

BRIDGE BUILDER

Fall 2017

WHAT'S INSIDE

- Summer Shade Camp - Page 2
- Donor Thank Yous - Pages 3-7
- Black Tie & Blue Jeans Benefit Dinner - Page 8
- Grow & Climb - Page 9
- Bash & Achieve - Page 10
- Thanksgiving Meal Delivery - Page 11



Mission Statement:

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

Get Involved:

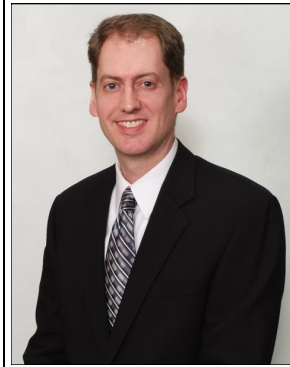
If you would like to know more about how to donate and/or volunteer, please contact us at:
305-442-8306
info@branchesfl.org
www.branchesfl.org



Branches
Grow Deeper, Climb Higher

From the Desk of the Director

From Andrew to Irma



Dear Friends,

Just after the 25th Anniversary of Hurricane Andrew, here came Hurricane Irma. For much of our community, Hurricane Irma is no longer top of mind. The winds came, the waters rose, the storm passed, and then the clean-up began. Our power was restored (finally?!). Piles of debris are being removed and the trees are sprouting new leaves. Now many of our neighborhoods and our lives are returning to normal.

At Branches however, we have settled into a 'new normal' of sorts in which we are back to normal operations while also serving needs that persist in the lives of those who are most vulnerable. In the communities in which we serve (particularly in South Dade), unemployment has beset so many families whose livelihoods are in the hospitality and agricultural industries.

Here is what Branches has done to date: Immediately after the hurricane and after cleaning up our sites, we opened up the Florida City facility to provide 3 meals a day, showers, ice, water and simply a place to rest for the community. Our facility had power so people came not just to eat but to stay cool and charge their cell phones. For five days after the storm, Branches was filled with people from all over the community. We provided activities for the children, and adults connected with one another. It was a beautiful testimony of why Branches exists in the first place. In fact, Branches in Florida City was born out of Hurricane Andrew.

In that first week after Irma, we received a visit from a CEO of a local foundation who was amazed to discover that 'everyone was so happy at Branches.' Indeed, Branches creates community where people are loved and supported and consequently are joyful despite the circumstances.

We are so grateful to be entrusted with generous resources from churches, foundations and corporate partners to ensure that people have food and emergency assistance while they get their lives back to normal. The Branches' team has been working every day serving hundreds of people addressing their immediate needs and working toward long term solutions.

From Andrew to Irma, Branches continues to be a beacon of light and a place of hope for so many. Thank you for being part of the Branches community!

With Hope and Gratitude,

Brent McLaughlin
Executive Director



Branches students helping to prepare Post-Hurricane Irma food and baby care relief packages.

Branches Happenings

Summer Shade Camp = Fun, Learning & Youth Employment

Thanks to the generous support from our donors, the 2017 Branches' Summer Shade Camp provided a safe, fun and caring environment for a record 406 children this summer! This 7 week-long day camp which takes place at each Branches site, allowed our children to practice math and reading through exciting lessons and enrichment activities. This helps prevent summer learning loss and ensures that all our students are ready for the next grade this school year. Of course our kids also had lots of fun, visiting places like Zoo Miami, Biscayne National Park, the Venetian Pool, Everglades Outpost, Miami Children's Museum, Ninja Lounge, Kendall Ice Arena, bowling, the movies and more. Our youth were also able to enjoy some amazing guest speakers like Mr. Stan Van Gundy, Zaniac and others.

In addition, Branches is proud to have employed 37 of our youth this summer to serve as Summer Guides (camp counselors) to help lead the activities of summer programming. Branches' staff and AmeriCorps members provided support, but this employment offered our guides a chance to build their resume, learn employable skills, practice leadership and earn some money.

Branches understands the value of hiring our youth. Our entire community must come together to support our youth and provide them with real opportunities to help them grow and achieve long-term success in life. Thank you to all the dedicated funders of our Climb youth program for believing in our ability to affect change, and most importantly, for believing in our kids.



