



**Branches**  
Grow Deeper, Climb Higher

# BRIDGE BUILDER

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### Mission Statement:

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

### Get Involved:

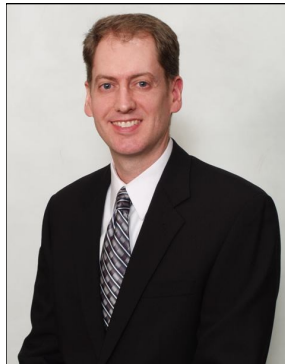
If you would like to know more about how to donate and/or volunteer, please contact us at:  
305-442-8306  
info@branchesfl.org  
www.branchesfl.org



**Branches**  
Grow Deeper, Climb Higher

## From the Desk of the Director

### Beyond the Numbers



Dear Friends,

In so many ways, our lives are defined by data and numbers. As children we are measured by our grades in school and on tests. As adults at some point we are evaluated by our credit score, debt to income ratio, and annual income. At Branches we are creating opportunities for our students and families to succeed when it comes to some of these critical numbers. For example for the past two years we have provided intensive SAT preparation for our college bound Branches students. In just that short timeframe, the students have raised their average SAT test scores from 885 to 1051 an 18.8% increase!

But sometimes the greatest lessons do not necessarily come from improving the numbers. A year ago we launched our Climb to College & Career mentoring program. One of our high school seniors, 'Carlos', was paired with mentor Jack Edwards. Carlos is an above average student and believed that his grades would help him gain entry into a school such as USF or UCF. But after applying to several state universities, he was declined at all but Florida Atlantic University and they deferred him until January 2019.

The impact on Carlos was devastating and he felt that he had failed. But Jack met with him and helped him to understand that sometimes in life when you get an answer that you did not expect or want that you do not give up. Jack helped him write a letter to the admissions office at FAU. In the letter, Carlos shared about his drive and enthusiasm, his commitment to his local church, the ways he had been a leader at his magnet school and the meaning and impact of Branches in his life. He expressed clearly how he would be an asset to FAU.

Within a month he received a response. They had reversed their decision and he was accepted to start in the Summer of 2018! Without his mentor, Carlos would have accepted what he perceived to be a 'NO'. This is too often the case for many of our students. Indeed we are pushing them to become better and achieve more but also helping them to know their value beyond the numbers.

We are recruiting more mentors! If you have an interest in becoming a Branches mentor, please contact Martine Marcelin, Climb to College & Career Program Manager, at mmarcelin@branchesfl.org.

With Hope and Gratitude,

Brent McLaughlin  
Executive Director



Branches' youth *want* a mentor!  
Are you in?

# Branches Happenings

## Summer Shade Camp = Fun, Learning & Youth Employment

Thanks to the generous support from our donors, the 2018 Branches' Summer Shade Camp provided a safe, fun and caring environment for a record 448 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, Frost Museum of Science, TopGolf, Monkey Jungle, Bill Baggs Cape Florida State Park, SkyZone, Grapeland Water Park, Artsy Hive Pottery, the movies, roller skating and more. Several youth were also able to go on a Mission Trip to rural South Carolina and repaired homes for low-income families. One of our youth, Danielle Neil, was accepted into the highly competitive LEDA Leadership Summer Institute and spent several weeks participating in this wonderful program at Princeton University. Upon her return, Danielle shared with Branches staff that her LEDA summer was one of the most transformative experiences of her life and thanked Branches for getting her to where she is today.

In addition, Branches is proud to have employed 43 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. Each youth also received 16 hours of financial coaching so they can be confident in regards to their finances, especially those students who went off to college this Fall.

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 26 to September 19, 2018 are listed at [www.branchesfl.org/news/newsletters](http://www.branchesfl.org/news/newsletters)

A special thank you goes out to our premiere supporters:

Trish & Dan Bell \* Shelley & Larry Rutherford \* Anthony R. Abraham Foundation \* Catalyst Miami \* Himan Brown Charitable Trust \* Internal Revenue Service \* Sandy & Rodney Bell \* Miami-Dade County OMB GC \* Ocean Reef Community Foundation \* The Batchelor Foundation, Inc. \* The Children's Trust of Miami-Dade \* United Way Miami-Dade \* The UPS Foundation \* Volunteer Florida \*



