deviantart.com
School board member for 18 years, now board chairman...

By John Charles Robbins

Our future rests in the hands of those bright young boys and girls chit-chatting in today’s classrooms.

Education is a key that unlocks so many doors, and those men and women who devote their lives to providing a quality education ought to be heralded for passing the torch. Perla Tabares Hantman, longtime member and current chair of the School Board of Miami-Dade County is one of those thought leaders whose academic endeavors and service to our youth deserves special recognition.

Ms. Hantman was nominated for this year’s Best of Miami by Dr. Elaine Lif tin, president and executive director of the Council for Educational Change. “She has worked tirelessly for 18 years on the Miami-Dade County School Board, and has been chairperson for seven years,” said Ms. Lif tin.

Ms. Hantman’s years of public service have helped to advance the area’s public schools, keeping them competitive and successful.

“She creative policy efforts have been instrumental in moving the school district forward,” said Ms. Lif tin.

“Public education has always been a passion of mine because I believe it is the single most important element in empowering a person to create their own destiny,” said Ms. Hantman.

“Once given, knowledge is a gift that can never be taken away.”

The success of a city or town can be gauged, in part, by the how its schools function.

“The quality and economic viability of a community is inextricably linked to the quality of education provided in the public schools,” Ms. Hantman said. “That is why I have committed the better part of my professional life to working for high quality schools for Florida and for Miami-Dade.”

“I am humbled to be recognized for this work,” she said.

Ms. Hantman saw the value of an education early in her own life, and stuck to the books. Born in Havana, she completed high school there and attended the University of Havana. Due to political circumstances, she was forced to emigrate to the US but she continued her education at Barry University in Miami. Ms. Hantman’s career in public service began with the Cuban Refugee Program of the US Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Later, she joined the US Foreign Service, assigned by the Department of State to the American Embassy in Mexico City.

Her vast experience was gained from years of service on prominent state boards. These included service from 1987-90 on the Florida Board of Medicine, and from 1990-96 on the Florida Board of Regents, the governing board of Florida’s 10 state universities.

She was the first Hispanic woman in the US to hold the position of Regent.

Ms. Hantman is an honorary life member of the National PTA and served on the board of the South Florida Annenberg Challenge. She’s also served as a trustee and member of the Executive Committee of the Florida International University Foundation Board.

It’s not all been schools in Ms. Hantman’s public service career. In 1999, Florida’s governor appointed her to the Metropolitan Planning Organization, and she is currently in her fourth term on that regional government body. She was unanimously elected vice chair in 2009 for a two-year term.

Ms. Hantman was first elected to the Miami-Dade County School Board in November 1996, representing District 4, and in 1998 and 2002 was re-elected to four-year terms without opposition.
...cited as thought leader along with River Art Fair’s chair

She was re-elected in 2006 and in 2010 and is currently serving her fifth term. In November of 2010, 2011, 2012 and again in 2013, Ms. Hantman was elected board chair.

What’s best for the students remains at the forefront of her work.

Ms. Hantman has successfully brought numerous initiatives before the school board on student safety and well-being. Children in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 now receive more complete vision and hearing screenings, the nutrition education curriculum has been strengthened, and her efforts to implement the Safe Routes to School program have been very helpful in securing more than $9 million in federal funding for infrastructure projects.

She also helps run the Blue Ribbon Campaign to prevent child abuse and neglect, observed in Miami-Dade County Public Schools every spring.

In such a diverse area as Miami-Dade, bilingual education is vital and Ms. Hantman has been a strong supporter. Her work has helped expand these programs, which have resulted in more opportunities for students to become bilingual and biliterate.

It’s no surprise that Ms. Hantman has been honored for her public service. Over the years she has been recognized for leadership in all areas of education, and for strong advocacy for the rights of women, students and minorities.

She has even had a day named in her honor. The Town of Miami Lakes honored Ms. Hantman’s commitment to education in a resolution designating June 7, 2005, as “Perla Tabares Hantman Day.”

Another community member recognized for creative ideas and drive is Nina Torres, who is director of the annual Miami River Art Fair.

“Miami is fortunate to have a creative cultural thought leader in Nina Torres,” said Brett Bibeau, managing director of the Miami River Commission, which created her for the distinction.

In 2014, the third annual Miami River Art Fair will return to downtown’s James L. Knight Center during Art Basel week and feature more permanent art installations along the public riverwalk.

Ms. Torres is the main force behind this event that helps elevate the community. In addition, Ms. Torres frequently leads art walks along the public riverwalk, bringing continued attention to one of the city’s refreshing locales.

“Art and culture are engines for community enhancement, and thankfully Ms. Torres strongly supports the improvements being implemented by the public and private sectors along the Miami River District,” said Mr. Bibeau.

For more than 20 years, Ms. Torres has been participating in the international art market, specializing in Modern and Contemporary Latin American Art.
Doctors hailed for improving the health of poor, uninsured

BY SCOTT BLAKE

The work that Dr. Nilda Soto and Dr. Tina Carroll-Scott do serving the poor and uninsured is far removed from the complicated, big-money world of health care and health care insurance, but their efforts haven’t gone unnoticed.

As medical director and CEO of the Open Door Health Center in Homestead, Dr. Soto and her small staff—typically see 40 to 50 patients a day, including farm workers. Their mission statement is decidedly uncomplicated: “Open Door Health Center is a primary healthcare center dedicated to serving the uninsured poor of South Dade at no cost to them.”

Dr. Carroll-Scott has a very similar mission. As medical director of the South Miami Children’s Clinic, she and her staff provide health care and health education to South Miami’s uninsured children and young people.

The clinic sums up its mission with a quote from Winston Churchill: “We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give.”

Dr. Soto and Dr. Carroll-Scott have been named to this year’s “Best of Miami” for their leadership and dedication to expanding and improving health and medicine. They were nominated by Baptist Health South Florida President and CEO Brian Keeley, who had this to say: “I commend (Dr. Soto and Dr. Carroll-Scott) for their work in the South Florida community that provides quality care to the underserved,” Mr. Keeley said. “Their timeless devotion to caring for individuals, children and families at times of need – and in keeping them well – makes a real difference in our community.”

Both the health center and the clinic were founded and continue to operate with contributions, from individuals to community organizations, and with in-kind services provided by physicians and healthcare companies.

Dr. Soto has run the health center since it opened in February 2001. She came from humble beginnings in Puerto Rico, she recalled, growing up in a wooden house “with barely a floor” near a sugar cane field.

She graduated from medical school there and later came to the US. She’s been practicing medicine in southern Miami-Dade since 1987. “I am one of them,” she said about her patients. “I came from the same background. I know how privileged I am.”

“It’s not just about money,” she added. “It’s about changing people’s lives.”

Dr. Carroll-Scott said she feels the same way. Her clinic sees many underprivileged African-American youngsters, some who come from troubled homes.

She has been heading the clinic since it opened in March 2007. Prior to that, she was working at a medical practice in Homestead. However, she felt she was losing touch with why she originally got into medicine – to help the underserved. So when the opportunity arose to lead the clinic, she took it.

“It was a blessing for me,” she said, adding about the clinic and its mission: “This is my baby. I’m personally invested in its success.”

Other “Best of Miami” nominees in health care are Dr. Steven Falcone of the University of Miami Health System, or UHealth, who was named to the list for his work of facilities.

“My responsibilities at the University of Miami are vast, but he wears them lightly and creates the true collegiality necessary for long-term partnerships to thrive,” Mr. Migoya said. “He has helped both Jack- son Health System and UHealth work together to develop shared services to focus on our shared community mission.”

About Dr. Falcone, he added, “He has played a pivotal role in making Miami a growing global health care center for some of the world’s most innovative specialized care in areas such as trauma, neurosurgery, cardiology and organ transplant.

“The field of medicine and the business of hospitals are changing like a thrill ride: fast, unpredictable, and sometimes scary,” Mr. Migoya added. “Dr. Falcone is the calm eye in that storm’s center.”

He described Dr. Falcone as “a top-rate” clinician who also thrives as a “transformative” organizational leader.

“There’s no one at the University of Miami are vast, but he wears them lightly and creates the true collegiality necessary for long-term partnerships to thrive,” Mr. Migoya said. “He has helped both Jackson Health System and UHealth work together to develop shared services to focus on our shared community mission.”

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“In every sense of the word, we are a healthier place because of Steve’s contributions.”

Dr. Tina Carroll-Scott, founder and CEO of the Open Door Health Center in Homestead, is one of this year’s “Best of Miami” winners for her work improving the health of the poor and uninsured. She is seen in this file photo by Mediterranean Airlines.

Don Steigman is making his mark in health care in a different way. As executive vice president and chief operating officer of the county-owned Jackson Health System, Mr. Steigman has played a key role in a dramatic financial turnaround for the organization.

The Jackson system has generated an operating surplus for the last two years and is the beneficiary of $830 million in general obligation bonds that will be used for capital renewal and expansion of Jackson’s network of facilities.

For such reasons, he was nominated by Joe Natoli, interim chief operating officer at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine and UHealth.

From the administrative side, Mr. Steigman looks for ways to improve health care, said Mr. Natoli, also the university’s senior vice president for business and finance and chief financial officer.

He said: “Don has partnered on… best-in-class programs including the Miami Transplant Institute and The Miami Project to Cure Paralysis, in addition to renowned services provided at the Ryder Trauma Center and Holtz Children’s Hospital.”

The Best of Miami 2014

HEALTH AND MEDICINE

the university and has since a built a strong professional repu-

tation there as both a physician and a leader on the business side of health care.

“Tireless” is one word that Jackson Health System Presi-
dent and CEO Carlos Migoya uses to describe Dr. Falcone.

“Steve Falcone distinguishes himself as a leader, as a partner, and as a thoughtful defender of world-class care for ev-
evone in Miami-Dade County,” Mr. Migoya said in nominating Dr. Falcone, who specializes in radiology and neuroradiology.

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Three play vital roles in developing our international trade

BY SCOTT BLAKE

Bill Johnson self-deprecatingly said his recent appointment is as “the toilet czar” — a joking reference to the final year of his 35-year career in county government that he’ll spend as director of Miami-Dade’s Water and Sewer Department.

Actually, the self-described toilet czar has some important duties before he retires — overseeing a system that serves more than 2.6 million people, that is, in early stages of a $1.3 billion-plus capital improvement overhaul to rehabilitate the county’s leaky, aged wastewater collection and treatment system.

Having recently departed an eight-year stint running PortMiami, Mr. Johnson still casts a big shadow over the area’s international trade industry. Prior to being the county director of the world’s busiest cruise port, he was an assistant county manager overseeing Miami International Airport.

Mr. Johnson has been named to this year’s Best of Miami list for his long record of work and his passion for high-profile projects that have helped grow Miami’s international business. He was nominated by World Trade Center Miami President Charlotte Gallogly.

“ITs of making things happen, it takes a dedication,” Ms. Gallogly said in reference to Mr. Johnson, “and he has really helped further Miami’s agenda.”

During his tenure at the seaport, for example, Mr. Johnson helped launch one of the most ambitious capital improvement programs in its history, including a public-private partnership that built the recently completed $1 billion-plus PortMiami tunnels.

He also oversaw expansion of new cruise brands at the port and championed plans to position PortMiami as a major cargo hub following the opening of the enlarged Panama Canal, including a deep dredging of the port’s shipping lanes to accommodate larger cargo vessels.

Related plans also included reactivating a freight rail line into the port, purchasing larger gantry cranes at PortMiami, and activating a freight rail line into the port, purchasing larger gantry cranes at PortMiami, and activating a freight rail line into the port, purchasing larger gantry cranes at PortMiami, and activating a freight rail line into the port, purchasing larger gantry cranes at PortMiami, and activating a freight rail line into the port.

When asked in a 2012 interview when he was going to “slow down,” he flatly replied: “When I die.”

“...I work every night. I take a briefcase home for reading. On vacation, I read. My Blackberry goes with me. You never disconnect, but to me it’s not work. I love what I do.”

Also named in this year’s Best of Miami in international business is Chris Mangos. Ms. Gallogly nominated him particularly for his work developing the cargo business at Miami International Airport, but he also works to develop passenger traffic — flights that “fly the flag of Miami’s tourism industry.”

Mr. Mangos is the marketing division director for the Miami-Dade Aviation Department, which operates Miami International. His duties include oversight of passenger and cargo marketing programs, including air service and route development.

At Miami International, that’s a big responsibility, given the size of the county-owned airport’s passenger traffic and cargo activity. Miami International handles the vast majority of air cargo shipped through Florida, while the airport ranks second in the nation in number of international passengers.

Overall, Miami International recorded 40.1 million passenger enplanements and deplanements in 2013, the fourth consecutive year of increases. The only decrease in the last decade came in 2009, when the economy bottomed out.

