

BRIDGE BUILDER

Spring 2016

From the Desk of the Director

WHAT'S INSIDE

- Latest Happenings - Page 2
- Donor Thank You - Pages 3-6
- Thanksgiving Meal Delivery Program - Page 7
- SAVE THE DATE! - Page 8



Mission Statement:

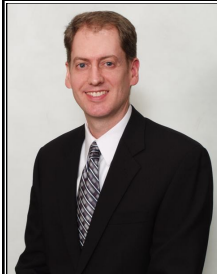
To serve, educate and inspire people through student, family and financial stability services in partnership with our communities.

Get Involved:

If you would like to know more about how to donate and/or volunteer, please contact us at:
305-442-8306
info@branchesfl.org



Branches
Grow Deeper, Climb Higher



Transforming a Generation

Dear Friends,

I always admired my Grandfather who had all of an 8th grade formal education but became a successful general contractor in life. He was born in 1898. After doing a little bit of research, I discovered that it was not unusual however for his generation to finish their education at the 8th grade level. In fact the American high school graduation rate in 1910 for the entire country was a mere 9%. Why?

Secondary schools were not common and therefore not accessible to most of the population. The ensuing 'high school movement' over the next several decades changed America and transformed successive generations by opening up educational opportunities to the masses. Today, our national high school graduation rate is just above 80%.

A century after my Grandfather's era, *post-secondary educational attainment* is the new challenge particularly for lower income students. A mere 9% of young adults from the lowest income brackets have attained a bachelor's degree (as of 2013 data). While income inequality plagues our country, it is well documented that the lifetime earning potential of a college graduate is more than \$1 million higher than that of a high school graduate.

At Branches we are working to *transform a generation* of impoverished students by creating opportunities for post-secondary success. We have recently launched the Climb to College & Career initiative aimed to prepare and equip youth to succeed in their chosen educational path beyond high school. From 8th through 12th grade, Branches students are engaged in life skills workshops, college tours, test preparation sessions, academic tutoring, a mentor relationship and ultimately are able to qualify for a Branches scholarship.

For many years, Branches' Grow and Climb programs have scaled with double digit enrollment increases. Across four program sites, we now serve 400 students each day and still growing. We currently have 24 students in college and these numbers will grow exponentially as we graduate ever more students from high school.

While 100% of our students graduate from high school, our bigger goal is that they succeed in their post-secondary educational plans and graduate from college. As former students have graduated, they have shared with us that it not only changes their lives but it also changes their families. Siblings are more likely to follow in their footsteps. Parents are encouraged and more hopeful about the future. Together they have achieved a new found stability thanks to the opportunities provided by Branches.

Your support is how we provide these opportunities and is greatly appreciated! I hope you will consider coming or supporting the Black Tie & Blue Jeans benefit dinner on May 6th and be part of transforming a generation!

With Hope and Gratitude,

Brent McLaughlin
Executive Director



Holiday Dinner this past December with Branches' High Schoolers and returning College students.

Latest Happenings

Launching Climb to College & Career

Branches is proud and excited to announce the official launch of its Climb to College and Career initiative! This program grew out of Branches efforts to help high school students prepare for life after high school. The program prepares and assists high school students (and their families) to develop the knowledge, skills and behaviors necessary for postsecondary success.

Pictured are Branches' graduates Stephanie Benoit and Brunia Jeudy. Both have attended Branches since middle school and are currently attending FAMU in Tallahassee. Stephanie is a now senior majoring in Social Work and is on track to graduate this May. She has been elected and serves as the student body president on campus. We are incredibly proud of her! Stephanie has also been mentoring Brunia, who is finishing her freshman year at FAMU and majoring in nursing. Brunia has been inspired by Stephanie and grateful to have her on campus guiding her in all the right directions.

Branches would like to sincerely thank Larry Rutherford and Shelley Daniel, Trish and Dan Bell and Bank of America Charitable Foundation for providing the seed funding to be able to launch this exciting new initiative which will support Branches students as they pursue post-secondary success!



Stephanie (L) at Brunia's (R) High School graduation.

To learn more or to support the Climb to College & Career program, please contact Isabelle Pike at 305-442-8306 x1002 or ipike@branchesfl.org. Thank you!

VITA In Full Effect

Branches is proud to once again be the Miami-Dade County lead agency for the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program which offers free tax help to people who earn approximately \$54,000 annually or less and need assistance in preparing their own tax returns. IRS-certified volunteers provide free basic income tax return preparation with electronic filing. Our volunteers and staff can help filers check if they qualify for special tax credits such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) among others. About 80% of individuals living in Miami-Dade qualify for VITA, yet less than 2% are taking advantage of the program.



