Miami Bridge Youth & Family Services, Inc.

Miami-Dade's only 24-hour emergency shelter for runaway teens and youth escaping violence, abuse, neglect and human trafficking.

Monthly Electronic Newsletter
May 2016

We hear you... loud and clear!

Greetings,

Based on our recent newsletters, we've received the most positive feedback around stories about the youth we serve. As such, we are proud to present a new section of our newsletter entitled "Did you know?". In this section, we will present (5) quick facts or stories relating to what we do or the youth we serve.

We can't wait to hear what you think.

All the best,

Dorcas

Miami Bridge Youth Testimonial

"The Bridge has helped to enlighten me on the things I do wrong and how I can fix them for myself and those around me. I am wiser and more mature which gives me the responsibility to better my peers and be a better person all around."

- Whitney, 16

Congratulations Dr. Wilcox

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We are so proud of our CEO - Dr. Dorcas Wilcox. She graduated and celebrated her birthday at our Central Campus on Saturday, May 7th, surrounded by her entire family. #WeAreFamily #MiamiBridge

Human Trafficking Forum

Miami Bridge attended the Florida East Coast Baptist Association’s Human Trafficking Forum at New Generation Missionary Baptist Church in Opa Locka on May 19th.

We are grateful to these members of the community, including the Federal, State and Local Government officials who, like Miami Bridge, do what they can to combat the human trafficking problems in our communities.

Memorial Day Party

- One of the youth entering our shelter for protection was shot at 5 times and has been truant for 2 months.
- We have human trafficking survivors in our shelter right now.
- Last month, we served 72 truant youth and their families.
- We have over 400 referrals of truant families waiting to be served.
- We had to Baker Act two of our youth for mental health breakdowns recently.

For questions or comments, please click here.

THANK YOU!!!

May Donors

Adrian Bada
Alexander Lian, P.A.
Alina Brady
Amy Zambrano
Angelica D. Zayas
Bonded Lightning Protection Systems, Inc.
Braman Family 2011 Charitable Foundation
Carnival Arts
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Feiler & Leach, P.L.
Florida International University
Greenspoon Marder
Jacqueline Rodriguez
James Dossing
Jose Cuellar
Juan Cordeno
Many thanks to David Pavon, with Evolusion Karaoke, for throwing a Memorial Day BBQ for our youth at our Homestead location. We are grateful you took the time to cook for our youth. Of course, there was some karaoke involved as well as dancing and fellowship. Youth from both shelters had a great time celebrating Memorial Day, while many of the regular staff were off for the day.

Miami International Airport Art Exhibit

The youth were privileged to perform at Carnival Arts End of Year showcase. The Carnival Arts program started in September 2015 with Barry University. The exhibit at the Miami International Airport was presented by Laurie Wynn and Alec Lindenauer, Law Offices of Marcia Del Rey, Lewis Mertz, Esq., Loretta Lewin, Marimuthu Canino, Lyzette Fuentes, Mariana Bernardinez, Michael and Ronnie Levine, Philanthropic Fund, Morgan, Lewis & Bockius, Patricia Corp, Phillip Alejo, Provider Network Solutions, Teresa Canias, The Russell and Ronalle Galbut Family Foundation, and The South Tech Academy Gay Straight Alliance.

Volunteer Opportunities

We encourage our community to volunteer and participate with our youth. Any assistance can make a difference in a child’s life.

Here are ways you can help:

- Data entry (up to 10 hours per week)
- Become a mentor through our Mentoring Program
- Tutor our youth
- Give a youth job training
- Plan an activity for our children and teens

Volunteer Event:

Dinner is an opportunity to dine and fellowship with the Bridge Family. We are looking for individuals, families, or groups to come in, prepare dinner and eat with our wonderful staff and kids. We can provide the food or you may bring your own food as well! Please note: Uncooked food must be prepared on our premises. We WILL welcome you with a huge smile and a loving environment.

The volunteer hours for cooking dinner for the youth are 4:30 PM to 7:30 PM (daily).