# Branches Happenings

## Black Tie & Blue Jeans Benefit Dinner and Auction

Branches celebrated its' 15th Annual Black Tie & Blue Jeans benefit dinner and auction on Saturday, April 28, 2018 at the JW Marriott Marquis. Over 450 guests attended and helped to raise over \$400,000 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 Rick & Margarita Tonkinson 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. Ron Magill of Zoo Miami and Auctioneer & Board Member Mr. Scott Howard. The event also honored Superintendent Alberto Carvalho with the Trish and Dan Bell Community Empowerment Award for his long-time and dedicated support of our South Florida community and its children. All proceeds from the evening appeal 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*

**Himan Brown Charitable Trust**  
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*Bronze Sponsors*



Jorge Luis & Marile Lopez, Maria Carvalho & Superintendent Alberto Carvalho, Philanthropic Chairs Trish & Dan Bell and Board Chair Rodney Bell



Steven Tonkinson, Sarah Deal, and Benefit Dinner Chairs Margarita & Rick Tonkinson



Greg Ault, Ed Deppman, Tomy Edwards & Jack Edwards, Jim Morgan, Audrey Warren, and Executive Director Brent McLaughlin



Tina & Robert Furniss-Roe



Philanthropic Chairs Dan & Trish Bell, Branches Graduate Stephanie Benoit and Superintendent Alberto Carvalho



Pearl Meyer, Scott Howard & Kathy Howard, and John Routh



Remy & Jeannette Dou

# Thank You, Branches Sponsors & Stakeholders!

List includes contributions received by Branches from March 26, 2018 to September 18, 2018. 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  
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 Catalyst Miami  
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 The Batchelor Foundation, Inc.  
 The Children's Trust of  
 Miami-Dade  
 The UPS Foundation  
 United Way of Miami-Dade  
 Volunteer Florida

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

BankUnited  
 Dans, Jose  
 Emergency Food & Shelter Program  
 Florida Conference UMC  
 Huizenga Family Foundation  
 Kelly Foundation  
 National Christian Foundation South  
 Florida  
 Pinney, Audrey & Peter  
 Protestant Foundation of the Ocean  
 Reef Chapel  
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## Between \$5,000 and \$9,999

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## Between \$1,000 and \$4,999

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 Baldwin, Paul

Bastian, Natacha & Bart  
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 Branches UMC  
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 Dale  
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 Coral Gables Community  
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 Cummins, Kary  
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 Dou, Jeannette & Remy  
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 First UMC Miami  
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Asrani, Ajit  
 Ball Mehta, Eileen  
 BALLY  
 Baurichter, Dalia & Anthony  
 Castaldi, Angelo  
 Corey, Linda & Phil  
 de las Pozas, Ann & Felipe  
 Diabetes Research Institute  
 Foundation  
 Ferrer, Stacey & Mark  
 Garrison, Pamela  
 Hoy, Kenneth L.  
 Huizenga, H. Scott  
 Law Offices of Alan Goldfarb, PA  
 Milton, Ana Veiga  
 Molina, Maria  
 National Association for Latino  
 Community Asset Builders  
 Nunez, Lucy  
 Plantation UMC  
 Poulos, Pamela  
 Raccah, Jon  
 Rose, Charles  
 Rowland, Jerry  
 Sanlando UMC  
 Santana, Gustavo  
 Sckalar, Robert David  
 Trombino, Joann & Roger  
 Weems, Cynthia  
 Zapletal, Laurie A..

## Between \$200 and \$499

Abella, Luisa Rebecca  
 Armstrong, Kim & Daniel  
 Ault, Cindy & Greg  
 Baker, Elizabeth & Edward  
 Bay, Luis  
 Beddow, Megan  
 Berg, Shelly  
 Bilzin Sumberg  
 Brock, Carol  
 Carrodegua, Vincent  
 Charity Services Centers PA  
 Compassion Med International Inc  
 Cross, Margaret  
 Davis, Tom  
 Deppman, Darlene & Edward  
 Dodd, Helida  
 Edwards, Jack & Tomy  
 Elisburg, Nany & Donald  
 Elmer, Marie & Daniel  
 Fernandez, Desiree  
 First UMC Homestead Women  
 Furniss-Roe, Tina & Robert  
 Gaab, Marylen  
 Grupenhoff, Lisa & Richard  
 Hart, Susan Lynne