The same pattern largely holds true for Miami International’s air cargo business, which rose to 2.13 million tons in 2013. It also was the fourth consecutive year of increases after a slight decrease in 2008 and a sharp decrease in 2009.

Chris Mangos develops both air cargo and our passenger traffic, particularly, as an executive for Seaboard Marine — a major cargo presence at the port that continues to invest in its local operations.

In January, Seaboard Marine announced it had signed a 267,400-square-foot industrial lease renewal with a 64,000-square-foot expansion at its warehouse and office facility in Medley.

And in March, the company announced it had added two new large mobile cranes at PortMiami.

Ms. Gallogly said Mr. Perez-Jones has cultivated relationships overseas that should pay off for Seaboard Marine and the port as whole once the enlarged Panama Canal opens, slated for 2016, creating the potential for Miami to draw even larger cargo vessels.

“Many of us look to his guidance [in matters involving] the import-export trade,” she said.

Born in Cuba, Mr. Perez-Jones was graduated from Miami Dade College.

His career in the maritime industry dates back to 1967. In 1983, he was one of the founding members of Seaboard Marine. As vice president of sales and marketing, he developed all sales and and from the US, Central America, South America, the Eastern Caribbean and elsewhere.

In 2001, Mr. Perez-Jones was promoted to his current position. In addition, he also has been a board member for a number of international trade organizations, including Caribbean Central American Action, Florida Free Trade Area Americas, and the Florida Customs Brokers and Forwarders Association.

Last year, Florida Gov. Rick Scott awarded him a Business Ambassador Award for making port investments a top priority in Florida and for expanding international trade opportunities through the state’s seaports, helping create jobs and opportunities.

“I am pleased to recognize Florida leaders, such as Jose Perez-Jones,” the governor said, “who have made a big impact in creating opportunities for Florida families to succeed.”
Bike spokesmen pedal on sustainability circuit

By Lidia Dinkova

Perhaps it’s a nod to sustainability. Or perhaps it’s a nod to tackling Miami-Dade’s transportation woes.

This year, both nominees for Best of Miami’s ‘sparkplugs’ category are advocates for biking as a transportation and recreation form.

Robert Ruano is co-founder and past chairman of non-profit Bike Walk Coral Gables, which promotes the accessibility of Coral Gables streets and trails to bicyclists and pedestrians, and Tony Garcia is a member of Bike Walk Coral Gables as well as of organizations advocating for environmentally conscious development of Miami-Dade and for biking and pedestrian-friendly county trails.

“Tony, I think, sparks change in that he has an extensive knowledge about the bureaucratic process of getting things done.… He is guiding us through some of these things that relate to grant writing all the way to what political leadership controls what and who sits on what board and what committee,” said Frankkie Ruiz, co-founder of Miami Marathon and chief running officer at Life Time Fitness. “That’s proven to be extremely helpful, because you might have an activist but they don’t know who to go to.”

Mr. Ruiz nominated Mr. Garcia. The two have advocated and worked on the proposed Ludlam Trail, a linear green space running along 67th Avenue. The company behind All Aboard Florida, a planned Miami-Orlando express rail, Florida East Coast Railway, owns the land, Mr. Ruiz said. Friends of the Ludlam Trail, a non-profit, wants the trail to include community gardens and pedestrian as well as bike trails, according to its website.

For Mr. Garcia, it’s all about preserving what’s more traffic,” Mr. Garcia said. “As a community, we should have more options to get around town than just being in our car.”

That includes expanding Metrorail and the public bus system, he said. He supports the proposed Baylink light-rail system that may connect downtown Miami to Miami Beach.

Another project high on Mr. Garcia’s list is GreenLink, a proposal to convert about 10 miles running underneath and along Metrorail from Brickell to Dadeland Southwest stations to walking, biking, and exercise paths.

Among Mr. Garcia’s civic involvements is committee member of the nonprofit Friends of GreenLink, which advocates for the GreenLink project; chairman of the nonprofit Green Mobility Network, which advocates for making Miami-Dade more bike and pedestrian friendly; board member of the Urban Environment League, which advocates for environmentally conscious growth that preserves waterfront, public and historic spaces in Miami-Dade; and founder and chairman of the nonprofit Friends of the Ludlam Trail.

Mr. Garcia is the principal of The Street Plans Collaborative, an urban planning, design, and research-advocacy firm that strives to reverse suburban sprawl by creating mixed-use neighborhoods complete with public spaces.

“I get to do for a living what I do as a hobby, as an advocate,” he told Miami Today.

Bike Walk Coral Gables, comprised of all volunteers including Mr. Garcia and co-founder Mr. Ruano, is as much about promoting bike and pedestrian safety as it is about promoting Coral Gables, Mr. Ruano said.

“We see it more as getting people moving out on the road teaching them the rules of how to be safe and everybody having a good time at a great place,” said Mr. Ruano, a Coral Gables resident of 13 years and founder and president of Ecostroa Services, a resource,劝告, application completion, general consultation and funding-development company.

Bike Walk Coral Gables organizes the annual Gables Bike Day, a street festival in the city’s downtown, and monthly bike rides done in collaboration with Coral Gables Museum.

“We are very respectful of everybody on the road,” Mr. Ruano said.

Bike Walk Coral Gables supports a proposed Coral Gables bike master plan.

“Ultimately, we want to make the city more bicycle friendly,” he said.

“Mr. Ruano is the kind of guy who is a very unassuming guy.… He is the kind of guy who people want to be around and people want to work with,” said Sabadell Bank Vice President Patrick Morris, who nominated Mr. Ruano.

Bike Walk Coral Gables “was an idea a couple of people had, and he was the force behind it.”
Principal, trust specialist represent well 40,000 school workers

BY NINA LINCOFF

Nearly 350,000 students attend 392 Miami-Dade County Public Schools and speak 56 languages, representing 160 countries. Working alongside those students are 40,000 employees, from teachers to janitors to counselors to coaches.

Herb Penton, resident principal at Thomas Jefferson Middle School under Project Lead Strong, and Leo Shama, a trust specialist at Devon-Aire K-8 Center, are just two out of 40,000. But they’re making their time in Dade schools count.

“[Mr.] Penton is an extremely committed educator for all the right reasons. He always stands for the right thing. He is an ardent supporter of students and their ability to have a chance to better themselves and their lives,” said Bradnock Senior High School Principal Manuel Garcia. “I have witnessed firsthand his passion and dedication to our Public Education System… Great father, great educator and yet, better human being,” Mr. Garcia said.

A product of the Miami-Dade County public schools himself, with 21 years down as an employee of the system – five as a teacher and the rest as an assistant principal – Mr. Penton has spent most of his life in the county’s public school system. As part of this year’s six-person Project Lead Strong class, a county program that takes applicants from the 40,000 employee pool and grooms them for a year to become principal material, Mr. Penton has been to schools in all corners of Miami-Dade.

“I’ve been all over the county and it has provided me with a great point of view. Dade County is not homogenous, and there are very unique needs and issues depending on the part of the county that you are in,” Mr. Penton said. “Having moved around, I’ve seen them all.

But in addition to any one problem, there are many positives. “Great educators, staff, students and parents,” Mr. Penton said. Coworkers, mentors and mentees are constant motivation, he said.

“The challenges are many. For good or bad our state has been economically impacted and hence schools have been negatively impacted,” Mr. Penton said.

“When it comes to the resources needed to address the pressing challenges in our schools, we see less today than we’ve seen in the past.” he said. While a funding drought presents its own set of challenges and the introduction of social media and smart phones onto the playground throws another curveball at students and administrators, some things have remained the same. “Committed and caring individuals who want to make a difference. It is those same characteristics that define the successful education today,” Mr. Penton said.

“When it comes to the professionals who seek accurate information in a clearly delivered way. Bottom line is that we get results and are able to link with people as a result of advertising in Miami Today.”
Banking industry leaders hailed

BY SCOTT BLAKE

Since launching a new business plan in 2010, Miami-based TotalBank has done well and Luis de la Aguilar has been leading the charge as the bank’s chief executive.

Mr. de la Aguilar joined TotalBank – part of Grupo Banco Popular Español, one of Spain’s largest banking groups – in 2000 as an executive vice president. In 2009, he was appointed TotalBank’s president and chief marketing officer.

Then, last year, Mr. de la Aguilar was named president and CEO shortly before the bank announced increases to its management team’s responsibilities as it prepared for the second phase of its new business plan. He also has a seat on the bank’s board of directors.

Currently, TotalBank ranks as the sixth-largest bank headquartered in Southeast Florida, based on regional deposits, with more than $1.7 billion as of June 30, 2013, according to the latest statistics available from the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp.

Overall, TotalBank has $2.5 billion in assets and 21 branches in Miami-Dade County. TotalBank also was one of 18 banks in Miami-Dade and Broward counties this year to receive a five-star rating – the highest possible – from bank rating firm BauerFinancial.

Mr. de la Aguilar deserves a lot of credit for TotalBank’s success, said Florida Bankers Association President Alex Sanchez.

“Their lending and capacity is building Miami into the world-class city that it is,” Mr. Sanchez said about TotalBank. “They’re really involved in the community.”

For such reasons, Mr. de la Aguilar has been named to this year’s Best of Miami for being a leader in building Miami’s status as a financial hub.

Mr. de la Aguilar has his fingerprints all over TotalBank, so to speak. He oversees all business delivery channels, product development, marketing and sales initiatives within the bank. He guides and supervises the bank’s main production units, including commercial, small business, real estate lending and residential mortgage lending, as well as the retail branch and international divisions.

He also oversees the bank’s wealth management division, treasury and financial reporting, credit, risk, operations and information technology, international personal banking and project management office.

Mr. de la Aguilar earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Miami in 1981.

He started his banking career in 1982 at City National Bank of Miami, and followed that as vice president and commercial lender at Republic National Bank, then was senior vice president of corporate banking and assistant branch administrator at Ocean Bank.

TotalBank Chairman of the Board Jorge Rossell praised his new chief executive last fall.

The bank, Mr. Rossell said, “has been led by an experienced and proven management team. This talented team has positioned us with a solid, safe and readily scalable platform for the near future, which is why we have chosen Luis to assume the position of CEO.”

In addition, Miami-based Ocean Bank President and CEO Alfonso Macedo has been named to this year’s Best of Miami in the banking and finance industry.

Mr. Sanchez said it’s hard to ignore Ocean Bank’s impact on Miami through the years. A group of entrepreneurs founded the bank in 1982, using a trailer as an office and with just 14 employees. The next year, the bank moved to its current headquarters.

Today, Mr. Sanchez said, “when you drive around Miami, you can see all of the financing [of projects] that the bank has done.” Mr. Macedo, he added, has been a big part of that legacy for the past decade.

A native of Venezuela, Mr. Macedo joined Ocean Bank in 2005 as a member of its board of directors. In 2006, he was named executive vice president of the bank’s parent company, Ocean Bankshares Inc. And in 2008, he succeeded the retiring Jose Conception as the bank’s president and CEO.

Today, Ocean Bank has $3.3 billion in assets, 21 branches, and calls itself “the largest independent state-charted commercial bank headquartered in Florida.” It serves the tri-county market of Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach.

It also ranks fourth among banks based in Southeast Florida in regional deposits, with $2.88 billion as of June 30, 2013, according to FDIC data.

Ocean Bank notes that it has been Miami-Dade’s most active lender in the US Small Business Administration’s 504 loan program, which encourages economic development by providing small businesses with long-term, fixed-rate financing for expansion and modernization.

The bank acknowledges that legacy, which has continued under Mr. Macedo’s guidance: “We have made a substantial contribution to the development of our community by financing many of the most important real estate projects in this area,” its website states, “as well as granting numerous loans to local businesses.”

Other nominees in this year’s banking/finance category were Jorge Trías, president and vice chairman of the board at Miami-based First Bank of Miami; Thomas Lumpkin, attorney and chairman of the board at Biscayne Bank in Coconut Grove; Eddy Arriola, chairman of the board at Apollo Bank in Brickell; Jorge Gonzalez, president and CEO at City National Bank of Florida in Brickell; John Fumagalli, Florida president and CEO for The Northern Trust Co., also in Brickell; and Miriam Lopez, president and chief lending officer at Marquis Bank in Coral Gables.
Newer Miamians make rapid contributions to community

By Lidia Dinkova

Eli Stiers has lived in Miami for about nine years. In that time, he has co-drafted a bill, he has advocated for the upgrade of a Miami park, he has penned columns calling for public-transportation reform, and he has advocated for more green space as well as for safety measures for pedestrians and bicyclists.

“It’s not often that you get someone from out of town who wants to make the community better,” said Frankie Ruiz, co-founder of Miami Marathon and chief running officer at Life Time Fitness, who nominated Mr. Stiers. “He is not a directly interested party, he is not in the business of running or biking or any of that stuff. He is just a very concerned citizen.”