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

All donors from March 13, 2017 - September 17, 2017 are listed at www.branchesfl.org/news/newsletters

A special thank you goes out to our premiere supporters:

Trish & Dan Bell * Nancy T. Hector * Shelley & Larry Rutherford * Anthony R. Abraham Foundation * Florida Conference UMC * The Kirk Foundation * Helen's Hope Foundation * Himan Brown Charitable Trust * Internal Revenue Service * Sandy & Rodney Bell * Kelly Foundation * School Board of Miami-Dade County * Ocean Reef Community Foundation * The Batchelor Foundation, Inc. * The Children's Trust of Miami-Dade * United Way Miami-Dade * Volunteer Florida

Thank You, Branches Sponsors & Stakeholders!

List includes contributions received by Branches from March 13, 2017 to September 17, 2017. 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

Bell, Trish & Dan

Anthony R. Abraham Foundation
Bell, Sandy & Rodney
Florida Conference of the United
Methodist Church (UMC)
Hector, Nancy T.
Helen's Hope Foundation
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Ocean Reef Community Foundation
Rutherford, Shelley & Larry
School Board of Miami-Dade County
The Batchelor Foundation, Inc.
The Children's Trust of Miami-Dade
The Kirk Foundation
United Way Miami-Dade Grants
Volunteer Florida

Between \$10,000 and \$19,999

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Peacock Foundation, Inc.
Protestant Foundation of the Ocean
Reef Chapel
Publix Super Markets, Inc.
Regions Financial Corporation
The Miami Foundation
Wells Fargo

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JP Morgan Chase Bank
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Macy's
Miami-Dade County Department of
Cultural Affairs
SunTrust Foundation
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The Tonkinson Foundation
Watkins, Jocelyn

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Aungst, Emily & Kristopher
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Miami Hospital
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Branches UMC
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First UMC Miami
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Hanuszkiewicz, Michelle & Juan P.
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Iszler, Elizabeth & Timothy
Kahn, Laurie & Fabian
Lawrence, David
Mandarin UMC
McLaughlin, Karen & Brent
Memorial UMC
Milledge, Sandy & Brother
Morgan, Missy & James Elmore III
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PDC Technologies
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Pinney, Audrey & Peter
Prothro, Rebecca & Carleton
Rogers, Nadine & Shaun
Serrate, Beth
Shear, Ryan
Snow, Ruth & Richard
South Florida Stucco
Symes, Dustin
Sziranko, Lincoln
Team FootWorks
Toral, Armando
Torres, Kim & Raymundo
Touching Miami With Love Ministries
Tripp Scott PA
Umbaugh, Glicer & Greg
Van Romondt, Alexandra & Jean
Paul

Villamil, Marielena A.
Villamil, TJ
Ways to Work
Zapletal, Laurie A.

Between \$500 and \$999

Barrinat, Tessie & Goldfarb, Alan
Barzyk, Janine
Bass, Hilarie
BBVA Compass Bank
Berrios, Jose
Burton, Linda
Byrne, Michael
Camenzuli, James
Chester UMC
Di Calvo, AI
Dou, Jeannette & Remy
Garrison, Pamela
Getchell, Kenneth
Gibraltar Private Bank & Trust
Grove Tree Service
Ho, Linda & William
Hudson, Christina & Robert
Karson, Jack
Kleber Family Charitable Trust
Koch, Deborah
Lancaster, Jessica & Joe
Mandarin UMC Men
Maxwell, Leslie
MBF Healthcare Partners
Mercedes-Benz of Cutler Bay
Miller, Bronwyn & Udell, Maury
Moore Stephens Lovelace CPAs
Onsgard, Robert
Pacific National Bank
Poulos, Pamela
Prasad, Prestin
Robinson, Sandra & Roland
Ross, Sandra & Arturo
Sanchez-Llorens, Migna
Sanlando UMC
Thornton, Channing D.
Turkell, Jaret
Watkins, Jim
Weems, Cynthia
Zanghi, Lucille & Dow, James