*Continued on Page 5*



## Thank You, Branches Sponsors & Stakeholders!

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### **Between \$200 to \$499, continued from Page 4**

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Hoffmann, Teodoro  
Irizarry-Lopez, Carmen Victoria  
Jackson, Patricia B. & Daniel  
Jones, Shevrin D.  
Knofsky, Jodie  
Langan  
Litten, Georgette & Randall  
Lopez, Vidalis  
Lowman, Manya & Bob  
Lumpkin, Cristina Arana  
Marcelin, Martine & Gary  
Maxwell, Leslie  
Meyer, Pearl  
Miller, Bronwyn & Udell, Maury  
Paraso, Aimee  
Persaud, Shivani  
Plaza Construction  
Price, Judy  
Ralsten-Cox, Johanna M.  
Ramirez, Ruth  
Seckinger, Carolyn & Daniel  
Shelley, Susan & Robert III  
Shorten, Victoria & Randolph, Jason  
Steiner, Dacia  
Sylvestre, Stephanie  
Vicioso, Kayra & Luis  
Warren, Audrey & Soto, Jose Luis  
White, Melissa & Kenneth  
Wilhite, Nancy & Lewis  
Wood, Thomas, Sr.  
Yao, Jayson  
Young, Mary  
YourCause, LLC

### **Up to \$199**

Alfonso, Richard  
AmazonSmile Foundation  
Anderson, John Allan  
Arbuco, Eleanor  
Arbuco, Robert  
Bachmann, Karla & Peter  
Bailey, Mario  
Barette, Alex  
Barzyk, Janine  
Bay, Jamie Diptee  
Beard, Melanie  
Beatty, Matthew  
Beauchamp, Michelle  
Beauchamp, Nathan  
Bellany, Keithler  
Benitez, Debbie  
Betancourt, Megan  
Blanco-True  
Bodin, Carrie & Amory  
Bounds, Bruce M.  
Bradley, Mercedes

Broad, Brian W.  
Buendia, Juliana  
Castillo, Jose  
Conrad, Katie & William  
Coronado, Christine  
Cortinas, Vivian  
Corzo, Isabela  
Cox, Justin  
Curran, Victoria & John  
Dammann, Holly  
Daniel, Bryanna  
Davis, Jesika  
de Boyrie, Nilda  
Debesa, Yvonne  
Deppman, Ed  
Diaz, Natalia  
Ebbertt, Marlin  
Evans, Lynn & Chester  
Ferniza, Ambar  
Ferniza, Ismael  
Fittipaldi, Sandra  
Fitzgerald, Kathy & Scott  
Ford, Melisa & Bruce  
Ford, Sally Ann & Edward H.  
Fuller, Paul  
Galvin, Brian  
Garcia, Martha  
Gautier, Tami  
Ghani, Anisa  
Gibson, Patricia & James  
Gilmore, Theresa  
Gonzalez, Leo  
Gonzalez, Miguel  
Gordon Food Service  
Gottlieb, Nicole  
Greist, Douglas  
Grey, Ginette  
Griese, Mary Ann & Jeffrey  
Guerrero, Amairany  
Guthrie, Mark O.  
Gutierrez, Javier  
Hardin, Rhonda  
Hernandez, Yessenia  
Herrera, Marta  
Hill, Matthew  
Hilson, Theresa & Robert  
Ho, Linda & William  
Hoffman-Guzman, Carol  
Hottendorf, Lori  
Hubbard, Esther  
Hughes, Ann  
Jaffe, Eve  
Jauregui, Jeff  
Johnson, Marlys  
Kahn, Laurie & Fabian  
Karshis, Carmen  
Karshis, Sean  
King, Charles & Diane  
Lineberger, Andy  
Lopez, Joanne & Raul

