

CORAL GABLES

JUNE 19 - JULY 2, 2023

Connecting Communities

Community organizations recognized at Foundation Annual Meeting



Foundation Chairman Dr. Charles A. Dunn presides over the annual meeting.

BY LEE STEPHENS

The Coral Gables based Dr. John T. Macdonald Foundation recently held its annual membership meeting at the Riviera Country Club, during which the guests heard presentations from three community-based organizations which receive funding from the foundation in its yearly community grants program. Foundation chair Dr. Charles A. Dunn noted that "community grants form the backbone of the organization." Friendship Circle of Miami, Caring for Miami and the Children's Bereavement Center were invited to share their programs' story with the foundation board members and guests.

Since its inception in 1992 as a philanthropic grant-making organization, the Dr. John T. Macdonald foundation has awarded \$49,570,731 in support of its mission and in meeting today's needs and tomorrow's medical advances.

Dr. Steven Pabalan, chair of the community grants committee reported that in the 2022-23 grant cycle, \$601,795 was awarded to 21 programs meeting a variety of identified community needs. He acknowl-



Volunteers Sydney Hochstadt and Gili Horwitz talk about their experiences in working with the special needs teens at Friendship Circle

edged the work of the grants committee for their passionate commitment to grass roots programs in reviewing the many applications received by the foundation.

The foundation's managing director, John Edward Smith, noted that the foundation is now coming into its fourth decade of service to the community. He encapsulated the legacy of community service which emanates from the establishment of Doctors Hospital in the late 1940s, and the one who was recognized for spearheading the building of the hospital: Dr. John T. Macdonald.

In introducing the presenting programs, the director noted that "grant making are the points of pride for the foundation, from the multi-million-dollar signature programs at the University of Miami School of Medicine, to funding 462 grants to community-based organizations, and the funding of nursing and medical scholarships at Barry University, Miami-Dade College, Florida International University and the University of Miami."

CARING FOR MIAMI

Ashley Gritili, Executive Director of Caring for Miami spoke of their organization's mission to bring basic and critical resources to families in underserved communities, through programs such as Weekend Meals for Kids, the Mobile Dental Clinic and the Mobile Food Market. These programs have a demonstrable impact by providing oral health care, food security for children and household food security. The Dr. John T. Macdonald Foundation funds the Caring For Miami Project Smile program which provides comprehensive dental care to low-income, uninsured individuals in Miami-Dade County. The goal is to reduce the number of adults with untreated dental disease who are unable to otherwise access the care they need. Since 2012, \$ 4.5 million of donated dental care has been logged. The Project Smile program has earned Gold Rating from National Association of Free and Charitable Clinics.

FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE OF MIAMI

Rabbi Yossef Harlig who founded Friendship Circle of Miami in 2004 with his wife, spoke to the members and guests of their vision to establish an inclusive community where individuals with special needs thrive and lead fulfilling lives. Friendship Circle fosters one-on-one relationships between volunteers and individuals, building friendships and life skills for the benefit of the entire community. Rabbi noted that "friendship is not a luxury, it's a necessity." Two volunteers, Sydney Hochstadt and Gili Horwitz provided testimony in empowering teenagers to make a difference through volunteerism. Rabbi emphasized that through the program "we are preparing the next generation of leaders through our volunteer program for a life-long commitment to service and advocacy."

A major capital campaign is underway for Friendship Circle of Miami 20,000 sq ft campus which will include specialized rooms for programming activities and quadruple participant enrollment. It was noted that over 350 families are affected by their services on a regular basis, and more than 160 teenage volunteers have provided 8000 hours of friendship and support.

THE CHILDREN'S BEREAVEMENT CENTER

Debra Albo-Steiger, the organization's CEO was joined by Tracy Adirka and Julissa Reynoso for their presentation. The Children's Bereavement Center's mission is to empower children, young adults and their families to adjust to life after the loss of a loved one within a supportive community of their peers and to promote helpful grief, healing, and growth. Children's Bereavement Center (CBC) was founded in 1999 and provides free grief support groups. Groups are open to anyone who has lost a parent, sibling, grandparent, rel-



Friendship Circle's Rabbi Yossef Harlig with foundation's managing director John Edward Smith.



Foundation board member Laura Russo in conversation with Debra Albo-Steiger of the Children's Bereavement Center.



Ashley Gritili, Director of Caring for Miami, reports to the foundation board on the work of the Mobile Dental Clinic funded by the foundation.



The Children's Bereavement Center presenters: Julissa Reynoso, Debra Albo-Steiger, and Tracy Adirka

ative, or friend because of illness, accident, suicide, or homicide. CBC's "Lift from Loss" program offers adult support groups available in both English and Spanish, with Creole being offered soon. The philosophy of CBC is grounded in research and best practices for addressing grief and bereavement, as well as helpful adaptation to loss. Through CBC's services and resources, their goal is to ensure that no one ever grieves alone.

2023-24 GRANT REQUESTS

For over thirty years, children, the elderly, veterans, indigents, the underserved, the homeless, have all benefitted from the foundation's largesse.

For information on the grants program, please inquire at info@jtmacdonaldfdn.org. Grant requests are being received through Friday, June 30, 2023.

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