Between \$200 and \$499

Ault, Cindy & Greg
Bado, Carolyn & Jean-Pierre
Bastian, Erwin
Baurichter, Dalia & Anthony

Continued on Page 4

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Between \$200 and \$499, continued from Page 4

Beauchamp, Nathan
Betty Chapman & Dale Chapman
Webb
Bodin, Carrie & Amory
Bonner, Tom
Carol City UMC
Castilla, Ana
Charity Services Centers PA
Clark, Richard
Deppman, Darlene & Edward
Ebbertt, Marlin
Eligon, Janille
First UMC Coral Gables
Foster, Jeanne
Foster-Morales, Dori
Ft. Pierce Haitian Mission
Gautier, Tami
Gonzalez, Cristina M.
Gonzalez, Karina & Alex
Greene, Sara
Greg Viejo
Hawks, Carol & Joseph
Hickey, Raquel R.
Holian, Ada & John
Hottendorf, Lori
Ignite UMC
Jones, William & Hernandez,
Reinaldo
Joseph, Julene
Klem, Deborah S.
Knofsky, Jodie
Komeshak, Diane & Pat
Litten, Georgette & Randall
Lopez, Vidalis
LPC Transportation
Mehta, Eileen Ball
Mendoza, Ernesto
Morgan, Patricia & Richard
Olmedo-Rodriguez, Jennifer &
Rodriguez, Alexander
Padron, Lourdes & Orlando
Paradowski, Christina
Pascual, Alex
Plaza Construction
Pruitt, Jonah & Judy
Reynolds, Douglas
Rhyner, Corinne & Matthew
Robinson, James
Seckinger, Carolyn & Daniel
Seitz, Patrick
Shank, Arden
Shelley, III Susan & Robert
Shindell, Michelle
Short, Phillip & Giovanella
Siegal, Brian
Smith, Bailey

Sylvestre, Stephanie
Travis, Geoffrey
Wilkey, Kaylin

Up to \$199

Acella, Pascual
Adams, Nathan Paul
Adan-Fernandez, Ofelia
Alvarez, Eneida
AmazonSmile Foundation
Anderson, Matthew
Arlene Williams
Ault, Stephanie Kane
Bachmann, Karla
Bader, Gregory K.
Baiaomonte, Natalie
Baker, Elizabeth & Edward
Balsinde, Sergio
Beard, Melanie
Benitez, Debbie
Bermudez, Wilmer
Bifolco, Stephanie
Bilia, Moti
Bleiker, Charles
Bonarrigo, Christina
Brownell, Robert
Burdette, Katie
Burstein, Melissa & Mark
Cabrera, Harold
Calderon, Elmar W.
Calderon, Martha E.
Casabone, Paolo
Castaldi, Angelo
Center, Brandon G.
Cervantes, Victoria
Claude, Jasmine
Cloyd, Veronica Leigh
Cole, Jane H.
Colina, Leslie
Crabtree, Bonnie
Cristancho, John
Cruz, Macarena
Cutler Ridge UMC
Dammann, Jacqueline
Davie UMC
Dinehart, Laura
Doorek, Brian
Edwards, Jack & Tomy
Encina, Lisa
Epstein, Gail
Evans, Lynn & Chester
Evans, Ryan
Eveyo, Kristina
Fernandez, Felipe
Fernandez-Guzman, Carlos & Maria
First UMC Homestead Women
Flecha, Alexandra
Foersch, Daniela

Foglia, Marina S.
Foster, Michael C.
Freile, Juan Carlos
Galindo, Doris
Gamm, Paul
Gamm, Yael
Garcia, Felix
Garcia, Rosario
Geffard, Marceline
Gibson, Patricia & James
Giraldo-Libin, Grace
Glicken, Howard
Gonzalez, Carmen
Gray, Nancy
Greist, Douglas
Griese, Mary Ann & Jeffrey
Groves, Wade
Gunn, Cameron
Gunn, Leticia
Gutierrez, Diane R.
Hall, G. Jay
Harmon, Lillian
Harrell, Keith
Harris, Aelxander
Harrison, Peter Richard
Hernandez, Pedro
Hernandez, Sara M.
Hill, Mark
Horne, Kelly King
Jackson, Daniel or Patricia B.
Jimenez, Catarina
Johnson, James
Jones, Robert A.
King, Charles & Diane
Klippel, Mary
Knight, Tracy & Thomas
Lago, Olga & Vince
Lazar, Beth & Scott
Le Blanc, Elizabeth
Leon, Natasha
Lineberger, Katie
Lopez, Ana
Lopez, Maria
Luis Boullon
Lungu, Carlos
Maier, Nikki DeLuca
Majano, Saul D.