Lotterman, Adam  
Lozano, Danniell  
Lynch, Marian  
Magill, Ron  
Martinez, Amy  
Mathavan, Sunita & Paramvir  
Mayor, Marianela & Jonas  
McCabe, William  
McCaughan, James  
McDowell, Laura  
Mendel, Janu  
Metcafe, David  
Moros, Jorge  
Nelson, Kipp  
Network for Good  
Norell, Robin  
Noyes, Jeffrey  
Onorato, Gisette  
Pacheco, Karen  
Pagan, Luis  
Parham, Penny  
Perlman, Deborah & Alan  
Petruzzo, Jennifer  
Phillips, Trudiann  
Pomeray, Lori & John  
Ponce, Gaspar  
Price, Vince  
Rabah, Albert  
Rashid, Hanis  
Reed, Chelsie  
Reilly, Mary  
Rey, Alexander  
Reynolds, Michael  
Rhyner, Corinne & Matthew  
Robinson, Carolyn Ruth  
Robinson, James  
Rodriguez, Pablo  
Rodriguez, Samuel  
Rubalcaba, Yoanet  
Ruiz Garcia, Ileana  
Ruiz, Nidia  
Russell, Nicole  
Russell, Stefan  
Sabatier, Guillermo  
Sablich, Hanai  
Salcedo, Karla  
Salome Martinez, Mariana  
San Miguel, Brian  
Sanchez, Hector B.  
Sanchez, Lydia  
Schriner, Brian & Maria  
Setareh, Rebecca  
Short, Giovanna  
Shriner, Brian  
Silver Palm UMC  
Sinclair, Donald  
Smith, Stephanie  
Soliday, Barbara  
Stormes, Jane

*Continued on Page 6*

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## Up to \$199, continued from Page 5

Stormes, Jane  
Stringer, Joanie C.  
Teague, Anthony  
The Tonkinson Foundation  
Torres, Noah  
Trabanco, Armando  
True, Alex  
Trueba, Jose  
Vandehei, Clara & Donald  
Velez, Melody  
Venturini, Diana Rizikow  
Villamil, Christina  
Walker, Jonathan  
Washington, Nicole  
Watts, Nancy & Dean  
Wells, Shirley  
Wilkey, Kaylin  
Wright, Katrina  
Wright, Molly

## Donors Through United Way

Anonymous  
Eileen Ball Mehta  
Katrina Vanderdray  
Leonora Denise Gilyard Stafford

## Donor Through YourCause

Nadine Davey Rogers

## TRIBUTES

### Gift In Memory of:

- Ferdie Pacheco from Karen Pacheco
- Nelson McFadden from Theresa Gilmore

### Gifts In Honor of:

- Hans Huseby from Laurie Huseby
- Sr. Jeanne O'Laughlin from Lynn & Chester Evans
- Laurie Johnson-Kahn from Stefan Russell
- Margarita & Rick Tonkinson from Terry Long & Charlie Gomes and Shelly & Julia Berg
- Mary Klippel on her 30th Birthday from Chelsie Reed, Eleanor Arbuco, Jane Stormes, Jennifer Petruzzo, Robert Arbuco and Victoria & John Curran
- Robert & Debbie Onsgard from Brian W. Broad
- Timothy Iszler from Nicholas Sottile and Crowe Foundation
- Trish & Dan Bell from Ana Veiga Milton

### Gifts in Celebration:

- Audrey & Peter Pinney made a gift to support Branches' Summer Shade Camp in honor of their 15th Wedding Anniversary



## In-Kind Donations

### Back to School

- ◆ **School Board of Miami-Dade County - 2 large pallets of assorted school supplies.**
- ◆ Baker, Elizabeth & Edward - 3 backpacks filled with school supplies.
- ◆ Banco do Brasil - Over 8 large boxes of backpacks and assorted school supplies.
- ◆ Baptist Health S FL Homestead Hospital - 2 boxes of assorted school supplies.
- ◆ California Pizza Kitchen - Served peanut salad samples to over 100 guests at Branches' Back to School Bash.
- ◆ Carnival Foundation - Over 15 boxes of assorted school supplies and 100 backpacks.
- ◆ CBRE - 1 large box of assorted school supplies.
- ◆ Crowe, LLP - 24 backpacks.
- ◆ Devon Seafood and Steak - Served small bites for over 100 guests at Branches' Back to School Bash.
- ◆ EPIC Hotel - 2 large boxes of assorted school supplies.
- ◆ Fairway Independent Mortgage Corporation - 5 large boxes of assorted school supplies and backpacks