Mr. Stiers has advocated for the removal of a fence and upgrade of Alice C. Wainwright Park in Miami just off the Rickenbacker Causeway. It’s a beautiful 8-acre park. Our goal is to turn that into a really nice park with running trails,” said Mr. Stiers, a partner at Aronovitz Law.

“He is a doer,” said Mr. Ruiz. “Unless there’s really a champion [for reform]… it’s just fluff. But he turned around and next thing you know he is sending emails, setting up meetings with commissioners.”

As a transplant from Alabama, Mr. Stiers said he “grew up with the joy of the unbridled freedom just to hop on your bike. I wanted to continue to enjoy that, and I wanted others to enjoy that.”

He still remembers the first time he went jogging in Miami.

“I remember running around in Brickell and thinking, ‘I am going to get hit by a car one day,’” he said.

Since then, he added, Miami has made strides as a lot more people are biking or jogging outside.

Mr. Stiers co-drafted the Aaron Cohen Life Protection Act, which calls for a mandatory sentence of at least four years for leaving the scene of an accident resulting in death. This session, the Florida House and Senate passed the protection act, which was awaiting final approval from Gov. Rick Scott. The protection act is the namesake of Aaron Cohen, who in 2012 died after being struck by a hit-and-run driver on the Rickenbacker Causeway. The driver, Michele Traverso, was sentenced to about a year in jail.

“Stay at the scene,” Mr. Stiers said. “Just be a considerate human being.”

Mr. Stiers is a board member of the Green Mobility Network, a nonprofit that strives to make Miami-Dade a safer place to bicycle and jog; the director of the Safe Streets Miami campaign, a project of the Green Mobility Network focusing on road safety; and a member of the City of Miami parks and recreation advisory board.

“Any true world-class city has respected the outdoors,” he said. “There’s so much more to offer the residents of Miami that people are slowly starting to discover.”

Another newcomer to Miami-Dade who has made strides advancing the county is Beacon Council President and CEO Larry Williams, who assumed the position in late 2013.

“Larry is trying to make sure that he is constantly in communication and trying to meet the mission and objectives of the Beacon Council,” said José K. Fuentes, chairman of the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce’s Government Affairs Group and senior government relations consultant at Becker & Poliakoff. “He has been really good about working with the community. He seems to have established a really good relationship with the members of the county commission.”

According to the Beacon Council, Miami-Dade’s public-private economic development organization, Mr. Williams previously served as vice president of technology industry development for the Metro Atlanta Chamber and assistant director of international trade and economic development for the Washington State Department of Commerce.

Miami-Dade a safer place to bicycle and jog; the director of the Safe Streets Miami campaign, a project of the Green Mobility Network focusing on road safety; and a member of the City of Miami parks and recreation advisory board.

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Poetry for the soul, bread for sustenance enrich community

By Nina Lincoff

A hipster, a food critic and a rabbi walk into a bar. Wait, no, a bakery? If it’s Wynwood, spotting that unlikely trio is likely at a bakery on Northwest 26th Street.

“It’s both ironic and beautiful,” said Zak Stern, founder of Zak the Baker, a 2-year-old bakery that opened its first brick-and-mortar store this year. “You have a hipster, you have the food critic, and then you have a very religious Jewish person, and when would you find the three of them together?”

At Zak the Baker’s 405 NW 26th St. location. “That’s beautiful, and I love that we are able to offer a space for that. When I see it, it just makes me so happy,” Mr. Stern said.

Mr. Stern and P. Scott Cunningham, founder and director of poetry and literature nonprofit O, Miami, were both nominated for filling in two gaps in Greater Miami by offering both food for the belly and food for the brain in a way that enriches the quality of life in the area.

The bakery started with just a simple loaf of sourdough bread and the space in a friend’s house. Add a pizza oven, farmers markets, a couple sourdough apprentices (of which I was one last year), full disclaimer: an upgrade to a commissary and then finally to his own store, and what you have is Zak the Baker today.

But it still comes down to a simple loaf of sourdough bread. Water, flour, salt and native yeast.

“What a bakery is… it feeds the community and creates a space for people to come together. It’s universal. It transcends every culture,” Mr. Stern said. Amidst the murals and bars in Wynwood, the bakery also offers something a bit unusual—a kosher eating space. Mr. Stern and his wife operate a kosher establishment, and in doing so have created a place where different demographics of Greater Miami can come together in a way they may have not before.

“The kosher community as of now really sticks to their own areas because they are limited to only kosher restaurants,” Mr. Stern said. “We’re bakers and a bakery first, and we just happen to be kosher.”

Mr. Stern added, “I want to offer the kosher community a way to bridge the gap between religious and not religious. Food is a big part of every culture. Food is at the center and if you can’t share that experience with another culture, it’s very alienating,” he said.

Bread, no matter your creed, your geography, no matter your religion, no matter your anything, everyone can relate to the word ‘bread’ in their own way. It’s a humble food… it’s basic,” Mr. Stern said.

Wynwood also provided the scene for Mr. Cunningham and his friends to start University of Wynwood six years ago, when the poetry endeavor consisted of things like open mic readings and Poems on the Street.

At first, the University of Wynwood was a group of friends from graduate school who loved poetry, who loved words, and wanted to share that feeling with others.

“We started writing poems on Saturdays. This was also the infancy of second Saturdays,” Mr. Cunningham said. The Miami Poetry Collective would set up a card table in front of a gallery and take orders for poems, turning out prose on an old typewriter to give away.

“We were trying to write the best poem possible. Now, that’s not to say it always turned great. The poem was very much tied to that moment and the act of giving it away,” Mr. Cunningham said. "Maybe the best poem I ever wrote was one I gave away.”

The collective and the university caught the attention of the Knight Foundation, and secured the group a $10,000 grant to bring in visiting lecturers.

Now, University of Wynwood has grown into O, Miami, a nonprofit with three poetry festivals, a visiting writer series and a publishing imprint under its belt. Where the bakery provides a place for people from all over Greater Miami to sit around a table and enjoy a piece of toast, O, Miami creates a movement where all that are interested in a poetry and literature culture can come together.

“Miami is a place where a literary culture could thrive. A culture, not a scene,” Mr. Cunningham said. “We are not trying to create a scene where there is an elite group of people included. Culture implies diversity and all the many people that have agency in it. We want literature to be something that can thrive, which means there will be a diversity of people involved.”

When O, Miami and its annual festival event celebrating poetry is transforming the month of April, the organization wouldn’t be offering a place for poetry and literature enthusiasts without the help and guidance of other Miami institutions, Mr. Cunningham said. Books & Books, the Miami Book Fair International and the Betsy Hotel Miami were instrumental in O, Miami’s success, either through offering up event space and support or showing that there is a thriving interest in books and the like in Greater Miami.

Zak the Baker and O, Miami are certainly enriching and improving the quality of life in Miami, but it also seems that they are adding to and complementing a rich and deep culture that we already have. The help O, Miami needed was a place, or an organization, to bring bread and poetry into focus.

P. Scott Cunningham and friends began University of Wynwood six years ago with Poems on the Street.

Zak Stern opened Zak the Baker in Wynwood this year. A bakery, he says, convenes the community.
Talented leaders helping performance arts to flourish

By Lida Dinkova

As visual art thrives in South Florida partially thanks to Art Basel and the international recognition of Wynwood and the Design District as art hubs, performance art, too, has been flourishing.

“I think the visual arts may be more noticeable because of the fairs,” said Rebekah Lane Lengel, managing producer at the not-for-profit Miami Light Project, which supports the work of South Florida-based performance artists. “But the performance community here is strong and it is complementary, because the more creativity that exists, it continues to grow and foster in and of itself.”

Two artists who have fostered the South Florida performance-art scene, according to Ms. Lengel, are Rosie Herrera, artistic director and founder of Rosie Herrera Dance Theatre, and Teo Castellanos, artistic director and founder of Teo Castellanos D-Projects.

Both play an ambassadorial role of South Florida artistic work by touring and performing their pieces. Both incorporate a quintessential Miami flavor in their work. And both nurture young South Florida talent.

“It kind of comes down to their artistic excellence. It’s such a positive representation of what is being created here,” Ms. Lengel said.

The talent in Rosie Herrera’s dance-theater company is as diverse as South Florida. There are actors, singers and contemporary ballet dancers, and there are break dancers, drag queens and folk singers.

“Miami has a reputation for not being able to sustain dancers here for a very long time,” Ms. Herrera told Miami Today. “There’s not a lot of paid opportunities so dancers are leaving. But I think that’s quickly changing. A lot of people are returning because of opportunities that are available.”

Rosie Herrera Dance Theatre has about 10 core performers, Ms. Herrera said.

Aside from Miami Light Project commissions, Ms. Herrera has been commissioned by the American Dance Festival, an organization that supports modern-dance work, to do “Pity Party” and “Dining Alone.” Both are dance-theater pieces.

“I choose to live here for a reason,” Ms. Herrera said. “I am inspired by the sounds, the architecture, the energy, I think that’s reflected in the work.”

Mr. Castellanos, too, has drawn inspiration from Miami.

Watch a couple of minutes of his Miami Light Project-commissioned NE 2nd Avenue play and see the streets of Miami come to life in his solo performance.

“Other solo artists represent New York City,” Mr. Castellanos said, “and I wanted to do the same, and I really wanted to represent my city and let the world know who we are.”

Mr. Castellanos toured and performed NE 2nd Avenue for about 10 years and in 2003 won the Fringe First Award at the annual Edinburgh Fringe Festival in Scotland.

“A solo work,” he said, “is the hardest thing I’ve ever done as an actor.”

So he created Teo Castellanos D-Projects, a dance-theater company.

Ms. Lengel said Mr. Castellanos not only does the writing but also nurtures the young talent part of the company.

“He really trained them and built them and helped them really foster their own artistic careers and identities as artists… because he is a teacher and a leader,” she said. “When you’ve got those traits of a leader and an educator, it’s something that permeates the work that you do.”

Mr. Castellanos coaches Miami-based Tigertail Productions’ WordSpeak team comprised of several teens who participate in the national-poetry competition Brave New Voices, and he directs Piano Slam, an annual event produced by The Dranoff International 2 Piano Foundation.

Piano Slam mixes two classical pianists, a professional poet, a hip-hop DJ, dancers, and about 17 middle and high school students for a performance at the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts.

“They [the students] are chosen only on the merits of their writing, which means that they aren’t necessarily great performers or that they feel comfortable in front of people,” Mr. Castellanos said. “So they learn a lot in a week.”

From artists like Ms. Herrera and Mr. Castellanos to the young talent they foster, Joseph Adler had good reason to say that “things are in a Renaissance period in South Florida for the arts.”

“The local arts community is greatly indebted to him for the many years of consistent workforce opportunities he has created to help sustain and expand our local and permanent talent base,” said Jeffrey S. Hodgson, New World School of the Arts provost, who nominated Mr. Adler.

Since he took over GablesStage about 16 years ago, Mr. Adler has created a core audience.

“Most of the time, the viewers describe us as ‘cutting edge,’ whatever that means,” he said. “I suspect it means that people will see on our stage what they would in real life.”

The theater is now showcasing Christopher Durang’s “Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike,” “a contemporary satire of [Anton] Chekhov,” and then will present Samuel Hunter’s “The Whale,” “a comic and touching play about a grossly overweight man,” Mr. Adler said.

“I love theater, so the opportunity to devote all my time in theater is so exciting,” Mr. Adler said. “I am excited about doing what I do, and I am as excited as when I started way back when.”
The Transportation Summit brought the Miami-Dade community together to discuss a shared vision for the future of public transportation in our County. The citizens, transportation professionals and community leaders who participated in this event and the follow up Transportation Summit Community Forum demonstrated widespread demand and support for increased investment in public transportation by offering new mode choices, greater mobility solutions and innovative financing methods.

The Transportation Summit is one of the ways in which the Citizen’s Independent Transportation Trust encourages discussions that aid in moving towards a vision for a comprehensive and coordinated public transportation system. Plans are underway for the 2014 Transportation Summit.

Information on the Report on Proceedings for the Transportation Summit, the Transportation Summit Community Forum, as well as the Citizens’ Independent Transportation Trust and the People’s Transportation Plan are available online at www.miamidade.gov/citt, by phone at 305-375-1357 or email at citt@miamidade.gov.
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#MIA2Brazil
Miguel "Mike" Fernandez founded and heads MBF Healthcare Partners, which holds multiple companies.
Ecologist with Everglades Foundation advances sciences

By Nina Lincott

Where does the water for one-third of Floridians come from? Where are nearly 70 endangered species housed? If you’re still unsure, here’s an easier one: where is the only place in the world that the American alligator and the American crocodile co-exist?