Continued on Page 5

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Donors through The Miami Foundation 2016 Give Day, Coral Gables Community Foundation & Key Biscayne Community Foundation 2016 Key to Giving Program, United Way Campaign and Challenge Star

Up to \$199

continued from Page 5

Marcelin, Martine & Gary
 Martinez, Karina
 Martinez, Mariano
 Mastin, Deborah
 Matthews, N'Shaye
 Metcalfe, David
 Montano, Carlos
 Morales, Jeannette & Ricardo
 Morales, Jimmy
 Morgan, Elaine W. & Michael W.
 Morris, Sally Stohz
 Natoli, Joseph T. & Jennifer D.
 Navatkoski, Jan
 Nelson, Kipp
 Newman, Joyce & Richard
 Norris, Robin
 Nunez, Lucy
 Nuñez, Ray Gonzalez
 Nunez, William
 Ocasio, Sara
 Olsen, Hannah
 Ortega, Liza
 Pacouloute, Guillot
 Padilla, Luis
 Pajotte, John
 Parkinson, Jane
 Parkinson, Shelly-Ann
 Penuela-Velez, Juan
 PEO Chapter K.
 Perez, Patricia
 Pergakis, Paul
 Perlman, Deborah & Alan
 Phillips, Sally B
 Pomeroy, John
 Ponce De Leon Title Services, Inc.
 Pope, Timothy

Presser, Shyla & Jay
 Ralsten-Cox, Johanna
 Reese, William
 Reiter, Ryan
 Reynolds, Dennis
 Rios, Kenneth
 Robinson, Ricky
 Rodriguez, Maria
 Russell, Latisha
 Russell, Nicole
 Saballos, Carlos
 San Miguel, Mita
 Segovia, Pilar
 Shapiro, Evan
 Shapiro, Jenna
 Sheeran, Kathleen
 Shindell, James
 Shomar, Henny
 Short, Giovanna
 Silver Palm UMC
 Simeon, Elda
 Sims, Michael
 Smith, Jacqueline & McGregor
 Soliday, Barbara
 Stowes, Hecter & TaRonce
 Sursky, Stephanie
 Swan, Mary & Alan
 Symes, Olivia
 Toelkes, Adam
 Toyawanich, Julie & Agulnik, Mark
 Trueba, Maria Del Carmen
 Ugarte, Carlos
 Urbina, Dara
 Uribe, Miguel A.
 Valencia, Adele
 Van Gundy, Cynthia & William
 Velez, Juan Pablo P.
 Velez, Melody
 Vellmet, Fritz

Villacampa, Jorge
 Wagner, Erin
 Wallace, Emelda
 Warner, Carol & Dallas
 Warren, Audrey & Soto, Jose Luis
 Watts, Nancy & Dean
 Wenke, Eric
 Westra, Polly
 White, Craig
 Woodbury, Holly

United Way Campaign

- Anonymous
- Dorothy Gail Adams
- Eileen Ball Mehta
- Gary Hall
- Gloria Maria Arazoza
- Katrina Vanderdray
- Rob Bowlby
- William J. Jones

YourCause

Macarena Cruz
 Paolo Casabone

Apportionment

Carol City UMC
 Davie UMC
 First UMC Boca Raton

Gift In Memory of:

- * Chuck Burton from Linda Burton

Gifts In Honor of:

- * Sister Jeanne O'Laughlin from Lynn Evans
- * Kim & Raymundo Torres from Kelly King Horne
- * Raymundo Torres and Branches Florida City men and boys from Pastor Diane R. Gutierrez