Branches' Executive Director, Brent McLaughlin (Far R) and Karina Ron, Assoc. Dir. of Financial Stability (3rd from R) with fellow community leaders at the 2016 EITC Press Conference at the Miami Dade Commission Chambers.

Branches is currently working with 24 local VITA partners and operating 52 tax prep sites across the county. We are offering 50% more sites this year and project to reach 9,600 total tax returns filed for our community which will mean over \$11 million in refunds, a third of which are EITC.

Hundreds of volunteer filers as well as staff have assisted with amendments and advocacy, such as victims of identity theft, predatory tax preparers, etc. In addition, thousands have assisted with the Affordable Care Act transitions, including support from Health Care Navigators at key sites. We are grateful to all the volunteers who help make VITA a true success for our community.

THANK YOU to all our generous donors for supporting Branches' programs!

All donors from Aug. 1, 2015—Feb. 24, 2016 are listed at www.branchesfl.org/news/newsletters

A special thank you goes out to our premiere supporters:

Agape * ARAMARK * Bank of America Charitable Foundation * The Batchelor Foundation * Trish and Dan Bell * The Children's Trust of Miami-Dade * Florida Conference UMC * Florida State Attorney General's Office * Miami-Dade County PHCD * The Miami Foundation * Nancy T. Hector * North Dade Medical Foundation * Ocean Reef Community Foundation * SE District United Methodist Churches * United Way of Miami-Dade * Volunteer Florida

Thank You, Branches Sponsors & Stakeholders!

List includes contributions received by Branches from August 1, 2015 to February 24, 2016. If you sent a contribution during this period and do not see your name on the list, please contact us at (305) 442-8306 x1005.

\$20,000 and above

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 The Children's Trust of Miami Dade
 The Miami Foundation
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 Volunteer Florida

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 Wells Fargo Foundation

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 Torres, Kim & Raymundo
 Weinreich, Nora & Ted
 Wulf, Karleton B.

Up to \$199

AA South Florida Dentistry P.A.
 Adrian Dominican Sisters Florida Mission Chapter
 Alpha Delta Kappa Lambda Chapter
 Andre, Joan
 Anson, Rita L.
 Aquarius Press
 Archer, Jennifer & John
 Arroyo, Christianne & Alain
 Ashby, Eric
 Atelus, Leslie & Mikey
 Becker, Eugene
 Becker, Kathryn Nan
 Behrens, Edward H.
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 Bohm, Jeanne & Robert
 Burton, Jeanne & Leland
 Butchko, John Robert
 Cantera, Regla
 Clark, Chloe
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 Cornerstone UMC
 Cowie, Winona
 Cox, Margaret
 Cranshaw, Matthew Wylie
 Cross, Margaret
 Cuba, Mairim Lisa
 Dammann, Jacqueline
 Dare, Martha
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 Dominique, Evelyne
 Doral Realty Corp
 Edwins, Lynn & Wayne
 Evans, Dorothy

Continued on Page 4

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Up to \$199, continued from Page

3

Fink, Bryan
 Fink, Elizabeth
 Fink, Laura
 Fung, Kathleen Zurich & Keser, Dennis
 Galvin, Opal J.
 Garcimonde, Allison
 Garrison, Riok
 Gautier, Tami & Dan
 Gonzalez, Denise & Charles
 Gordon, Vashti
 Grappell, Carolyn
 Grillo, Claudia A.
 Grzybek-Jacobs, Christina
 Guevara, Yeilyn Garcia
 Harris, Chester
 Hawks, Carol
 Hedquist, Bob
 Hopps, Debby & Bob B.
 Iniguez, Eduardo R.
 Jefferson, John
 Jockel, Helmut G.
 Jones, Mary
 Karen Raben
 Kelly, Marla Lydia
 Klem, Deborah S
 Lafosse-Marin, Steffany & Stephane
 Lee, Diane & Terry
 Marchesani, Darren
 Mason, Michael
 Maze, Steven A.
 McBride, Marilyn & William
 McCauley, Jill & William
 McDougle, Patricia & Denise
 Morales, Nelida & Felix
 Morgan, Elaine W & Michael W
 Morgan, Jeffrey & Erin