What is, the Everglades?

The 8 million acre ecosystem in South Florida provides a wealth of resources from educational to environmental, but even a national park the size of the Everglades needs help. Wh ich is where Stephen Davis, Ph.D., a wetlands ecologist with the Everglades Foundation, comes in.

The Best of Miami nominee in the environmental science and conservation category, Davis uses changes slightly to dust off the dirt and return home.

A NEW COLDWELL BANKER COMMERCIAL IS HERE...

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Ecologist Stephen Davis is working to communicate to all the wonders of, and threats to, the Everglades.

Ecologist Stephen Davis, Ph.D., a wetlands ecologist with the Everglades Foundation, advances sciences.
City’s planning, parking directors cited for looking ahead

By John Charles Robinson

He is the calm voice of reason in a storm of questions and concerns. Growth and development can bring out detractors and opponents of change, and they can often be loud and vocal. Francisco Garcia, the City of Miami’s director of planning and zoning, approaches everyone the same way: in a professional and respectful way, he answers the questions and explains the details.

Mr. Garcia could have been a diplomat, and would surely have excelled in that endeavor as well. Based in part on his professionalism and adherence to quality, Mr. Garcia was named to this year’s Best of Miami as one of the area’s best at looking ahead through planning.

Mr. Garcia was nominated by Iris V. Escarra, an attorney with Greenberg Traurig who is kept busy representing development firms planning projects large and small. A former assistant city attorney, Ms. Escarra has been with the Miami law firm for nearly 10 years. She specializes in land use and zoning in Miami-Dade County and its municipalities.

“As the director of one of the departments with the highest demand in the City of Miami, Francisco Garcia is an exceptional professional who is able to promptly address concerns and find reasonable solutions to tough issues,” Ms. Escarra said of Mr. Garcia.

“He is dedicated to making sure that each project, irrespective of size, is designed with the highest quality planning standards possible,” she said.

A Chicago native, Mr. Garcia earned a bachelor’s degree in architecture and master’s in urban design from the University of Miami.

His very first paying job in planning was with the City of Miami.

For more than 10 years Mr. Garcia worked in the planning, building and zoning departments, for the Miami Parking Authority, and the Neighborhood Advancement Team program. He served as the city’s zoning director for some time.

Around 2004 he decided to try his hand in the private sector. He worked for urban planning firm Duany Plater-Zyberk & Co. for several years, and Oppenheim Architecture + Design.

When the city’s planning director retired in 2010, Mr. Garcia sought and garnered the top job.

His return to public service coincided with the merging of the planning and zoning departments, and with the city adopting a modern set of zoning rules called Miami 21.

As planning director in a city that seems to be bursting at the seams with new growth and development, Mr. Garcia strives to strike a balance between competing interests, and Miami 21 helps in that endeavor. Implemented in May 2010, Miami 21 is a form-based zoning code. It doesn’t hurt that the consulting firm that worked on Miami 21 was Duany Plater-Zyberk & Co.

Earlier this year, Miami 21 won an award from the American Institute of Architects. Selected from more than 500 submissions, the city was one of 26 global recipients capturing a 2014 Institute Honor Award.

The firm of Duany Plater-Zyberk & Co. was also honored.

Miami 21 replaced Miami’s Floor Area Ratio and land-use based regulations. The new code focuses on “the control of building to assure pedestrian-oriented public space, and provide physical predictability for developers and residents alike,” the institute said. The city commission approved the new code in 2009 and it took effect in 2010.

“People were concerned when Miami 21 was being adopted that it would somehow negatively impact development in Miami,” said Ms. Escarra.

“Well, we now know that isn’t true.”

Much credit must be given to Mr. Garcia for navigating through a brand new code and working with the development community on the various projects to make sure that Miami 21 helps accomplish their development goals, she said.

“He is truly amazing,” she said.

Mr. Garcia was also commended for his professionalism by Brett Bibeau, managing director of the Miami River Commission.

“Francisco Garcia is a phenomenal director of the City of Miami’s Planning and Zoning Department, because he kindly listens to all perspectives first, and then carefully considers all the various factors while planning our communities’ future,” Mr. Bibeau said.

“Director Garcia gracefully strikes the difficult balance between various and sometimes competing interests, including developers, preservationists, residents, environmentalists and so on.

“He is widely admired, respected and appreciated by all,” Francisco Garcia returned to head the city’s planning operations in 2010 when his predecessor retired.

Arthur Noriega helps partner with Miami Northwestern Senior High.

Mr. Bibeau said.

Arthur Noriega was nominated for Best of Miami in the field of those planning for our future by Dr. Elaine Lifkin, president and executive director of the Council for Educational Change.

Ms. Lifkin said Mr. Noriega has been a “tireless” executive partner and coach to the principal at Miami Northwestern Senior High School.

“Under his mentorship the school went from a 50% graduation rate to 80% graduation rate, and moved form an ‘F’ to an ‘A’ school,” she said.

HistoryMiami congratulates Miami Today on over 30 years of exemplary journalism; reporting important news on our city’s arts & culture, business, and civic life.

HistoryMiami is the premier cultural institution committed to gathering, preserving, and celebrating Miami’s history through education, research, collections, exhibitions, city tours, and publications.
Public service, convening community mark two who give back

BY SCOTT BLAKE

Albert “Al” Dotson Jr. has accomplished a lot on the job, but what he’s done in his free time may be what really sets him apart. Mr. Dotson is a partner at the Brickell Avenue law firm of Bilzin Sumberg, where he is the firm’s government relations and land development practice group leader.

He also has been a leading figure for many years with 100 Black Men of America, based in Atlanta with the primary mission of mentoring African American boys and African American young men – usually from middle school through college – to put them on the path to successful, fulfilling lives.

Mr. Dotson has been named to the Best in Miami among business executives who give something back to the community.

“He’s really a super guy,” said Knight Foundation Miami Program Director Matt Ferguson, who nominated Mr. Dotson. Mr. Haggman described him as a “top-flight lawyer” and “an amazing, thoughtful, generous guy.”

“He’s not the only one who’s noticed. This year, President Barack Obama appointed Mr. Dotson to the President’s Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for African Americans.

His duty on the commission is to advise the president and the US secretary of education on ways to advance federal programs that improve educational opportunities for blacks.

It isn’t Mr. Dotson’s first stint in public service. In 2009, he was chosen as a member of the Florida Federal Judicial Nominating Commission, a statewide panel charged with selecting finalists for presidential appointments to district judgeships, US attorneys and US marshals.

Locally, Mr. Dotson also has been active with the Overtown Youth Center, the Orange Bowl Committee and the History Miami museum.

However, Mr. Haggman singled Mr. Dotson out for his involvement with 100 Black Men of America, which has more than 110 chapters across the US and beyond, with more than 10,000 members and more than 100,000 participating youths.

Mr. Dotson has been involved with 100 Black for about 25 years. He founded the local chapter and later served as vice chairman for the entire organization for 10 years.

In 2004, he was chosen to head the entire organization, serving as chairman of the board for eight years. Today, he continues to serve on the group’s executive committee.

Formed in New York City in 1963, 100 Black Men’s stated mission is "to improve the quality of life within our communities and enhance educational and economic opportunities for all African Americans." In addition to intensive mentoring programs for young black males, the organization has broader economic development incentive programs, states, “on behalf of major US corporate clients.”

Other “Best of Miami” nominees for business executives

You might call Mitchell Kaplan the literary man’s executive – that laid back “cool” guy with a penchant for community involvement.

When choosing who to mentor, Mr. Dotson said, the organization typically looks for kids with potential, but who are underachieving. He got involved because of “the recognition that there was an underserved group of young men in our school system,” he said.

“I and others who helped start the program [in Miami] realized they could benefit from mentoring and other support to help them benefit academically and in other parts of life.”

Mr. Dotson also has received accolades for his work as a lawyer. He has been consistently named by Chambers USA and The Best Lawyers in America for his work in land use and zoning law.

At Bilzin Sumberg, he handles federal and local government procurement contracts and compliance cases. He also represents real estate developers in securing land use, zoning, and other government approvals and permits for large-scale real estate developments.

“The balmy Miami weather helps bring them to town,” the Miami New Times wrote in 2011, “but it’s really Kaplan’s competence that gets them here.”

On its website, Books & Books explains its approach: “We’re a community of writers and readers, hosting 60 author events a month and featuring a carefully curated selection.”

Apart from his bookstores, Mr. Kaplan is co-founder of the Miami Book Fair International. He also serves on the steering committee of the Florida Center for the Literary Arts, Miami Dade College’s literary center.

In addition, Mr. Kaplan recently was selected as president of the American Booksellers Association and serves on the board of the American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression.

In 2011, he received the National Book Foundation’s “Literarian Award for Outstanding Service to the American Literary Community.”

The award is presented to a person for outstanding service to the American literary community and whose life and work exemplify the goals of the National Book Foundation to expand the audience for literature and to enhance the cultural value of literature in America.

“I really believe in community gathering places,” Mr. Kaplan told Publishers Weekly in 2009. “Your store has to be so integral that your community won’t it go out of business. There’s the library, the park system and your bookstore.”
Role of nonprofit leaders harder than for-profit counterparts

BY LIDIA DINKOVA

Running a nonprofit organization is more difficult than running a for-profit. So says Patrick Morris, who as current vice president of Sabadell Bank and co-founder and former CEO of nonprofit volunteer organization Hands On Miami has been a leader in both realms.

“In a for-profit, you have a finance person, you have someone doing human resources, you have someone doing marketing,” said Mr. Morris, a member of the Nonprofit Business Committee at the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce.

Nonprofit executives, he added, “have to have all those skills as well as be a motivator of their team and the board and be able to articulate the mission of the organization to the community.”

South Florida nonprofit executives who gracefully wear those hats, according to Mr. Morris, are Casa Valentina Executive Director Deborah Korge and Branches Executive Director Brent McLaughlin.

“When you spend time with [Ms. Korge], you see how much she oozes the mission of Casa Valentina and the work that they’re doing,” Mr. Morris said.

Since 2006, Casa Valentina has been the only Miami-Dade nonprofit that provides housing and mentoring to teenagers who age out of foster care once they turn 18. About 100 youths age out of foster care annually in Miami-Dade, Ms. Korge said.

“They are being told by the system, ‘You are off on your own. Find housing, find a job,'” Ms. Korge said. “Wait a second. These are still teenagers, and they aren’t ready to live on their own, they aren’t ready to come up with $700 a month for rent.”

Currently, about 22 residents between 18 and 23 live in housing Casa Valentina rents, owns or has access to through a partnership with Camillus House.

“Our goal is to try to get them as well on track as possible, so when they leave us, they are more like their peers who have not been in the system,” Ms. Korge said.

“Sometimes a student comes in and they are 18 and they are still in the tenth grade. That’s a big dent in their self-esteem,” Ms. Korge said. “But if we say, ‘OK, let’s get your GED and now you can go to Miami Dade [College], or now you can go to vocational school,’ that goes a long way because it makes what they want to do a little bit more attainable.”

While Casa Valentina and Branches serve different community needs, they have a similar approach. Rather than fixing a problem for their participants, the programs give people the tools to help themselves.

“We are not going to do it for them, but we are here to provide them opportunities,” said Mr. McLaughlin of Branches.

“We are not going to do it for them, but we are here to provide them opportunities,” said Mr. McLaughlin of Branches.

Branches educates adults how to reach financial stability through an array of programs from tax-return preparation to budgeting and business development.

“The Ways to Work Car Loan Program, for example, might qualify participants for a car loan at an 8% interest rate. "This is a character-based loan program,” Mr. McLaughlin said. It approved for the car loan, other parts of people’s lives start rolling forward, he added. They are able to go to work on time and take their children to school on time.
 Persistent, consistent, and a champion for the environment and public access to the Miami River and Biscayne Bay.

That’s what colleagues say about Dr. Ernie Martin, selected recently by Mr. Martinez as an unsung hero, those movers and shakers who work behind the scenes to achieve the grand things for the greater community.

Dr. Martin shies from the spotlight but not from challenges. He can be local when he feels the time and occasion call for that approach. “I work best behind the scenes, building coalitions and collaboration,” said Dr. Martin.

He was nominated for recognition by Commissioner Audrey M. Edmonson.

“Ernie is a resident of a small area near the Civic Center that sits on the Miami River, has been a staunch advocate for environmental protections for many years,” Ms. Edmonson said.

“As a constituent, there was not an issue affecting our precious river and bay that Ernie Martin was not speaking up for or speaking out against. He has volunteered full time for numerous community groups over 20 years. From affordable housing to the Miami River Greenway, Dr. Martin is an unsung hero for Miami-Dade County’s general public and we all thank him,” she said.

