



Fall 2024

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MISSION STATEMENT:

To provide life-changing opportunities to hardworking families and their children to help them break the cycle of generational poverty.

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

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A Message from the CEO

Bridging the Digital Divide

During the pandemic, one heartbreaking lesson we learned is that the digital divide is real and has adverse consequences in the communities where we serve. Perhaps most poignantly we saw how solopreneur-led micro businesses were hit very hard as the failure rate soared during 2020 and 2021. For the most part, these businesses were ill equipped to pivot quickly and utilize technology to their advantage.



After providing more than a year of vital emergency assistance to local micro-businesses, we evolved the Micro-Business Incubator program to build digital equity as a way for these entrepreneurs to capitalize on current opportunities and to be prepared for future crises. We are grateful for the grant support of Comcast that enabled us to move in this direction!

The results from the past few years have been truly astounding and our Micro Business Incubator, E-Lab and BE ONE app have been integral to the stabilization and growth of hundreds of local businesses. In fact, the two-year survival rate for the businesses we are serving is 98% as compared to only 55% survival rate for small businesses statewide!



Michele Tirado joining the Micro-Business program in 2022.

Michele Tirado, owner of Bellezza Miami (bellezzamiami.com), a nail care salon and accessories business with an e-commerce site, joined our program two years ago and won our pitch competition in May 2023 sponsored by City National Bank. Michele recently shared her story at our August staff meeting. After facing obstacle after obstacle and having to close her first business location, she said, “When I first joined, I was all over the place - juggling a failing business, being a single mom, and trying to stay afloat in a very competitive environment. But Branches became my anchor. The workshops, guidance, and resources I received have been invaluable. They helped me start my new business, refine my strategies, build amazing connections, and transition into the entrepreneur I am today.”



Michele attending a Branches Micro-Business class in 2024.

Thank YOU for generously supporting Branches’ mission – together we are creating truly life-changing opportunities for Michele and so many others throughout our community!

With Hope & Gratitude,

Brent McLaughlin
President & CEO



Entrepreneurs at Branches learning about sales this past July.

Branches' 8th Annual Back to School Bash!

All 500 Branches students started the school year off with a new backpack and supplies.

On August 7th, Branches hosted its 8th Annual Back to School Bash at the University of Miami's Newman Alumni Center. The event, a happy hour with a purpose, brought together over 150 guests who enjoyed food and drinks from local restaurants while stuffing backpacks with school supplies for Branches' 500 students. The evening featured music by DJ Mayner and delicious bites from local restaurants such as Divieto, Dos Croquetas, La Tropical Cervceria, Half Moon Empanadas, Seasons 52, Sushi Maki, and two of Branches' Micro-Business program participants, Big Yard and Sir vin Delights. Thanks to the support of all of our wonderful sponsors, Branches was able to successfully pack 500 backpacks for our children and youth, continuing to support our families and provide them with the supplies needed to start off the school year right!

We also want to acknowledge all our wonderful school supply drive partners who helped ensure Branches' 500 students went back to school well-equipped and ready to learn: Alma Agency, Amazon, Annie & Tom Tannehill, Aramark, BankUnited, Bill Bieler, Boeing, Holland and Knight Law, Invitation Homes, The Templeton Family, and many more. Here's to an awesome school year!

A special thank you goes out to all our sponsors and individual donors who helped to make the Back to School Bash such a huge success.

Please visit branchesfl.org/2024back2schoolbash to learn more and watch our fun Bash Recap video!



Aramark was honored with the 2024 Herbert C. Parlato Volunteer Award for their incredible support of Branches!



Branches President & CEO, Brent McLaughlin, Board Chair, Rod Bell, Lina Lopez, and Board Member, Scott Howard.



Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava sharing remarks at the event.



Melissa Cancio and Lisa Albizu-Vazquez with South Miami Mayor Javier Fernandez.



Gold Star Sponsor Bean Automotive Group.

Branches Happenings

Branches' Summer Shade Camp and Climb Higher Scholarships

Branches' Summer Olympics

Inspired by the 2024 Summer Olympics, our students had an incredible opportunity to continue fostering their love for learning at Branches' Summer Shade Camp! They stayed active with outdoor games and enjoyed a series of fun field trips, exploring museums, water parks, and even visiting a movie theater. Each day started with Fiesta and ended with Fêt, where students sang and danced to Christian songs and original Branches tunes, cherishing every moment. This year, we celebrated a record 46 Branches high school students who served as Summer Shade Camp Guides, mentoring younger campers. One guide, Jeyvin Garcia, 18, shared, "I love being a Summer Shade Camp Guide because I love working with kids, dancing, and singing with them. This job has also taught me a lot about responsibilities and time management."

Our students continued to grow over the summer, engaging in financial wellness, arts and crafts, reading, and math. We're immensely grateful to our partners and donors for supporting Branches, helping to prevent summer learning loss, and preparing children for the upcoming school year with essential academic support. Check out Branches' social media for all the Summer Shade joy at @branchesfl.



Climb Higher Scholarships

We are thrilled to congratulate our outstanding seniors from all three Branches sites on their high school graduation! In recognition of their hard work and dedication, these exceptional students were awarded the Branches Climb Higher Scholarship. This scholarship is more than just financial aid; it's a crucial resource that empowers our graduates to achieve their post-secondary educational goals. The Climb Higher Scholarship plays a vital role in bridging the financial gaps that can hinder students from fully embracing their college experience. It covers essential expenses such as books, meals, laundry, and even the occasional night out, allowing students to focus on their studies and personal growth. This support is transformative, creating a "family support" system that encourages our graduates to strive for excellence and reach new heights in their educational journey.

Thank you to Trish and Dan Bell for their unwavering support in launching this life-changing scholarship program. Your generosity is not only making dreams come true but also laying the foundation for a brighter future for our first-generation college students. Congratulations to all our scholarship recipients—your journey is just beginning, and we are excited to see all that you will accomplish!



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

All other donors from the current Fiscal Year (6/13/24-9/20/24) are listed at branchesfl.org/our-stories under Newsletters.

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Thank You, Branches Donors & Stakeholders!

List includes contributions received by Branches from June 13, 2024 to September 20, 2024. 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.

\$100,000 and up

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THANK YOU to the Junior Orange Bowl Committee and Mark, Migdal & Hayden for donating these amazing snack packs to our Branches students!

If you are interested in donating Sandwiches & Snack Packs to our students, please contact:

Sarah Pattison
305-442-8306 x 3003
spattison@branchesfl.org



Branches

Trish & Dan Bell Family
Empowerment Centers

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Branches

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24th Annual Thanksgiving Meal Delivery

On Thanksgiving Day (Thursday, November 28, 2024), we will prepare and deliver over 5,000 meals to feed individuals in need across Miami-Dade and Broward Counties. But we need your help!



Give here!

Scan the QR code to donate!