Moure, Almalee & Edwin
 Murff, Kay & William
 Newton, Dorothy & Sam
 Newtown, Anne
 NextEra Energy Foundation, Inc
 Ordaz, Hildelisa
 Owen, Pat
 Pabst, Auleene T.
 Palm Springs UMC
 Pantry, Florribelle & Desy-Ann
 Parlato, Herbert
 Percy, Joanne & Morgan
 Peel, Jan Harrison
 Perez, Alina
 Perez, Nancy & Brookins, Hilda
 Phillips, Simone E
 Phillips, Trudiann
 Pobletts, Elsie M
 Poshard, Deanna & Keith
 Potts, Theodis
 Prasad, Prestin
 Prentice, Lillian & Robert
 Preston, Ethel H.
 Providence UMC Langdon Circle
 Quencer, Christine & Robert
 Ralsten-Cox, Johanna
 Ramirez, Rene Magda
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 Rich, Jean Evans
 Roberts, Patricia & Robert
 Robinson, James
 Robinson, Sandra & Roland
 Rodriguez, Lourdes & Jose
 Ron, Karina
 Rossmore, Carmen
 Roy, Beverly & Lucien
 Russell, Stefan
 Sands, Cornelia & Oswald
 Schriml, Vicki

Schwab, Paul
 Sheehy, Jennifer & Andrew
 Shoaf, Diane & David
 Sims, Brian & Amy
 Skogstad III, Sam
 Small, Andrea
 Smith, Shelly & Charles
 South Miami Senior Citizen's Bridge Club
 Spruce, Susan & Jones, Annette
 Stallings, Evelyn Neel
 Sullivan, Joanne
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 Van Gundy, Cynthia & William
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 Van Wyck, George
 Velsaco, Olga & Jose
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 Whitmyre, Linda
 Wilhite, Nancy & Lewis
 Williams, Jill & James
 Williams, Patricia I.
 Wolaver, Lenore & John
 Wooching, Jill & Sililo
 Wood Sr, Thomas
 Zamikoff, Sara

Gifts to Kathryn Becker Scholarship Fund

- ◆ ADP Employees & Benevity Causes
- ◆ Anne Newtown
- ◆ Benevity Causes
- ◆ Brent McLaughlin
- ◆ Brian & Amy Sims
- ◆ Evelyn Neel Stallings
- ◆ Jean Evans Rich
- ◆ Jose Sanchez
- ◆ Kara Wood
- ◆ Kathleen Kowalski
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- ◆ Keisha Newell
- ◆ Marilyn & William McBride
- ◆ Marla Lydia Kelly
- ◆ Mary Susan & Philip Ward
- ◆ Mary Susan & Philip Ward
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- ◆ Sara Zamikoff
- ◆ Scott Howard
- ◆ Stefan Krumbiegel
- ◆ Wendy L. Boyd

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Gifts in Memory of

- ◆ Abraham Akselrad from Josh Joey Akselrad
- ◆ Alvah H. Chapman, Jr. from Jonah Pruitt, III
- ◆ Ann Maree Beaman from Deborah B. Hopps
- ◆ Bob Herris from Mindy Herris
- ◆ Capt. James Hodgman from Jeanne & Leland Burton, Cindy & Gary Rich, Lenore & John Wolaver, Karleton B. Wulf and Christianne & Alain Arroyo
- ◆ George Van Wyck from Edward H. Behren, Douglas Greist, Estelle M. Miller, Joanne W. Percy and the South Miami Senior Citizen's Bridge Club
- ◆ Johanna & Horst Mayer from Isabelle Pike
- ◆ Katherine Clarke Skogstad from Sam Skogstad III
- ◆ Michael from Deborah S. Klem
- ◆ Rebecca Potts from Theodis Potts

Gifts in Honor of

- ◆ Sister Jeanne O'Laughlin from Adrian Dominican Sisters Florida Mission Chapter
- ◆ Branches Florida City staff from Jane & David Cranshaw
- ◆ Branches VITA Program from Anonymous Donor
- ◆ Doug Williams from Linda & Mark Wilford
- ◆ Ed Deppman from James Robinson
- ◆ Huggins Family from Eric Ashby
- ◆ Kim Torres from Shirley L Collins
- ◆ Kim & Raymundo Torres from Kelly King-Horne
- ◆ Megan Beddow from Johanna Ralsten-Cox
- ◆ Paul & Ella Andre from Joan Andre

Donors through The Miami Foundation 2015 Give Day

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
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Donors through the Coral Gables Foundation 2015 Key to Giving