Gifts in Honor of Lucy Nunez on her Birthday

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| * Eneida Alvarez | * Felix Garcia |
| * Wilmer Bermudez | * Rosario Garcia |
| * Harold Cabrera | * Catarina Jimenez |
| * Martha E. Calderon | * Maria Lopez |
| * Leslie Colina | * Lucy Nunez |
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| * Marina S. Foglia | |

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In-Kind Donations

Back to School:

- ◆ Alma Ad - Hosted a Back to School Party at Branches Florida City with Face Painting, Temporary Tattoos, Inflatable Slide, Magic Show, Lunch and Snacks and Donated over 120 Backpacks filled with School Supplies Including Jump Drives and Headphones plus 20 Cases of Copy Paper and Several Boxes of Extra School Supplies
- ◆ AT&T - 12 Bags of Assorted School Supplies and 4 Backpacks
- ◆ Baker, Elizabeth & Edward - 6 Backpacks and 2 Large Boxes of Backpacks and Assorted School Supplies
- ◆ Biz Nest - 1 Large Box of Assorted School Supplies
- ◆ Canero Immigration Law Firm - 1 Large Box of Assorted School Supplies
- ◆ Devon Seafood and Steak - Sushi for over 100 Guests at Branches' Back to School Bash
- ◆ EPIC Hotel - 80 Jansport Backpacks, 50 Boxes of Crayons, 50 Spiral Notebooks, 30 Boxes of Colored Pencils and 30 Glue Sticks
- ◆ FirstBank Florida - 4 Large Boxes and 3 Bags of Assorted School Supplies
- ◆ Florida International University - One Large Box of Assorted School Supplies
- ◆ Hurtado, Elyse - 12 Pencil Boxes, 36 Ticonderoga Pencils, 12 Erasers, 12 Eight-Pack Jumbo Crayons, 800 Sheets of College Ruled Notebook Paper, 18 Pads of Post-it Notes, 25 Two-Pocket Folders, 30 Elmer's School Glue Sticks and 500 Sheets of Construction Paper
- ◆ JLL - 121 Backpacks Filled with School Supplies such as Folders, Paper, Composition Notebooks, Pencil Boxes, Crayons, Colored Pencils, Glue Sticks, Scissors and Pencils
- ◆ JLL- Property Management Office - 2 Boxes of School Supplies
- ◆ JP Morgan Chase Bank - Over 5 Large Boxes of Assorted School Supplies
- ◆ Miami Herald Media Company - 3 Large Boxes of School Supplies
- ◆ Pallavicini, Mayner - Provided DJ Service for 3 Hours for Branches' Back to School Bash
- ◆ Parra, Alexandra - 4 Uniform Skirts
- ◆ Pisco y Nazca - Provided Short Rib Samples for over 100 Guests at Branches' Back to School Bash
- ◆ Pizza Rev - Provided Pizza for over 100 Guests at Branches's Back to School Bash
- ◆ Regions Financial Corporation - 7 Boxes of Assorted School Supplies and One Backpack
- ◆ Rodriguez, Jessica - 48 Backpacks and 48 School Supply Kits Including Notebooks, Folders, Rulers, Pencils, Pens, Crayons, Glue Sticks and More

- ◆ Seasons 52 Coral Gables - Provided Dessert for over 100 Guests at Branches' Back to School Bash
- ◆ South Miami Associates Group of Jack and Jill of America, Inc. - 2 Large Boxes of School Supplies
- ◆ Sushi Maki - Provided Sushi for over 100 Guests at Branches' Back to School Bash
- ◆ TD Bank Bird Road - Two Boxes and 1 Large Bag of Assorted School Supplies
- ◆ Titanic Brewing Company - One Keg of Beer for Branches' Back to School Bash
- ◆ Transwestern - 5 Backpacks and 3 Bags Filled with School Supplies
- ◆ UHealth Lennar Foundation Medical Center - Rental of Rooftop terrace for Branches' Back to School Bash
- ◆ University of Miami SONHS - Several Large Boxes filled with Backpacks and Assorted School Supplies
- ◆ USI Insurance - 55 Backpacks with School Supplies
- ◆ Walton, Carol - Event Photos for Branches' Back to School Bash
- ◆ Yahoo, Inc. - 1 Box of School Supplies