“Dr. Martin has lived on the river for many years and has seen the degeneration and progression of a deteriorating workforce,” Ms. Edmonson said.

Ernie shares my passion for preserving the beauty and home of the South Florida that help revitalize lower-income communities.

He served as director of community and economic development for Dade County for 24 years, retiring around 1994.

Dr. Martin said when his first moved to Miami it was supposed to be a temporary thing. Instead, he quickly fell in love with this urban world set among tropical beauty.

“I thought the city’s beauty, to me, was the views of the water – there’s so much water everywhere,” he said.

The Miami River flows in an Edgewater area, in a waterfront condo, and being an urban planner by background, he discovered such marvelous resources as Biscayne Island and the Miami River,” said Dr. Martin. The fact that there was a wealth of public access to the beach and the bay was surprising to him.

“I developed an interest in reviving them and public access,” he said.

Dr. Martin has served on the Miami River Commission since it was created. He currently is chairman of the commission’s Greenways Committee.

During his employment with the county, Dr. Martin moved to a riverside residence. Some of his friends wondered why, as the Miami River didn’t have a great reputation.

“They’d ask, ‘How soon can you get out?’ The river was not considered desirable real estate...there was pollution and not very much access,” said Dr. Martin.

“I joined with the Trust for Public Land to develop a master plan for a river greenway,” he said. A major part of the overall plan was to secure public access to the river “at as many vantage points as we can,” he said.

The Miami River Greenway action plan was adopted in 2001.

The ultimate goal is for an unimpeachable greenway along the mouth of the river downtown westward toward the airport, extending about 5 miles on each side of the current riverwalk on the north side of the river connects with the city’s Bayfront Park.

Today the greenway stretches about five miles along the river. Sections. Dr. Martin said he hopes to see the greenway completed in his lifetime – continuous and uninterrupted.

With the massive influx of people moving to downtown Miami, in condo towers sprouting up along up the river’s edge, it’s more important than ever to fight for public access, according to Dr. Martin.

“It’s understandably a growth concern that we have access to the water,” he said.

As part of the Urban Environment League, Dr. Martin has spent years trying to force county leaders to follow through on a promise to turn the land east of American Airlines Arena into a public park on Biscayne Bay.

His public service work has extended to stints on the Miami Historic and Environmental Preservation Board, the Miami Waterfront Advisory Board, and his current appointment on the Planning, Zoning and Appeals Board.

In his own neighborhood, Dr. Martin has worked to turn two small parcels into open, public green space. With the help of organizations like the Spring Garden Civic Association, Dr. Martin helped establish Spring Garden Point Park and Greenfield Garden.

Unsung heroes in our community wear many different hats.

Miami City Commissioner Wifredo “Willy” Gort wants to praise Father José Luis Menéndez, the pastor at Corpus Christi Catholic Church in the heart of Allapattah.

Mr. Gort, chairman of the city commission, said Father Menéndez is a wonderful person who does countless things for the community.

“He’s a do a lot of volunteer work in the Allapattah area, and he helped establish a museum there,” Mr. Gort said.

Father Menéndez’s countless, selfless efforts for the betterment of the community have spanned decades.

“The amount of work he does to improve the quality of life is just tremendous...for 20 or 30 years,” Mr. Gort said.

Father Menéndez was born in Havana in 1947. He ventured to the US in 1961, and then to Mexico for a year before settling in the replica of an old Peruvian church he hopes will one day be a thriving museum.

“The goal is to assemble, preserve and display one of the largest collections of art and history of its kind, with 105 paintings and sculptures plus a national register of documents family links between Florida and Latin America. “We want to give back some of the things we gained to the United States for what it has given us, said Father Menéndez, who gained his love for art and music while in Spain.

Father Menéndez has been called a “trailblazer” too.

In 2008, he was facing the prospect of having to close the parish school due to dwindling finances. But Father Menéndez, working with Miami’s now-retired Archbishop John C. Favalora and Catholic Schools Superintendent Richard DeMaria, found a creative and practical solution.

By turning the parish school into a secular public charter school, they saved the parish, while continuing to offer a valuable alternative to the district public schools, according to Seaton Education Partners.

In a case study of the matter, Seton Education Partners applauded the leadership of Father Menéndez, Mr. DeMaria and Archbishop Favalora, “because we believe that there are alternative ways of doing things that have been the steady and accelerating demise of inner-city Catholic education – even more so when, as was going to be the case in Miami, it would also be accompanied by the closure of inner-city parishes themselves.”

For his years of commitment to the children of his parish’s lives, Arthur Hertz was named as one of Best of Miami’s unsung heroes.

He was nominated by Dr. Elaine Liflin, president and executive director of Preschool of Miami.

“Mr. Hertz works tirelessly behind the scenes on behalf of children,” said Ms. Liflin.

“He is an Unsung Hero because of the work he has done, and in particular, to ensure that all children have a level playing field and are successful,” Ms. Liflin said.

Mr. Hertz is chairman and CEO of Wometco Enterprises Inc., which is the owner of the Miami Seaquarium, Wometco de Puerto Rico Inc., the owner operator of 57 Baskin- Robbins stores and franchisee of Dunkin Donuts for Puerto Rico, and franchisee of The University of Miami Alumni Association.

Additionally, Mr. Hertz is a member of the University of Miami’s Board of Trustees. He is an active supporter of numerous charitable causes and professional organizations throughout the United States.

Mr. Hertz serves on numerous community professional organizations and foundations including the Florida Tourism Commission, Visit Florida, the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce, City of Miami Office of Cultural Affairs, Board of Directors of the University of Miami Alumni Association.

Sometimes, being an unsung hero is as simple as being consistently pleasant to the people you meet, and never forgetting to smile.

John Blazejack, a business owner at 172 W Flagler St., said his weekdays are brightened by his hero is as simple as being consistently pleasant to the people you meet, and never forgetting to smile.

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Photo by Miami Underwater

[By John Charles Robbins]
Cutting county costs: Miami-Dade commissioners gave final OKs Tuesday for staff to analyze how to cut operating costs and also for the commission auditor’s office to include in its purview analysis of the county budget to pinpoint cost savings. Both resolutions call for all cost-cutting measures to avoid effects to county services. The original resolutions also called for cost-cutting measures that after some commissioners said that would make the study’s scope too restrictive. The resolutions approved Tuesday call for staff to analyze alternatives if operating costs of each department were cut by 3%, 5% and 10%. The staff report is due in 60 days. Chairwoman Rebeca Sosa and Commissioner Sally Heyman sponsored the resolutions.

Safety after funding: Miami-Dade is to install signs that call for bicyclists’ safety and alert drivers to watch out for cyclists at the entrance of the Rickenbacker Causeway. But the county is to install the signs only after it identifies the spare funding in its own coffers or a private sponsor donates the funds. Commissioners gave final approval Tuesday. The Rickenbacker Causeway, which leads to Key Biscayne, is popular with bicyclists. In 2012, bicyclist Aaron Cohen died from injuries after being struck by a hit-and-run driver on the causeway. Commissioner Jose “Pepe” Diaz was the resolution’s prime sponsor. The legislation didn’t specify whether the signs would be installed at the east or the west, or both, entrances to the Rickenbacker Causeway.

Real estate high: Taylor & Mathis has finalized a 12-year, multi-million dollar renewal lease at the 550 Biltmore building in Coral Gables, with UBS, a Swiss banking company, for its 43,500-square-foot property. This lease is the largest in Coral Gables this year. Before renewing, UBS was looking elsewhere in Coral Gables for a potential alternative location. The deal was brokered by Taylor & Mathis director of leasing Ryan Holtzman and UBS broker Tony Jones of Cashman & Wakefield.

Residencies drive construction: Construction activity in South Florida continues to be driven by residential high-rise building as cranes dot the skylines in the urban core of Miami-Dade. April contracts awarded for future construction work in South Florida rose 21% from the same period a year earlier, according to McGraw Hill Construction. Overall growth hides a total decline of 11% in nonresidential development of retail and 325 hotel rooms, Mr. Gonzalez told Miami Today.

Art Basel, others shun city’s limits
Convention space cut

As Miami Beach moves forward toward its Miami Beach Convention Center renovation for 2016-2018, major conventions and shows have already said they can’t work within the city’s parameters.

Art Basel is not willing to work with the two-half maximum offer and is looking to preserve its four-hour show. eMerge Americas, which held its first event this year, is also in talks to see if it can stay.

The Miami International Boat Show is discussing its long-term future with center staff and plans to announce in July where the show will be held from 2016 onward, said Bob Balsam, center general manager.

Loss of those big shows will cut into hotels and retail during construction. However, the Miami International Auto Show has said it will condense to two halls during the work. Mr. Balsam said during an advisory board meeting Tuesday.

To finish renovations and construction within the city’s 36-month timeframe, the center will be partially closed during 2016-2018 to allow construction on half of the four-hour building at a time while keeping two halls open for use.

An idea of installing a tent to add space during construction, floated at a city commission meeting this year, is not likely to happen, convention center staff said. The tent would cost at least $15 million, and probably much more because the center would need it for two or more years. Even without a tent, the center’s calendar is relatively booked for the construction period. The center will simply be operating as a two-half site.

“Our clients have been incredible,” Mr. Balsam said. “I’ve really been impressed with how many clients have said [they still] want to work with us.”
A controversy parking program that led to a 120-day moratorium in February finally has been updated by Miami commissioners.

A second and final vote to approve changes to the Design District Parking Improvement Trust Fund and rules and fees governing parking waivers came after months of negotiation among the interested parties – mainly the city and property owners in the burgeoning Design District.

An ordinance creating the fund hadn’t been updated since 2006 so it didn’t reflect market rates or consider the Design District’s rapid expansion.

The goal is to use the parking waiver fees to build or obtain shared public parking to benefit the entire district.

By ordinance, developers in the Design District may buy parking waivers. The charge was $12,000 per parking space.

The proposed amendment as drafted in February would have bumped that up to $35,000 per space.

In the end, the price of a parking waiver will shoot so that what was initially a waiver for some fear it will discourage development by those property owners who have been granted the funds from parking waivers are spent.

Uncertainties about the moratorium’s impact on housing prices and interest rates were mitigated by the fact that the fund would be used “to facilitate parking for new construction without requiring one new parking space at a cost of $45,000 per parking space.

Art Noriega, CEO of the Miami Design District, also knew that the city would get countless other benefits, such as parking facilities for public use, co-ordinating parking facility improvements or expansion in conjunction with public transportation plans and operations; and providing accessibility to off-street parking facilities for public use.

Commissioner Hardemon passed out the commission’s final version of the amendment, with a few more modifications he had made.

Those changes dealt with the make-up of the Design District Improvement Committee, a new body with seven voting members who will oversee how the parking waiver fees are spent.

Deputy City Attorney Barnaby Min explained that the intent of the proposal was to require that the committee was to ensure diversity among the members, basically to make sure the committee included other property owners in the district beyond Daca, the major stakeholder. Schiller Jerome, who said he was speaking for a group of property owners in an adjacent neighborhood, told commissioners there is already limited parking in the area and that allowing new construction without making it easy to get a building permit through parking waivers would be “disastrous.”

“Min said the fund would be used to “facilitate parking for new construction within the area,” through (in part), acquiring land for parking; constructing, operating or leasing off-street parking facilities for public use; coordinating parking facility improvements or expansion in conjunction with public transportation plans and operations; and providing accessibility to off-street parking facilities for public use.

Commissioner Hardemon told Mr. Jerome the amendment was to make sure the property owners will get a building permit within one year of getting a parking waiver, which we think is too long. The ordinance is to have the funds to put the parking in there.”

The ordinance requires that the funds from parking waivers be used “to facilitate parking purposes within the area,” through (in part), acquiring land for parking; constructing, operating or leasing off-street parking facilities for public use; coordinating parking facility improvements or expansion in conjunction with public transportation plans and operations; and providing accessibility to off-street parking facilities for public use.

The amendment also allows an applicant to pay for the waivers over time, after making a 50% deposit and paying a special $500 application fee to the parking agency.

The commission approved the first reading of the amendment back on Feb. 13, along with an emergency 120-day moratorium on issuing parking waivers for the Design District.

Commissioner Carrollo feared the “floogates” would open without the moratorium and the city would get countless applications for waivers at the $12,000 rate from developers hoping to avoid a price hike. Mr. Carrollo and others were also concerned about control of the fund, and Mr. Carrollo argued for wording to make sure the city commission retained oversight of the money.

The passage of the amendment grants initial oversight of the trust fund to the new improvement committee, and final approval by the Off-Street Parking Board. It does, however, require the parking agency’s board to submit annual financial reports to the city commission each year.
Transportation trust’s next route: public-private partnerships

BY SCOTT BLAKE

Charles Scurr and his staff at the Citizens Independent Transportation Trust say they want to help give Miami-Dade residents the public transportation system they deserve and that the county needs to thrive.