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In-Kind Gifts

- ◆ 1st National Bank of South Florida - 3 boxes of school supplies
- ◆ Aldi, Inc. - \$25 gift certificate
- ◆ Alma - 109 backpacks filled with supplies and a party for Branches FL City students
- ◆ Baptist Health South Florida - 10 large premium trash receptacles
- ◆ Barrinat, Tessie & Goldfarb, Alan – adopted 5 Branches angel children for Christmas
- ◆ BB&T Brickell - 20 tickets with parking passes to Disney on Ice show at the BB&T Center, 9/20/15
- ◆ BB&T Brickell - 300 Miami HEAT Tickets to the 11/12/2015 game for Branches students and 20 \$25 visa gift cards for families who participated in the Aramark 2nd Annual Career and Health Night on 10/22/2015
- ◆ Bell, Trish & Dan - Hosted the Branches high school graduates party on 6/7/15; weightlifting set including a barbell weight rack and barbell weights from 10 lbs to 50 lbs.
- ◆ Benditte, Gabriele & Reinhard - 1 new queen mattress & 1 new king mattress
- ◆ Bohren, MaryEllen - Connect Four, Checkers/ Chess, Monopoly, and several socks
- ◆ Brito, Stephanie - 15 cases of water bottles for MLK Day volunteers
- ◆ Coral Gables Community Foundation - Office Furniture and assorted Decor
- ◆ Coral Reef Elementary School PTA - 4 contractor bags full of down jackets
- ◆ Cresa Partners - school supplies for 25 Branches students and 15 books for our students
- ◆ Dunkin' Donuts - 10 boxes of assorted donuts for MLK Remix
- ◆ Einstein Bros Bagels - 2 Dozen Bagels and 1 Box of Coffee for MLK Remix
- ◆ Feeding Children Everywhere - 40 boxes of food
- ◆ First UMC Coral Gables - 60 backpacks
- ◆ First UMC South Miami - 1 box of assorted school supplies
- ◆ FirstBank Florida - 3 boxes of school supplies and 20 Bank bags filled with goodies
- ◆ Florida Blue - 250 Habit Heroes comic books for our youth
- ◆ Furniss-Roe, Tina & Robert - dozens of books collected by their daughter
- ◆ Galindo, Doris - Christmas tree and decorations
- ◆ Gibraltar Private Bank & Trust - 36 Halloween costumes
- ◆ Girl Scout Troop 810 - 10 beautiful gift baskets (cleaning supplies and beauty products) for Branches Florida City mothers
- ◆ Gombos, Pete - adopted a Branches family, including Christmas dinner and gifts
- ◆ Guindi, Enas Hannah - 10 women deodorant and 10 men deodorant
- ◆ Homestead Correctional Institute/DOC - over 60 toys for Christmas
- ◆ Homestead Hospital - 10 large boxes of school supplies; 8 cases of bottled water for MLK Day
- ◆ HSBC - 170 books (OMG Official Money Guide for Teenagers) for the Branches youth
- ◆ Jones, William J. – adopted 2 Branches angel children for Christmas
- ◆ Law Offices of Dagmar Llaudy - 60 Halloween costumes
- ◆ Lopez, Brennen - 250 Halloween costumes
- ◆ Lucas, Ritchie - Lexmart desktop printer
- ◆ Luongo, Linda - dominoes, paints, and paintbrushes
- ◆ Miami HEAT - 100 tickets to the 11/3/15 Miami HEAT game
- ◆ Miami Herald Media Co. Touching Lives - 42 Halloween costumes
- ◆ Miami Lakes K-8 Center National Elementary & Junior Honor Society - over 200 Halloween costumes
- ◆ Miami Lakes UMC - 20 Jansport book bags filled with school supplies
- ◆ Miami Vineyard Community Church - 15 book bags and 2 boxes of school supplies
- ◆ Neighbors 4 Neighbors – partners for Adopt a Family for the holidays
- ◆ Office Xpress Supply - 1 executive office chair
- ◆ Old Cutler Presybyterian Women's Ministry - several large bags full of school supplies
- ◆ OptiStaff, Inc - Christmas presents and a hot dinner for Branches Lakeview family
- ◆ Outreachers - 47 backpacks packed with school supplies; 5 boxes of white copy paper; 3 Boxes of wide-ruled lined paper
- ◆ Pike, Isabelle - 4-piece couch and ottoman set
- ◆ Roberts & Durkee Attorneys At Law - 9 Halloween costumes
- ◆ Roth, Bob - Hockey Table
- ◆ South Miami Associates Group of Jack and Jill of America, Inc. - 40 Halloween trick or treat buckets and bags
- ◆ State Farm South Florida - over 300 toys; visa gift cards (\$50 value); and, 1 Target gift card (\$20 value)
- ◆ The Women's Fund of Miami-Dade - Office materials- 2 boxes housewares, 1 dozen vases, 2 small carpets, 2 office chair mats, 1 office chair, 6 folding chairs, and 1 large framed artwork
- ◆ University of Miami SONHS - several large boxes of school supplies
- ◆ USI Insurance - 16 backpacks
- ◆ van Kipnis Caplow, Pascale - adopted a Branches family for Christmas, provided toys and \$450 in Target gift cards
- ◆ Walmart Supercenter Miami Gardens - \$200 Gift Card
- ◆ Winn-Dixie Bird Road - 4 cases of Winn-Dixie water for MLK Remix
- ◆ Yahoo, Inc. - 6 backpacks and 3 large boxes of school supplies
- ◆ Yepez, Emilio - 1 Hoverboard Segway
- ◆ Yepez, Emilio - dozens of toys and board games; Claire's jewelry; \$50 Walmart gift card and \$50 Forever 21 gift card
- ◆ Zapletal, Laurie A – adopted 1 Branches angel child for Christmas