- ◆ First UMC Miami - 218 flash drives and 1 box of assorted school supplies.
- ◆ FirstBank Florida - 23 backpacks filled with school supplies and 2 large boxes of assorted school supplies.
- ◆ Florida Community Bank- South Miami - 1 large box of backpacks and assorted school supplies.
- ◆ Hancock Askew & Co., LLP - 6 backpacks and 1 large box of assorted school supplies.
- ◆ Hegler, Karen - Supported 5 college students with bedding essentials, kitchen supplies and more.
- ◆ JLL- Property Management Office - 4 large boxes and over 20 bags of assorted school supplies.
- ◆ Jones Lang LaSalle (JLL) - 20 backpacks filled with assorted school supplies.
- ◆ JP Morgan Chase Bank - 12 large boxes of assorted school supplies and backpacks..
- ◆ Lennar Corporation - 1 large box of assorted school supplies and over 10 backpacks.
- ◆ Mercedes-Benz of Coral Gables - 5 boxes of assorted school supplies and a dozen backpacks, as well as 5 boxes of colored paper for art projects.

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## In-Kind Donations

### Back to School, cont'd from Page 6:

- ◆ Miami Herald Media Company - 5 boxes and 2 large bags of backpacks and assorted school supplies.
- ◆ Misha's Cupcakes Inc. - Provided 300 mini cupcakes for Branches' Back to School Bash.
- ◆ Morgan, Patricia - Supported 5 college students with bedding essentials, kitchen supplies and more.
- ◆ PEO Chapter A - 12 bags of assorted school supplies.
- ◆ Pisco y Nazca - Served ceviche samples for over 100 guests at Branches' Back to School Bash.
- ◆ Prime Time Miami - 3 large boxes of assorted school supplies and over 15 backpacks.
- ◆ Publix Super Markets, Inc. - \$250 Publix gift card.
- ◆ RX Coffee - Served coffee samples for over 100 guests at Branches' Back to School Bash.
- ◆ Sanchez, Hector B - 3 boxes of assorted school supplies.
- ◆ Seasons 52 Coral Gables - Served dessert shooters for over 100 guests at Branches' Back to School Bash.
- ◆ Shinnery, Brian - 1 large bag of assorted pens.
- ◆ Shula's 347 Grill - Served tenderloin tip samples for over 100 guests at Branches' Back to School Bash.
- ◆ Squire Patton Boggs, LLP - 2 large boxes of assorted school supplies.
- ◆ TD Bank Bird Road - Over 12 bags of assorted school supplies.
- ◆ Titanic Brewing Company - 1 pony keg for Branches' Back to School Bash.
- ◆ UM School of Nursing and Health Studies - 21 backpacks and over 5 boxes and 20 bags of assorted school supplies.
- ◆ Unity on the Bay - Over 80 backpacks filled with school supplies.
- ◆ USI Insurance - Over 30 backpacks filled with assorted school supplies.
- ◆ WeWork Miami - 1 bag of assorted school supplies.
- ◆ Yahoo, Inc. - 1 box of assorted school supplies.
- ◆ Zinn, Curran - 1 bag of assorted school supplies.

### Other In-Kind Donations

- ◆ Arazoza Brothers Corp. - Mulch for Branches Florida City outdoor classroom.
- ◆ Banco do Brasil - 1 girl's bicycle. Hosted Brazil Day on 3/21/18 and 5/30/18 and provided cheese bread, fudge balls, soda and goodie bags for over 30 students on each day.
- ◆ Bell, Trish & Dan - A rowing machine for home exercise.
- ◆ Books & Books Suniland - Two \$50 gift cards, several Dr. Seuss stickers and certificates.
- ◆ Edwards, Tomy & Jack - Provided snacks and cooked dinner for Branches South Miami students.