However, with most of the tax revenue at their disposal committed to fixed expenses for years to come and no new taxes on the horizon, they’re looking for creative partnerships to help get future projects underway.

The first major project to be accomplished through a public-private partnership could be the proposed rail line from Miami to Miami Beach. In a recent interview with Miami Today in his 10th floor office at Government Center, Mr. Scurr said, “The trust’s top administrator, Mr. Scurr heads a 15-member panel that oversees revenues generated through the People’s Transportation Plan surtax.

The surtax is a half-penny increase in the county’s sales tax that local voters approved via a November 2002 ballot referendum to pay for expansion of the county’s existing public transit systems, as well as projects to create new services.

Another kind of partnership, he said, could involve the Miami-Dade Expressway Authority for a project to enhance public transit along one or more of the county’s main east-west corridors. Such a partnership probably would involve a bus rapid transit system with dedicated bus lanes to speed up trips. Although bus rapid transit is considered a lower-level project, it could set the stage for the bus lanes to be eventually converted into a rail line whenever funding becomes available, Mr. Scurr said.

Ironically, revenue from the half-penny surtax has been increasing in recent years and is expected to do so for years to come.

Annual revenue from the surtax rose to roughly $215 million in the last fiscal year and is projected to be about $225 million for the current fiscal year. Mr. Scurr’s office also projects increases through 2030, when surtax revenue is expected to near $400 million.

Yet, there still won’t be much left for new projects. One reason is that a percentage of People’s Transportation Plan revenue has gone to Miami-Dade Transit’s operating budget each year since the program began rather than being set aside completely for new projects.

The percentage of annual surtax revenue used to fund existing transit operations peaked in 2009 at 32%. The percentage has leveled out at 19% or 20% from 2012 to this year. Mr. Scurr expects that a chunk of surtax money will continue to go to operations, saying “it is critical to support operating transportation improvements as well as building them.”

However, the biggest chunk of surtax revenue each year goes to paying off lingering debt from bond sales used to finance People’s Transportation Plan projects during the program’s early years.

Otherwise, Mr. Scurr said, the county would have had to wait years to accumulate enough surtax revenue to pay for big projects, such as the $506 million Metrorail Orange Line extension that linked Dadeland in the Kendall area to Miami International Airport.

About $70 million of this year’s surtax revenue is earmarked for debt service from the bond sales. And debt service is projected to escalate to $150 million a year by 2020 and to stay at that level at least until 2030. Starting in 2022, when the program’s bond capacity increases, the annual debt service payments are also projected to rise, eventually reaching more than $200 million a year in 2029 and beyond.

Another big chunk of the annual surtax revenue – currently roughly $50 million a year – goes to 34 municipalities around Miami-Dade, earmarked to them to address their individual transportation needs.

After other fixed expenses and debt are taken away, Mr. Scurr said, only about $96 million will be left over this year to actually help operate and maintain the transit system.
Grace Carricarte brings family history of philanthropy...

Q: What is the psychology community in Miami?
A: On a nationwide level the communities, the small ones, do get to the level of full expertise. In Miami, most of my classmates from the University of Miami are my colleagues today and it’s nice to see us all grow together professionally. We’ve collected a group of about 20 people. The majority did stay in Miami, but not all are still practicing.

Q: What is a typical alternative if they’re not practicing?
A: People who are working at community agencies doing counseling, or maybe within their own private practice, and individuals like myself. I’m using my mental health background and expertise I’ve developed through the counseling that I’ve provided my clients to now do prevention education.

Q: What’s the benefit of going into the field?
A: I’ve found that I’ve actually went into interior design with a mental health angle, and caterpillar crossing the sidewalk from when I was just a few years old. Then as I continued to grow up my family would always be volunteering with schools that we adopted or non-profits, non-profit endeavors that we took upon ourselves. I went to an orphanage in Ecuador to work with the students and it was just natural. I didn’t know that every family didn’t do that.

Q: Is philanthropy and education something you’ve always been passionate about?
A: I was born and raised in Miami and I come from a very, very philanthropic family. Being involved with the community and giving back is just a part of our culture and our lifestyle.

Q: Is there a lack of awareness about available resources?
A: There’s a lack of awareness about everything mental health related. Not only in terms of how to find the help, but mostly I’ll just take them into my home as a foster mom for a couple of weeks and then find them a home. Sometimes they have to get better – you’ve got to put a little meat on them.

Q: How long have you’ve been involved with Girl Power?
A: I got to know them through my work at Family Counseling Center and as an individual and group therapist there. I grew up in South Miami, but Miami is full of so many good people and I love being a part of all good efforts. Girl Power is definitely one of them, as is the Melissa Institute, and of course the obvious, the [Ganley Foundation] I work for. Good people gravitate toward each other, and through synergy and working together we can do so much more. I don’t care whether they’re born in Liberty City or the Gables, every kid deserves the best outcome possible.

Q: How can in certain areas of mental health services, how does Miami compare to other cities?
A: Miami, like most major cities, has care options available, but generally speaking throughout the majority of the US there is limited access to appropriate care.

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Q: Is philanthropy and education something you’ve always been passionate about?
A: I was born and raised in Miami and I come from a very, very philanthropic family. Being involved with the community and giving back is just a part of our culture and our lifestyle.

Q: Is phi...
PROFILE
...to Ganley Foundation in preventing suicides by youths

A: We never know it all, but the more we know the better we can all do. I apply that principle to our education efforts at the Ganley Foundation as well.

I went from the Children’s Diagnostic and Treatment Center to Family Counseling Services and I worked at the Journey Institute and then was able to develop the counseling program that’s at Girl Power today. I was the program manager for that.

The great thing about kids is that maybe there was an isolated trauma or they went through something longstanding, but being able to see them get better was an awesome privilege.

I was there several years, and I took a risk. I took the position that I have now as executive director of the Ganley Foundation. I accepted a position really with a very small non-profit. It was founded 10 years ago.

Unfortunately, like so many in the field of prevention, [the foundation] arose out of tragedy when Jimmy Ganley, the son of Jim and Ann Ganley, lost his life due to suicide.

I could use words like devastation, shock, but it could never fully capture [the sentiment]. To me they’re the real heroes here, because if we think there’s a stigma nowadays, I can’t imagine what they went through something longstanding, and adolescence is the age of complete and total change taking place in the mind, changes in hormones. There are all these things that stabilize, the scary place where we’re seeing some notes of increase is in ages 10 to 14.

Q: Are there new challenges facing the current generation of kids and teens?
A: There are challenges now that we didn’t have then. There are vulnerabilities that come with youth, and even though suicide rates are somewhat stabilized, the scary place where we’re seeing some notes of increase is in ages 10 to 14. In the past it was like 10 years ago.

Q: Are there new challenges facing the current generation of kids and teens?
A: They had the courage, they are the heroes in this because they knew they wanted to make some difference.

We know that in the US suicide is the 10th leading cause of death. What’s scary is that once you hit high school, from age 14 to 25 that rises from the 10th to the third leading cause of death.

Up to the age of 24, it’s the second leading cause of death. We know there are vulnerabilities that come with youth, and even though suicide rates are somewhat stabilized, the scary place where we’re seeing some notes of increase is in ages 10 to 14.

A: There are a lot of factors, some of which we’ve looked at such as limited access to care.

In Miami-Dade it’s tough. I wish we had more counselors in the schools, that we had more support available, which is actually one of the wonderful things we’ve been able to work on. I’ve been able to provide staff trainings as well as parent and student presentations to help get that information into the hands of those who need it.

To a degree, stigma. When we look at issues like bullying we look at vulnerable populations within our youth, the GLTBIQ or those who are socially isolated, maybe those who are getting into trouble and abusing drugs or maybe even within the special needs population.

We see there are vulnerabilities, and when there are not enough protective factors to outweigh the risks that our youth are exposed to, it’s a bad combination.

Q: What could be contributing to a rise in suicide rates between 10 and 14 years of age?
A: There are a lot of factors, some of which we’ve looked at such as we should be able to find a way to make a difference.” We began with the premise when I first signed on that all our efforts will be worth it if we just saved one life. Just one, and that’ll make everything worthwhile.

A: Most of us would reflect on our own childhood, and think we’d take two seconds to save that.”

But nowadays, if somebody cyber bullies you or uses some form of technology in that child’s world, everyone has seen it, and thousands more can witness something versus a playground incident.

Since most teachers and staff and parents – most people in general – don’t have the background I have, something I might be able to see more clearly and be able to show them, then they are empowered by that information and are able to intervene in a more powerful way.

I’ve had success stories where teachers tell me, “You saved my student’s life.” Because I took two extra seconds to check in with that kid that I wanted to yell at. I just took two extra seconds to say this isn’t like him, what’s going on? It turns out they were going through horrible things at home and they had thoughts of ending their life.”

Q: Is prevention education paramount to success in ensuring the safety of students?
A: Prevention is the key in solving almost every societal problem, especially when it comes to our children. I would hate an adolescent who has a depressive episode to struggle throughout life, because it is so unnecessary. I’d rather us be able to catch that early and give them better coping skills.
If you’ve been around Miami at least a decade you recall the euphoria that’s causing condos to sprout up like mushrooms, from which we can count. “At this rate, we’ll have more than 12,000 units just this year,” architector Willy Bermudez told members of the Miami’s Urban Development Review Board two weeks ago as more than 1,300 units in four unrelated towers sought approval.

Mind you, he only tallied what’s about to rise inside the city of Miami, the county’s hottest but not only boom area. And with all of Miami’s many hooves, this one has unique elements, the reasons those caught up in the cycle use to assure one worried about a bubble that “this time is different” — which is always true right up to the point that it isn’t.

This time indeed differs from the bust eight years ago: buyers now finance construction, not the banks that did it last time and certainly not developers, who for years have operated on OPM — other people’s money.

Still, bubbles should ever fall — and it’s a safe bet that they will by some percentage someday — it’s the buyers who’ll be losers, nobody else.

And since most buyers are foreigners who rent out their units, bankers and developers take comfort, telling us that none of us will get hurt if the bubble bursts.

Nobody wants to talk about this, because, greed or Joes and income are at stake. Why shake up the market?

Well, nobody wanted to talk about it in the past decade, either. In fact, nobody ever wants to talk about it.

Last decade, the global economic slide left more than 20,000 unsold condos in Miami County. We all thought they’d linger on the market — but fortunately the current boom soaked them up, leaving a hunger for more.

Developers are more than happy to feed that hunger. They are feeding it quickly. In preconstruction projects with 16,843 units are listed in preconstruction, though in their frenzy developers may already have begun some of them.

Thankfully, they’re building high-quality buildings. They’ll fill a need. Condo buyers can put as little as $1,500 in earnest and ask: What is the price?

At the right purchase price, these units might score investment. The financing “the right purchase price” is tricky as the frenzy sends the sale price per foot of new units soaring.

Before the last bust $300 per square foot defined a luxury condo. The same units bring more than $600 per foot of new construction, according to the price at $1,000 per foot and their getting price.

The Miami Real Estate Gold Rush is an old story. Back in January 1926, Harper’s Monthly Magazine ran a long story about the bubble of 1924 and 1925:

Florida land buyers “found themselves in 1926 as oblivious to the mighty inflation and wild fest population migration of history — a migration like the possessive pilgrimage of army ants or the seasonal flight of myriads of blackbirds. From everywhere came the land-seekers, the profit-seekers. Armies of millions, along the 18-foot-wide Dixie Highway, the main artery of East Coast traffic, in a dense, struggling stream.

And “On a street corner a woman selected a choice lot from a beautiful plat shown her by a complete stranger. This plat had never been replotted. The lot was fully hoarded. He gave her a receipt, but vanished. There was no land.”

Don’t get me wrong: today’s sales are no con jobs. The condos are real, beautiful, useful and valuable — at least, that’s today.

But in the early 1920s, most of the sales were also real, with the values then 20% below earlier peaks.

One cannot be overburdened with the evidence often confounds.

The Miami Real Estate Gold Rush is a tale of it by Gertrude Mathews Shelby in her book Florida land buyers “found themselves in 1926 as oblivious to the mighty inflation and wild fest population migration of history — a migration like the possessive pilgrimage of army ants or the seasonal flight of myriads of blackbirds. From everywhere came the land-seekers, the profit-seekers. Armies of millions, along the 18-foot-wide Dixie Highway, the main artery of East Coast traffic, in a dense, struggling stream.

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One cannot be overburdened with the evidence often confounds.
A routine agenda item for mass transit improvements before county commissions Tuesday ignited a contentious turf war among Miami-Dade officials whose districts are having the transportation needs neglected.