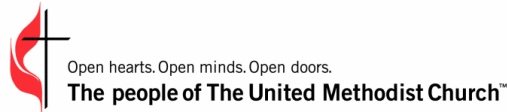
2015 Thanksgiving Recap

15th Annual Thanksgiving Meal Delivery Another Success!

A HUGE Thank You to our premiere *Thanksgiving Day Sponsors* for their generous support and making this special day possible:



The Batchelor Foundation



Thanks to the efforts of our amazing donors and volunteers, Branches provided 6,245 meals to individuals in need on Thanksgiving Day 2015! Over 1,200 volunteers helped cook, package and deliver these meals at 9 sites throughout Miami-Dade and Broward counties.

Due to the generosity of hundreds of caring individuals, we were able to make a lasting impact in the lives of thousands of people in need. Along with a hot, delicious Thanksgiving meal, clients also received a very important resource pamphlet containing information about Branches programs, and emergency and public benefit services.

A Big Thank You also goes out to Florida Community Bank, Goya Foods of Florida, Kathy & Scott Howard, Killian Pines United Methodist Church, Mercantil Commercebank and United Way of Miami-Dade for their generous support as *Thanksgiving Sponsors!*

Thank you as well to the individuals and organizations for being official *Thanksgiving Supporters*: Mr. William S. Berk, City National Bank, Mr. Wayland R. Hicks, Moore Stephens Lovelace and Mrs. Pamela Poulos. Thank you also to Chase Bank and the Miami Marlins Community Foundation for their generous in-kind contributions.



Volunteers serving up deliciousness.



Volunteer drivers off to make deliveries.



A Branches family enjoying their meal!

A special THANK YOU to our incredible Food Drive Partners!

1st National Bank of South Florida, AAA Auto Club South, Antioch Missionary Baptist Church, Aviation Instrument Services, Inc., BE Aerospace, Broward College South-Office of Student Success, Coconut Grove Montessori School, FirstBank Florida, Gulliver School, Johnson & Wales University, Kendall United Methodist Church (UMC) Day School, Kingdom Faith Global Ministries, Lady Fit, Miami Vineyard Community Church, Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist Church, Palmer Trinity Private School, Inc., Pembroke Road Church, Poinciana UMC, Redland Community UMC, Regions Bank, The Growing Place of FUMCCG and USI Insurance.



Branches
Grow Deeper, Climb Higher

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

SAVE THE DATE

PLEASE JOIN US AT OUR 13TH ANNUAL
Black Tie & Blue Jeans
BENEFIT DINNER AND AUCTION

FRIDAY, MAY 6TH, 2016
JW MARRIOTT MARQUIS MIAMI
255 BISCAYNE BLVD WAY, MIAMI, FL
7PM – 12AM

◆ FEATURING ◆
THE TRISH & DAN BELL
COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AWARD
HONORING THE BATCHELOR FOUNDATION,
FOUNDER GEORGE E. BATCHELOR

◆ PHILANTHROPIC CHAIRS ◆
TRISH & DAN BELL

◆ GALA CO-CHAIRS ◆
NICOLE KRAUSS
LAURIE ZAPLETAL

Share in an uplifting evening as
we celebrate together!

Reception, Silent & Live
Auctions, Dinner and Dancing.

For details about this event,
please visit
[www.branchesfl.org/
benefitdinner](http://www.branchesfl.org/benefitdinner)

For questions and to RSVP,
please contact Isabelle Pike at
305-442-8306 x1002 or
ipike@branchesfl.org

See you there!



Branches
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