Other In-Kind Donations:

- ◆ Arazoza Brothers Corp. - Mulch for Branches Lakeview Outdoor Classroom
- ◆ Aungst, Emily & Kristopher - Baby Einstein Activity Jumper and a Reclining Baby Chair
- ◆ Balkin, Lisa - 2 Large Bags of Baby Clothing and Accessories, Baby Carrier, Infant Car Seat and Base
- ◆ Castle Harbor Boat Club & School - 2017 Summer Sailing Camp Scholarships for 9 Branches Students
- ◆ City Furniture - Twin Bunk Bed with Mattress and a Twin Bed Frame with Mattress
- ◆ First UMC Boca Raton - Hosted Branches Climb to College & Career Bootcamp on August 11th and 12th, 2017
- ◆ First UMC Coral Gables - Rented Pool at A.D. Barnes Park and Hosted Pool Party for Branches Florida City and Branches South Miami Youth with Lunch From Pollo Tropical
- ◆ FPD Painting Corp. - Provided all of the Paint, Brushes and Prime Materials for Outdoor Classroom Project
- ◆ Galleria Farms - Flowers for 20 Centerpieces for the Climb to College & Career Summer Celebration Dinner
- ◆ Howard, Kathy & Scott - 4 New Pairs of Water Shoes and Water Bottles for Branches South Miami 's Sailing Camp Students

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Other In-Kind Donations, continued from Page 7

- ◆ Law Offices of Dagmar Llaudy - 2 Large Bags of Halloween Costumes
- ◆ Lush Life - Mulch for Branches Lakeview Outdoor Classroom
- ◆ Pike, Isabelle - 1 Blue Men's Jacket and a Men's Navy Suit
- ◆ Prindle, Hunter - 20 Bags of School Uniforms Including Polo Shirts, Pants or Skirts, Socks and Shoes
- ◆ Shula's Grill 347 - Hosted a Cooking Demonstration for 6 Branches Students and 2 Staff with Lunch
- ◆ The Miami FC - Donated over 1,500 Tickets to Various Games for Branches Families
- ◆ Total Safety Consulting - Wood Needed to Build Branches Lakeview Outdoor Classroom and 5 Benches
- ◆ WPLG Local 10 - Over 300 New Books for Branches Students
- ◆ Zambrano, Amy - 1 PlayStation and Several Games, Over 200 Books, One Large Bag of Legos, 1 Wii Gaming System, Two Large Bags of Barbies and Accessories, 1 Bag of New Books, Two Gym Mats, Wii Fit System and Scrapbook Materials
- ◆ Zaniac - 1 Minecraft Workshop and 1 Robotics Workshop Held at Branches South Miami on July 6, 2017 and 1 week of Summer Camp Registration for 2 Students from Branches South Miami
- ◆ Zeta Tau Alpha Fraternity Housing Corporation - 2 Sofas, 4 Armchairs, 1 Ottoman, 2 Decorative End Chairs, 1 Dining Table, 2 Large Tower Cabinets, 1 Butcher Block Counter, 3 Dining Room Straight Back Chairs, 3 Commercial Area Rugs, Wood TV Trays and 2 Leatherette upholstered Straight Back Chairs



Branches Happenings

Black Tie & Blue Jeans Benefit Dinner and Auction

Branches celebrated its' 14th Annual Black Tie & Blue Jeans benefit dinner and auction on Saturday, April 22, 2017 at the JW Marriott Marquis. Over 450 guests attended and helped to raise over \$370,000 for Branches' programs which provide services and life-changing opportunities to low-income children, youth and families focused on long-term success.

The event was co-chaired by Gala Chairs Mr. Dustin Symes of City National Bank and Mrs. Laurie Zapletal of BB&T and kicked off with a cocktail reception and a silent auction, followed by dinner and dancing, as well as an appeal and an exciting live auction, led by MC Mr. Calvin Hughes of WPLG Local 10 and Auctioneer and board member Mr. Scott Howard. The event also honored David Lawrence Jr. for his long-time and generous support of the South Florida Community with the Trish and Dan Bell Community Empowerment Award. All proceeds from the appeal of that evening supported Branches' Summer Shade Camp and all donations were doubled since they are matched \$1:\$1 by a generous Challenge Grant provided by Trish and Dan Bell.