Commissioner Jose “Pepe” Diaz raised the issue while commissioners addressed a proposal for enhanced county bus service along Northwest 27th Avenue, which runs through the county’s northwest corner. Mr. Diaz said he was told that commissioners District 9 and 12, representing those areas, had been asking for the proposed $2.8 million to construct a park-and-ride facility and bus terminal at Northwest 27th Avenue and Northwest 215th Street in Miami Gardens.

Commissioners eventually approved the item, but not before tense exchanges. Mr. Diaz accused District 9 Commissioner Snedden and commissioner District 12 of promoting the state, while a bill on the agenda, which has money for film productions, use 3,000 to 4,000 hotel rooms per year, so a 20- to 30-cent charge per movie could add up quickly.

A sales tax for online purchases or point-of-sale purchases might support the trust fund, Mr. Winick suggested. With high gas prices, everyone is looking for a way to save money. By riding public transportation, you could save thousands per year. Leave your car at home and ride the bus or train on National Dump the Pump Day. Leave your car at home and ride the bus or train on National Dump the Pump Day.
New Magic City venue, Hialeah Park’s pending

BY SCOTT BLAKE

With a new court ruling in their favor, the owners of Miami’s Magic City Casino are looking to expand their gambling operations and Florida City in southern Miami-Dade County is their most likely target.

“It’s one of the plans we are considering,” Isador “Izzy” Havenick, Magic City’s vice president of government affairs, told Miami Today last week. “More than likely, it’s going to be Florida City.”

First, however, regulators at the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation must grant Magic City’s parent company, West Flagler Associates, a summer jai alai permit.

The department’s Division of Pari-Mutuel Wagering already turned down West Flagler’s application, but a ruling last week from the First District Court of Appeal turned down West Flagler’s application and not necessarily approve it.

“This could be a while before anybody knows,” he added.

Meanwhile, the department is mulling over its next step and hasn’t ruled out an appeal.

“The department received the ruling last Tuesday and has not yet determined any future legal action,” Ms. Ancora-Brown wrote.

West Flagler isn’t the only one seeking a summer jai alai permit. Its application and not necessarily approved.

A summer jai alai site in Florida City for Magic City Casino awaits state action, said Isador “Izzy” Havenick.

Both Magic City Casino, west of Little Havana, and Hialeah Park Racing and Casino in Hialeah offer slot machines, poker, electronic table games, and live and simulcast racing.

However, jai alai betting is not one of the things they now have.

The Florida Department of Transportation is looking into truck parking as well as a park-and-ride site on about 63-acre publicly owned West Miami-Dade site near Dolphin Mall. This is one of nine lots examined for overnight truck parking in Tallahassee directs the department to reinstate the application.

West Flagler has the option to buy a piece of property in Florida City and wants to offer betting on jai alai matches in the summer months with the chance of eventually opening a poker room there, Mr. Havenick said, but having slot machines in Florida City is not an option.

The Department of Business and Professional Regulation agreed.

“A summer jai alai permit holder, if it meets eligibility requirements, may apply for a cardroom license,” department spokeswoman Tajiana Ancora-Brown wrote in an email to Miami Today. “A summer jai alai permit does not provide for an entity to be eligible for a slot machine operating license.”

For now, Mr. Havenick said, West Flagler is not yet counting on having jai alai in Florida City, given that the court’s ruling only requires the state to reconsider its application and not necessarily approve it.

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County extends sewers to backwatered locales

By Scott Blake

Hoping to breathe new life into old commercial and industrial corridors, Miami-Dade commissioners Tuesday approved $126 million in sewer line extensions to help existing businesses and attract new ones.

The county will use unallocated bond funds from the Building Better Communities program approved by voters for water and sewer improvements.

Commissioners agreed that extending the sewer system to underserved corridors that rely on septic tanks because no connections are available should set the stage for economic development and job growth in the future, while protecting the water quality of the river by eliminating commercial septic tanks.

Jean Monestine of District 2, the resolution’s primary sponsor, said the plan can’t go ahead unless the project can be paid for without increasing Dade County’s debt.

Mr. Johnson suggested Mr. Diás’ district isn’talone: many spots through the city could use water and sewer enhancements to the tune of about $3 billion in addition to the department’s roughly $13 billion long-term capital improvements plan.

Department spokeswoman Jennifer Messmer explained that businesses in areas where the sewer lines will be extended still will have to pay to hook up to the lines—a connection fee like any other users.

The $126 million “is money that will be targeted for these commercial areas,” she added. “It’s not taking money away from other projects.”

The resolution notes that business in both commercial and industrial areas have septic tanks that are at capacity and expanding, especially because of environmental regulations.

“Without the availability of a sewer collection system, it will be very difficult for businesses to expand. We need to get the sewers extended so businesses can expand in the area,” Commissioner James C. Spring said.

Before joining the board, she was vice president of marketing of Metro 1 Properties, and prior to that she served as vice president of marketing of Metro 1 Properties.

Douglas Elliman names executive VP

Douglas Elliman Development Marketing has named Susie Glass executive vice president of marketing.

Ms. Glass will oversee all marketing and sales of the company’s mixed-use development, Brickell City Centre.

Prior to joining the company, she served as vice president of marketing and sales for Cervera Real Estate.

She is a graduate of Miami Senior High School.

The University of Miami has named Raymond E. Nault-Hix Jr. an associate dean of enrollment management and admission management.

Mr. Nault-Hix holds a bachelor’s degree in management from Franklin Pierce College and a master’s degree in business administration from Florida International University.

He holds a bachelor’s degree in history from Franklin Pierce College and a master’s degree in higher education leadership from Capella University.

Greenberg Traurig names land co-chair

Greenberg Traurig has named Iris Escarra co-chair of its Land Development Practice Group.

One Escarra can receive a call from a lender prevents solid candidates for development from facing the hurdles of developing affordable housing.

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ONE OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES a Realtor faces in today’s market is the lack of buyer confidence. Negative media portrayals of mortgage conditions, economic and job market instability have made buyers reluctant. A depressed mortgage market makes it extremely wary about the conversation of buying a home. The limited availability of credit from lenders prevents solid candidates for home ownership from ever being able to qualify for a loan and close until it makes the market improve.

As a Realtor, the toughest task you’ll face is in letting your clients overcome those worries and take advantage of the economic conditions of today’s market. Reassure your clients, but maintain honesty and scale, in your approach to the situation.

Today’s buyer is more research oriented, particularly when it comes to understanding the legal process involved in buying a home. When faced with a buyer whose ignorance is shaken, or if your clients don’t close on financing because of a 60-point decrease in credit rating, you can lose up to 10% in market value.

For professional advice on all aspects of buying or selling real estate, please contact me at arross@miamirealestate.com or 305-980-2575, or come by the office at 50 Atlantic Circle, 9th Floor, in Coral Gables.
A Class 16-story office tower is planned to rise in North Gables.

BY SUSAN DIANEY

The present building is 13,175 square feet.

ARCHITECT ALBERTO CORDOVA said the drive-through will be away from the site’s western boundary, where it abuts multi-family medium-density use, and will be designed with good traffic flow to avoid conflicts with residences.

Steve Foldes, who founded his firm in 1985, will remain as chairman of the combined firm.

Mr. Foldes with Evensky & Katz, said: “I couldn’t be more excited. That is the opportunity to significantly increase our resources, we’ll be able to significantly increase our control over the client relationships that I’ve had for many years.”

The combined firms expect to close the deal July 14.

The merger also will reunite Mr. Foldes with Evensky & Katz, where he was a client from 1986 to 1991, then joined the firm in 1993 and later started his own advisory firm.

The firms reached an agreement last week and expect to close the deal July 14.

The combined firms expect to have more than 800 clients and manage more than $920 million in managed assets. Foldes has 400-plus clients and manages about $600 million in assets.

Evensky & Katz Financial Management.

The firms plan to move to the Evensky & Katz office at 4000 Ponce de Leon Blvd. in Coconut Grove, which is a lease at 915 S Dadeland Blvd. expires at the end of October.

Financial terms of the deal were not disclosed.

Mr. Foldes said he will stay with the new firm for at least six years.

The two firms say they will retain all of their employees and will continue as a combined firm,

including 13 certified financial planners.

Mr. Foldes said he started the merger with the long-term welfare of his clients and staff in mind.

“I’m turning 65 this year,” he told Miami Today. “I’m looking to ensure the client relationships that I’ve had for many years will continue and that their needs will be taken care of.”

In a statement, Mr. Evensky said: “I couldn’t be more excited. With an amazing increase in intellectual capital and financial resources, we’ll be able to significantly grow the quality and range of services to our clients.”

All interested parties may appear and be heard at the time and place specified.

A person who decides to appeal any decision made by any board, agency, or commission with respect to any matter considered at its hearing, will need record of the proceedings.

For material in alternate format, a sign language interpreter or other accommodation, please call 305-370-2015 or send email to: agendco@miamidade.gov
**GABY DURAN:** The W South Beach presents its “SpeakerBox Concert Series” featuring soulful singer Gaby Duran. The evening will also feature signature cocktails inspired by the evening’s musical styling and snacks from Living Room’s menu. 7-9 p.m. 5 W South Beach Living Room Bar, 2201 Collins Ave., Miami Beach. Free. Details: (305) 938-3000 or www.wsouthbeach.com.

**DANCE**

**FRIDAY 6/5**

**BALLET HISPANICO**

The Adrienne Arsht Center presents “ Ballet Hispanico.” The show features a world premiere by Miami choreographer Rosie Herrera and works by Artistic Director Eduardo Vilano, as it explores the contemporary Latin soul through pieces that fuse ethnic dance with classical and contemporary techniques. 8 p.m. Additional performances on June 7. Adrienne Arsht Center, Ziff Ballet Opera House, 1300 Biscayne Blvd., Miami. $30-590. Details: www.adriennearshtcenter.org.

**SATURDAY 6/7**

**DANCE & WELLNESS**

The So You Think You Can Dance Alumni host “Type 2 Diabetes Wellness Event and Dance Class.” Participants will follow an easy-to-follow hip-hop and Latin dance class by Fik-Shun and Janette Manrara. Event will include dance instruction, health screenings, wellness tips and information for living well with type 2 diabetes. 12-3 p.m. Betty T. Ferguson Recreational Complex, 1000 NE 19th St., Participants must be 18 years or older. Miami Gardens. Free. RSVP. Details: (844) 244-2194 or www.12dancecrew.com.

**DINING OUT**

**SATURDAY 6/7**

**TASTE OF THE GALBIES**

The 2014 “Taste of the Galbies” will kick off Coral Gables restaurant week. VIP Attendees will have access to all areas, plus a Bacardi open bar, additional food stations and a goodie bag to take home. Must be 21 to attend. 7-10 p.m. The Westin Colonnade Hotel, 180 Aragon Ave., Coral Gables. $30 advance general admission, $35 advance VIP, $65 at site VIP. Details: (305) 591-0311 or restaurantweek@miamigables.com.

**WHISKEY LOVERS**

The Betsy-South Beach and Jack Daniels host “Whiskey Lovers Take Note: Sinatra Dinner.” The evening will include a whiskey pairing dinner featuring cocktails, passed hors d’oeuvres and a four-course dinner paired with Jack Daniels Sinatra Select and signature whiskeys by BLT chef Dan Guyen. 6:30 p.m. B-BAR speakasy at The Betsy-South Beach, 1440 Ocean Dr., Miami Beach. $185. RSVP. Details: (305) 673-0044 or davidd@bltsteak.com.

**SUNDAY 6/8**

**SIMPLY SMOOTHIES**

The So You Think You Can Dance Alumni host “Simply Smoothies... A Sampling with Linda Gassenheimer.” Participants will attend a smoothie demonstration by Ms. Gassenheimer and lasting as she presents her latest books “Simply Smoothies: Fresh and Fast: Flavorful Great Diabetes Meals from Market to Table.” 2 p.m. Jewish Museum of Florida – FIU hosts “Simply Smoothies... A Sampling with Linda Gassenheimer.” Participants will attend a smoothie demonstration by Ms. Gassenheimer and lasting as she presents her latest books “Simply Smoothies: Fresh and Fast: Flavorful Great Diabetes Meals from Market to Table.” 2 p.m. Jewish Museum of Florida – FIU, 301 N. Bayshore Dr., Miami Beach. Free for members. Details: (786) 922-3164 or info@jewishmuseum.com.

**EXHIBITS**

**THURSDAY 6/5**

**GABRIELINE IN OPP**


**BUSINESS**

**A SIP OF SUMMER WITH HYPE**

Network with young professionals. HYPE Miami

The Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce’s young professionals committee, HYPE Miami, hosts “A Sip of Summer with HYPE.” The event is a kickoff to summer where young professionals will network and learn more about the chamber. June 11, Bambu, 2200 NE 10th Ave., Miami. $15 advance, $20 on site. RSVP required. Details: (954) 713-0930 or info@shopcoralgables.com.