- ◆ Gordon Food Service - Over 7 large boxes of assorted food.
- ◆ Hegler, Karen & Jonathan - 110 Easter bags for Grow students and 75 Easter bags for Climb students.
- ◆ Hickey, Raquel R. - Xbox 360 and 10 games.
- ◆ Hyman, David - Several footballs and basketballs.
- ◆ Irizarry-Lopez, Carmen Victoria - 2 large bags of books, pens, and craft supplies.
- ◆ JP Morgan Chase Bank - 60 Tickets to Zoo Miami, 52 Adult admission tickets to Zoo Miami, 5 child admission tickets, 54 boat ride tickets, 89 blue tickets for rhino feeding, 27 yellow tickets for giraffe feeding and 22 tokens for carousel rides.
- ◆ Kendall UMC - 40 hygiene bags for Oasis Spring Break Camp.
- ◆ Law Offices of Dagmar Llaudy - One bag of Halloween costumes and accessories.
- ◆ Miami Marlins Community Foundation - 15 tickets to opening day, 25 tickets and t-shirts for the 8/6 Marlins game, 50 tickets to 8/31 Marlins game and 18 tickets to the Miami Marlins game on 9/22/18 plus 370 tickets to Summer Miami Marlins games and 288 t-shirts.
- ◆ Miami Vineyard Community Church - 200 NLT NT Bibles for Oasis Spring Break Camp
- ◆ Miami-Dade County District 8 - 50 tickets to the Museum of Science.
- ◆ Natland, Bryn & Paul - Over 500 DVDs of movies ranging from family, thriller and action.
- ◆ Palmer Trinity Private School, Inc. - 11 scientific calculators, 20 SAT prep books and a dozen board games and puzzles.
- ◆ Plaza Construction - Built and painted Branches Florida City's outdoor classroom, purchased supplies and paint for the project, and purchased lunch for all volunteers.
- ◆ Publix Super Markets, Inc. - \$200 gift card.
- ◆ Schragger, Ronald E. - 1 ping pong table and 4 paddles.
- ◆ Shapiro, Adam F. - 1 outdoor basketball hoop.
- ◆ Total Safety Consulting - Wood and assembly of Branches Florida City outdoor classroom.
- ◆ University of Miami Health System - One box of lacrosse balls.
- ◆ The Washington Economics Group - 30 black storage crates, 25 leather portfolios, 30 mini portfolios, 10 binders and 25 hanging folders and 2 oversized love seats.
- ◆ Wells Fargo - 4 Table and chair station sets.
- ◆ Zaniac - 4 half day scholarships to Zaniac's Summer Camp.



# Branches Happenings

## Hurricane Irma: Still Recovering

When Hurricane Irma blew through Miami-Dade County in early September of 2017, no one expected the impact it would have on our community a year later, especially in South Dade. As much of the southern part of the County lost power, Branches Florida City was never without. Immediately after the Hurricane had passed, Branches opened up “Hurricane Shade” which mirrored our Summer Shade Camp and provided fun activities for the children while their parents recovered and cleaned up for days post-storm. Branches’ families flocked to Branches for ice, meals, respite from the heat as well much needed help ranging from food and diapers to help with signing up for FEMA assistance and other disaster relief. Several of our families who are employed as farmworkers were now without a job as most of the food had been destroyed by Irma. Hurricane Irma caused much devastation for our families yet Branches served as a first responder to the crisis.

Thanks to several key funders like the Volunteer Florida Disaster Fund, The Miami Foundation, The Peacock Foundation, the National Christian Foundation and SunTrust, Branches was able to go into overdrive and serve all affected families who came to us for assistance. In the end, Branches served over 450 families. In addition, United Way Worldwide provided Branches with a large grant to support small business recovery enabling our ASSETS Small Business Solutions team to serve over 250 local, small businesses, providing individualized support. However, recovery is still ongoing so Branches recently hired a new director, Mr. John Pimentel, to lead this effort through FRIEND, Miami-Dade’s Long-Term Disaster Recovery Group. Mr. Pimentel can be reached at 305-442-8306 x3001 or at [jpimentel@branchesfl.org](mailto:jpimentel@branchesfl.org) for any recovery questions or needs. Thank you!



The Branches team at Centro Campesino serving the community.



Branches students help clean up post-storm and sort care packages for families.



## Oasis Camp: KNOWN

Oasis Spring Break Camp has served Branches youth since 1994 and was created as a result of Hurricane Andrew when local United Methodist youth were not able to attend summer camp in 1993 because their families were still recovering from disaster. Oasis is designed and led by staff and volunteers who are engaged in Branches, church youth groups and our faith-based partners that serve urban middle and high school students. Oasis is unique because it is created by adults from Miami for youth of Miami, and the camp is genuinely the spiritual highlight for the youth each year. It is at camp that many make a first time faith commitment and are strengthened on their journey to follow God.