Branches would like to thank all who supported Black Tie & Blue Jeans. In particular, we want to recognize the following premiere sponsors:

Trish & Dan Bell
Philanthropic Chairs

Sandy & Rodney Bell
Platinum Sponsor

BB&T
Gold Sponsor

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Philanthropic Chairs Dan & Trish Bell, Roberta Lawrence & Award Honoree David Lawrence Jr., Nancy & Jon Batchelor and Executive Director Brent McLaughlin



Gala Co-Chairs Dustin Symes and Board Member Laurie Zapletal



Board Chair Rodney Bell, Riley Bell, Reese Bell, Nicole Ballesteros and Sandy Bell



Executive Director Brent McLaughlin and Shelley & Larry Rutherford



Shelley Rutherford, Judge Bronwyn Miller, Judge Migna Sanchez-Llorens and Carrie Bodin



Christina & TJ Villamil



Pam Garrison and Philanthropic Chairs Dan & Trish Bell

Grow, Climb...

Climb to College & Career Bootcamp

Summer is a popular time when most high school juniors and seniors visit colleges and start planning for their future as they anticipate the start of a new school year. However, that is not always the case for all students. The reality is that many low income students face college planning challenges due to social and language obstacles, less exploration because of low expectations and underestimation of the amount of financial help available.



Branches' Climb to College & Career (CtC) program served 97 youth this past summer, which is an exciting first for this new initiative. During the school year, CtC prepares youth to succeed in their chosen educational path beyond high school through life skills classes, academic tutoring support, a mentor relationship and ultimately are able to qualify for a Branches scholarship.

This past Summer, 97 Branches youth came together for In Focus, an intense two week college prep session divided into cohorts, from 8th -12th Grade, and participated in interactive workshops on financial aid education, college coaching, SAT prep from expert professionals and college tours.

After In Focus, 35 juniors and seniors were able to jump start the college readiness planning process with a culminating session at the overnight Climb to College & Career Boot Camp where students receive individualized coaching from college counselors to create a plan for the application process. They also worked with a writing coach to draft personal essays for scholarships and college admissions. The boot camp ended with a banquet where the students dressed up to celebrate their hard work, and each other.



Most recently, Branches honored Mr. Herb Parlato (left) with the Inaugural Herbert C. Parlato Volunteer Award. Herb has been instrumental in mentoring many Branches children who are now successful college students.

Top: Branches students working on online career assessments.
Bottom: Branches youth touring University of South Florida.

OASIS Camp: More Than Just Camp

From April 9-12, over 200 of our middle and high school students were able to get away and enjoy a few days at the Warren W. Willis Camp in Leesburg, FL. Warren Willis, a camping ministry of the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church provides a Christ centered camping experience that transform the lives of young people.

Thanks to the generous support from Trish and Dan Bell, Branches students have the opportunity to take part in this amazing experience and take a break from their often turbulent lives and escape to paradise, even if it just for a few days. Branches students look forward to attending this camp all year long and for many of them, Warren Willis Camp is the first time they leave their community. Campers' schedules are packed with activities for the different age levels; elementary, middle, and high school students each have different themed programming that allows them to work together to accomplish specific goals. Each morning is started with a quiet time on the lakeshore singing songs and reflecting on God's purpose for their lives. Just some of the fun activities range from crafts to archery, from soccer to cooking, and from sailing to yoga.

This special camp is truly a place for growth, love, and for branching out in ways our students never thought they could, and it is an experience that will stay with our Branches campers forever.



Middle School girls enjoying lunch together.

SAY CHEESE!

Outdoor Fun!

All smiles at the pool!

Branches Happenings

Branches' Back to School Bash was a Blast!