**DANCE**

A reflection of ever-changing diversity of Latin cultures.

**Ballet Hispanico**

The Adrienne Arsht Center presents “Ballet Hispanico.” The show features a world premiere by Miami choreographer Rosie Herrera and works by Artistic Director Eduardo Vilaro, as it explores the contemporary Latin soul through pieces that fuse ethnic dance with classical and contemporary techniques. 8 p.m. June 6. Additional performances on June 7. Adrienne Arsht Center Theater, 2630 Miami Beach Blvd., Miami. $30-$90. Details: www.arshtcenter.org.

**FILM**

**“The Day It Snowed In Miami”**

The Miami Herald Media Co., in association with WPBT2 and filmmaker Joe Cardona, presents “The Day It Snowed In Miami.” The documentary, chronicling South Florida’s role in the LGBT rights movement, will be accompanied by a panel discussion with its filmmaker, community activists and moderated by Fred Fejes, LGBT studies program director at University of Miami, as part of the School of Communication and Multidisciplinary Studies at Florida Atlantic University. 7-9:30 p.m. June 5. The Classic Gateway Theatre, 1820 E. Sunrise Blvd., Ft. Lauderdale. $25-$75. Details: www.saveadale.org.

**MUSIC**

**DINING OUT**

**RESTAURANT WEEK**

Who will be named the best?

Coral Gables Restaurant Week

Downtown Coral Gables celebrates its seventh annual Coral Gables Restaurant Week, presented by Hispanic Cultural Arts Center off party. Attendees will sample signature dishes from restaurant week newcomers and veterans and begin their votes for the “Best Taste of the Gables.” During the restaurant week, participating restaurants will offer special three-course lunch and dinner menus. Must be 21 or older to attend. June 5-12. Runs June 9-9. Westin Colonnade Hotel, 180 Aragon Ave., Coral Gables. Details: (305) 569-0311 or info@shopcoralgables.com.

**OUTDOORS**

Meet the Ambassador Loggerhead.

Sea Turtle Walks

The Museum of Discovery and Science presents Summer Sea Turtle Walks. Participants will have the opportunity to witness a 300-pound Loggerhead sea turtle venture out of the ocean to lay her eggs. The evening includes an informative hands-on session about turtles (land, fresh waters and ocean) and an expanded focus on sea turtles and a meet and greet with the museum’s Ambassador Loggerhead sea turtle, which is almost one year old. Must be age 9 or older to participate. 9 p.m. June 5-12. Museum of Discovery and Science, 440 NE 22nd St., Fort Lauderdale. $18 members, $20 others. RSVP required. Details: (954) 713-0930 or www.mods.org.
submit

This is a calendar of selected events in honor of World Oceans Day. June 8-12: 2014.

Miami. Details: (305) 375-1293.

Tuesday 6/10

FINANCE COMMITTEE

The Finance Committee meets. 9 a.m. Stephen P. Clark Center, 111 NW First St., second floor commission chambers, Miami. Details: (305) 375-1293.

PUBLIC ART

The City of Miami-Made Art in Public Places Trusts meet. 12:30 p.m. Stephen P. Clark Center, 111 NW First St., sixth floor, Miami. Details: (305) 375-5436.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

The Infrastructure & Capital Improvements Committee meets. 2 p.m. Stephen P. Clark Center, 111 NW First St., second floor commission chambers, Miami. Details: (305) 375-1293.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Economic Development Action Committee meets. 2 p.m. Stephen P. Clark Center, 111 NW First St., second floor commission chambers, Miami. Details: (305) 375-1293.

GROVE WATERFRONT

The Coconut Grove Waterfront Planning Master Plan Implementation Committee meets. 5:30 p.m. Miami City Hall, staff room, 350 Pan American Dr., Coconut Grove. Details: (305) 416-1415.

SUNDAY 6/12

LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT

The Land Use and Development Committee meets. 4:30 p.m. Miami City Hall, commission chambers, 350 Pan American Dr., Coconut Grove. Details: (305) 416-2037.

RECYCLING MEETING

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Economic Development & Port Miami Committee meets. 2 p.m. Stephen P. Clark Center, 111 NW First St., second floor commission chambers, Miami. Details: (305) 375-1293.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Economic Development Committee & Port Miami Committee meets. 2 p.m. Stephen P. Clark Center, 111 NW First St., second floor commission chambers, Miami. Details: (305) 375-1293.

VIPEY TRUST

The Vizcaya TrustCollection Management Committee meets. 4 p.m. Miami Beach, Winnie Bassin Auditorium, Vizcaya Museum & Gardens, 3250 S Miami Ave., Miami. Details: (305) 445-4142.

WATERFRONT ADVISORY

The Waterfront Advisory Board meets. 6:30 p.m. Miami City Hall, commission chambers, 350 Pan American Dr., Coconut Grove. Details: (305) 416-1532.

MIIAMI COMMISSION

The Miami City Commission meets. 9 a.m. Miami City Hall, commission chambers, 350 Pan American Dr., Coconut Grove. Details: (305) 416-2037.

ANIMAL SERVICES

The Public Safety & Animal Services Committee meets. 9:30 a.m. Stephen P. Clark Center, 111 NW First St., second floor commission chambers, Miami. Details: (305) 375-1293.

AVIATION COMMISSION

The Transportation and Aviation Committee meets. 2 p.m. Stephen P. Clark Center, 111 NW First St., second floor commission chambers, Miami. Details: (305) 375-1293.

TECH BASH

TigerDcachesthehosted annual "TechBash" this year on Saturday, June 7. The bash will include technology exhibits, demonstrations and social networking activities on Saturday, June 7, at 7 p.m. parachute. Details: (305) 416-2037.

OVERTOWN FUNDRAISER

St. John Community Development Corporation hosts the 15th annual "Things Are Cooking in Overtown" fundraising gala. 6:30-10:30 p.m. Aug. 22. Jungle Island, oyster bar, 1111 Panama Dr., Miami. Details: (305) 416-2037.

ANNUAL BANQUET

Miami Children's Hospital hosts its 9th Annual "Annual Banquet". 5:30 p.m. Miami Beach, Fontainebleau hotel, 4401 Collins Ave., Miami Beach. Details: (305) 938-3000.

I-95 UNDERWATER FESTIVAL

Miami-Dade Office of Arts, Culture and Tourism presents the 21st annual "Miami Beach I-95 Underwater Festival." June 6-7, Miami Beach, Convention Center. Details: (305) 938-3000.

WORLD OCEANS DAY

Miami Museum of Science host the third annual "World Oceans Day" celebration. 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Miami Museum of Science, 3280 S Miami Ave., Miami. Details: (305) 375-1293.


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County votes 10-2 to extend Heat's lease 10 years, pays more

**By Scott Blake**

“County commissioners Tuesday night approved a final agreement between the Miami Heat and Dade County for the long-term lease of American Airlines Arena that resulted in the city getting nothing for the 40-year deal the Heat offered up $257,134, last year.”

Mayor Carlos Gimenez, who with his staff and county attorneys negotiated the new agreement, said most of the negotiations consisted of the Heat’s desire for a long-term lease and the county’s desire for the franchise to remain in Miami. The mayor said the deal both “recognizes the value of the Heat and goes to the taxpayers.”

Representatives from the Heat, who are preparing to play for their second straight NBA championship this week, described the deal as enhancing the franchise’s long-term security in Miami.

“Our fan base is growing. The downtown area is growing. It’s a win-win situation.”

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**Suit to invalidate city’s Grove development plans tossed out**

**By John Charles Robbins**

The City of Miami was victorious in a lawsuit that challenged the validity of a 2013 referendum that approved the development of the Coconut Grove waterfront. At the conclusion of a hearing last week in the 1st Judicial Circuit Court in Miami, a judge threw out the case of Graciela Solares against the city.

Ms. Solares, a community activist, argued that the ballot language was vague and misleading. On May 30, Judge Darrin Gayles granted a summary judgment to the city, finding sufficient notice had been given to qualify the ballot language and summary accurately reflected the city commission’s resolution to create a lease with the May Grove Investment Group LLC, and adequately informed the public of the city’s purpose. In the summer of 2013, the commission agreed to lease about 7 waterfront acres in Coconut Grove to Grove Bay Investment Group LLC for $1.8 million a year, and an additional $17.9 million of privately-funded improvements to medallion a marina, construct restaurants, improve the public bay walk, fund a portion of a parking garage and other improvements.

Another lawsuit related to the waterfront area in that includes Scotty’s Land and the Chart House restaurant stirred up reasons with some community members raising concerns about the proposal, citing the site, especially of the garage, the added retail and open space.

The issue was put to a referendum in November for city voters to decide, with 61% for and 39% against the proposal. The vote cleared the way for the city and development firm to sign a 50-year lease. Ms. Solares sued in October, initially requesting an injunction to prevent the vote. Judge Jerald Bagley denied that request.

Another lawsuit related to the water front plan, Knepper v. City of Miami, is pending disposition, and another $2 million payment to the city. The proposal to redevelop the waterfront area in City Hall includes two parking garages, 1,100 linear feet of bike trail, 1.5 acres of gardens, 1,100 fixed annual payment from the city, finding sufficient notice had been given of the referendum and that the city, finding sufficient notice had been given of the referendum and that the city commission will consider the proposal. The money would result in nothing for the county during the first 13 years of the arrangement. The new agreement scraps that part and replaces it with a fixed annual payment from the team – $1 million, retroactive to last year – continuing annually through 2030, and then increasing to $1.25 million from 2031 to 2035. Under the original agreement, the county pays $6.4 million a year toward the arena’s “operational and maintenance expenses.”

The new deal will increase the county’s annual payment from $1 million in 2013 to $1.4 million in 2019, and then $1.5 million in 2020. The money for the annual payments comes from the city’s hotel and tourist tax collections. Also, for the period from July 2010 through June 2040, the new deal gives the county the right to sell the naming rights or transfer them to the Heat. A management firm named Basketball Properties Inc.

If the county gives the naming rights to the manager, it would have avoided paying a $2 million annual naming rights payment. "It is in the best interest of the franchise and the city to remain as users of the arena for the long-term," Mayor Gimenez said in a memo to commissioners.

"This agreement accomplishes that goal by extending the current agreement for an additional 10 years, and, also, ensures numerous financial provisions that, given the passage of time of these agreements, more appropriately adjust the county’s annual payment made to the arena manager, as well as provide a guaranteed influx of revenue to the county.”

Mayor Gimenez said the Heat also will be expected to invest more in improvements to the arena with the pledge to secure "a first-class" facility.

In addition, commissioners approved an agreement to call for the mayor and the team to make a "good faith effort" to secure an NBA all-star game at the arena in coming years.

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**Miami may allot $2 million more to develop Regatta Park**

**By John Charles Robbins**

The plan to revive a key portion of the waterfront in Coconut Grove is expected to get a big boost this month, to the tune of $2 million more.

City planners made the announcement at the third of three public meetings on the Regatta Park Plan on May 29 at City Hall.

Cesar Garcia-Pons, deputy director of planning and zoning, told the crowd he was excited the project had reached a new phase. He said the city commission will consider allocating an additional $2 million to get Phase I off the ground.

“It’s basically doubling the budget,” Mr. Garcia-Pons said. The money would cover the impact fees that developers pay the city.

The city initially set aside $2 million for the first phase, which included the cost to demolish the old waterfront expo center. With the large expo center now removed, the city has just over $1 million left for the initial work at Regatta Park.

City planners have promised the first major change might be coming yet this year with grass being placed on the giant floating lawn. They explained earlier the reason for the delay was left by the zoning of the expo center.

The plans for this area, west of City Hall, to become the Great Lawn – a wide open green space framed by rows of existing and mature trees.

“Let’s put it together on a grass lawn,” Mr. Garcia-Pons said. With the boat launch staying put for now, he said that delays are not the only major changes planned:

1. Westbound South Bayshore Drive will be turned into a pier, and moving the sailing clubs to that location.

Mr. Garcia-Pons began the meeting with an overview of public comments from the March meeting. He said one main expression desired was: “We want to keep open water views.”

The wide open feeling was illustrated when the planning staff presented colorful before-and-after images in a PowerPoint presentation.

The master plan for the entire waterfront adopted in 2008 includes kayaks and rental, a lot a skate park, dinghy tie-ups, a sunken living room, bike trails, a cultural and community center, a lawn amphitheater and more. The estimated price tag for all of that is about $26 million.

Major commercial uses on the waterfront are targeted and limited to the land east of Alhambra Ave. The stated goal of the overall master plan is to "transform the underutilized waterfront frontage into a vibrant public spaces and reorganizes the Expo Center and Dinner Key Marina to provide enhanced waterfront for recreation, education, and live-aboard."
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