The theme for 2018 was “Known” and during the four days this past April, students were able to experience being “known” by God and were given an opportunity to know God better. Thanks to the generous support from Trish & Dan Bell, over 200 youth participated in Oasis Spring Break Camp at the beautiful Warren W. Willis Camp in Leesburg, FL. Students were able to partake in fun activities as well as create meaningful and positive relationships, learn new skills and go on new adventures. Thank you so much to everyone who made this year’s Oasis another unforgettable experience for our youth who are sure to treasure this little get-away for a lifetime. Here’s to an amazing 2019!



Basketball is a favorite!



SAY CHEESE!!



Quiet reflection time on the Lake is a true blessing and enjoyed by all.



# Branches Happenings

## Branches' Back to School Bash - Another Success!

Over 100 guests attended Branches' 2nd Annual Back to School Bash on August 9th, 2018 at the UHealth Lennar Foundation Medical Center. Guests mixed and mingled as they enjoyed the DJ, drinks and delicious appetizers. 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 for their generous support, as well as Alan Goldfarb P.A., Bilzin Sumberg and Missy & Jim Morgan for sponsoring this fun event and of course our incredible restaurant partners for bringing such yummy treats for our guests: California Pizza Kitchen, Devon Seafood, Pisco y Nazca, RX Coffee, Titanic Brewery, Seasons 52, Shula's 347 Grill and Misha's Cupcakes.



We are also grateful for the wonderful support of our top partners who helped us make sure all 428 of our Branches' children and youth went back to school ready to learn with the proper supplies and tools they need: Alma Advertising Agency, Carnival Cruise Lines, Miami-Dade County Public Schools and the National Christian Foundation. Thank you again to everyone who came out to this fun event and supported our kids!



Executive Director Brent McLaughlin, Rick Morgan Jr., 2018 Herbert C. Parlato Volunteer Award Honoree Patti Morgan & Rick Morgan



Maxine Hart Weinstein, Karen Plaster, Bobbi Meyers, Wanda McCaskill



Veronica Ramirez, Fara Santana, Leyla Alfonso, Board Member Maria Molina, Richard Sixto



Kipp Nelson, Board Member Jim Morgan, Board Member Ed & Barbara Deppman

## VITA : Real Impact on our Community



Branches staff strike a pose at the thank you reception.

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 partner VITA sites are very proud to share that together we were able

to prepare 10,058 free tax returns and secure over \$11 million in tax refunds for our local residents. We are incredibly proud of this accomplishment!

To celebrate the 400+ volunteers who helped make VITA possible, Branches hosted a special thank you reception at Florida Blue in Doral on Friday, May 4th to show our sincere appreciation for their hard work. Together, these amazing volunteers served a total of 13,120 hours helping individuals prepare taxes free of charge. Thank you again to everyone involved in this incredible and truly worthwhile community effort!



VITA Volunteers enjoy a delicious Mexican Feast at the VITA Fiesta.



**Branches**  
Grow Deeper, Climb Higher

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## Branches To Celebrate 18th Thanksgiving Meal Delivery Anniversary

**Thursday, November 22, 2018**

To mark the 18th year of this meal delivery program, we will prepare and deliver meals from 6 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!

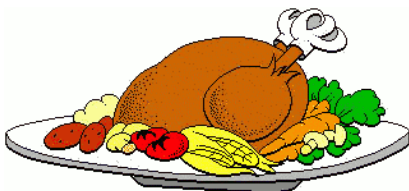
- **\$5,000—Thanksgiving T-Shirt Sponsor**
- **\$2,500 —Thanksgiving Site Sponsor**  
(Provides 500 meals )
- **\$1,000 —Thanksgiving Sponsor**  
(Provides 200 meals)
- **\$500 — Thanksgiving Supporter**  
(Provides 100 meals)

**For sponsorship details, please contact:**  
**Isabelle Pike**  
**Phone: 305-442-8306 x1002**  
**Email: [ipike@branchesfl.org](mailto: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](http://www.branchesfl.org)  
and click on Events, Thanksgiving!**



When this ministry began in 2001, we delivered about 600 meals. In 2017, we delivered almost 5,000 meals with the help of over 700 volunteers. THANK YOU again to our supporters who faithfully help us each year to provide for those who have little. God Bless!