Over 100 guests attended Branches' 1st Annual Back to School Bash on August 10th, 2017 at the UHealth Lennar Foundation Medical Center. Guests mixed and mingled as they enjoyed drinks, delicious appetizers and music by DJ Mayner. Guests were also able to fill a new backpack with school supplies and write a note of encouragement for a Branches student. A special thank you to Team FootWorks and Gibraltar Private Bank & Trust for their great support of this event and of course our incredible restaurant partners for bringing such yummy treats for our guests: Sushi Maki, PizzaRev, Seasons 52, Pisco y Nazca Ceviche Gastrobar and Devon Seafood + Steak Kendall.



Plaza Construction came out in full force!

We are also grateful for the wonderful support of our partners who are helping us make sure all 406 of Branches' children and youth can go back to school ready to learn with the proper supplies and tools they need: JLL, EPIC Miami Residences and Hotel, and Alma Advertising Agency. Thank you again to everyone who came out to this fun event and supported our kids!



Alexandra Gonzalez, William Nunez, Lucy Nunez, Harold Cabrera, Laurie Kahn, Eneida Alvarez, Ricardo Morales



Cat Marcel, Board Member Jim Morgan, Board Member Jack Edwards & Tomy Edwards, Ed Baker, Missy Morgan, Elizabeth Baker



Jesse Cloyd, Emily Aungst & Board Member Kris Aungst, Carolina & Jean-Pierre Bado



Branches staff strike a pose at the thank you reception.

VITA : Real Impact on our Community

Branches is proud to once again have served as 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. Our volunteers and staff also help filers check if they qualify for special tax credits such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) among others. About 60% of individuals living in Miami-Dade qualify for VITA, yet less than 2% are taking advantage of it.

Branches partnered with United Way of Miami-Dade in order to educate our community about VITA and spread the word about this free service to key neighborhoods. Branches and its partners are very proud to share that we were able to prepare 9,918 free tax returns and secure over \$13 million in tax refunds for our local residents. We are incredibly proud of this accomplishment!

To celebrate the 460+ volunteers who helped make VITA possible, Branches hosted a special thank you reception at United Way on Thursday, May 25th to show our sincere appreciation for their hard work. Together, these amazing volunteers served a total of 15,089 hours helping individuals prepare their taxes free of charge. Thank you again to everyone involved in this incredible community effort!



VITA Volunteers are all smiles at the Thank You Reception!



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Branches To Celebrate 17th Thanksgiving Meal Delivery Anniversary

Thursday, November 23, 2017

To mark the 17th year of this meal delivery program, we will prepare and deliver meals from 5 sites on Thanksgiving Day throughout Miami-Dade and Broward Counties to feed at least 5,000 community members in need. But we need your support! Some ways you can help:

Be a Premiere Sponsor!

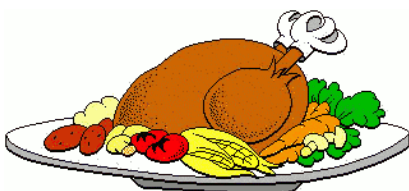
- **\$5,000—Thanksgiving T-Shirt Sponsor**
- **\$2,500 —Thanksgiving Site Sponsor**
(Provides 500 meals)
- **\$1,000 —Thanksgiving Sponsor**
(Provides 200 meals)
- **\$500 — Thanksgiving Supporter**
(Provides 100 meals)

For sponsorship details, please contact:
Isabelle Pike
Phone: 305-442-8306 x1002
Email: ipike@branchesfl.org

Raise Additional Support!

- Help us raise cash and in-kind donations to support the Thanksgiving Day Meal Delivery.
- Organize food drives (workplace, church, school, etc.) to collect non-perishable food items for the Thanksgiving meals. All non-Thanksgiving food items are distributed by our partner churches' food pantries to community members in need during the year.
- Organize volunteer teams to help with meal prep and delivery on Thanksgiving Day.

For food drive and volunteer details,
visit www.branchesfl.org
and click on Events, Thanksgiving!



When this ministry began in 2001, we delivered about 600 meals. In 2016, we delivered over 5,100 meals with the help of over 1,000 volunteers. THANK YOU again to our supporters who faithfully help us each year to provide for those who have little. God Bless!