If you would like to volunteer, serve as a mentor or plan an activity for our youth, please call 305.636-3529 or email info@miamibridge.org.

Shelter Needs

Many of our children arrive with little to no personal belongings. We can always use NEW pajamas and

Laurie Wynn and Alec Lindenauer
Law Offices of Marcia Del Rey
Lewis Mertz, Esq.
Loretta Lewin
Lourdes Canino
Lyzette Fuentes
Mariana Bernardinez
Michael and Ronnie Levine
Philanthropic Fund
Morgan, Lewis & Bockius
Patricia Corp
Phillip Alejo
Provider Network Solutions
Teresa Canias
The Russell and Ronalle Galbut Family Foundation
The South Tech Academy Gay Straight Alliance
Miami Airport showcases work made by our youth since the beginning of the program.

While this season has come to an end, we look forward to partnering with Barry University and Carnival Arts in the future.

**Flying Solo Workshop**

As part of What if Works new Flying Solo program, FIU alumni professional actors mentored six of our youth, under the direction of FIU Professor Phillip Church, in the process of research, writing and developing a solo performance based on a character of their choosing. The two-day workshop resulted in six short pieces being shared with family and friends at the Seminole Theater in Homestead.

What if Works is a 501c not-for-profit, community-engaged post-graduate company offering young artists in theater, film and music a bridge by which to travel from an academic environment to the professional world of performance while championing the arts to bring about social change.

**Comcast Cares**

Many thanks to Comcast, who provided 42 massive boxes containing more than 2,000 snack bags for our youth and the families we serve through our First Stop for Families Outreach Programs.

**Barry University Move Out Drive**

undergarments. New sneakers are always helpful too. Your donations are very much appreciated!
Many thanks to students and faculty who participated in Barry University’s Move Out Drive. Miami Bridge was one of the lucky recipients of donations from this project. We received new, unused toiletries for our youth. Many youth enter the shelter with just the clothes on their back or very limited belongings. These hygienic products - like feminine supplies, shampoo, toothpaste, bath soap - are the little things that help in a big way!

Read more about Barry University’s Move Out Drive here: Barry University

Pizza Party!

Miami Bridge had a pizza party thanks to the mother of one of the youth staying at our shelter. She surprised us with pizza for all our youth and our staff. Thank you!!

Rock Odyssey

Thank you to the Arsht Center for donating these tickets to Miami Bridge. We enjoyed the dress rehearsal of the Rock Odyssey performance, a fast and funny theatrical adaptation of Homer’s Odyssey that transforms the epic work into a rock musical for young students.

Youth Mentoring
Thank you to Sunny Odogwu, Miami Hurricane offensive lineman, who came to speak to our youth to inspire them with his testimony. He grew up in Nigeria, without electricity and water. He "never slept on a bed" - sharing a "a 10x10" sleeping space with three brothers, three sisters and four other family members in his village of Ezeagu - until he came to the United States after his father died in 2009.

He played football for the first time as a senior in high school. After some struggle to learn the game, and control his temper, he is now a valuable player for a top team - one we Miami people are very proud of. His is a story, with a happy ending, that many of our youth can relate to in some way. Thank you for inspiring hope of greatness in the lives of our youth.

Did you know we have a mentoring program at Miami Bridge, every Tuesday night, led by our Board Member Alfred Karram, Jr.? To get involved, please contact Lina Aguirre at 305-635-8953.

Read more about Sunny Odogwu here: Miami Herald

Karaoke Night

Our Galleria Grant has enabled us to host Karaoke Night on an on-going, regular basis for our youth. The kids really enjoy singing with each other and with staff.

Marlins Game
Our youth had a blast at the Marlins vs. Phillies game on Mother’s Day. Although our team did not win, the entire experience was new and exciting for the youth who attended.

The average length of stay for our youth is about 14 days, so while our newsletter community may see us attending Marlins games frequently, the truth is we are enriching the experiences of a different group of youth each time.

**Yoga Gangsters**

Miami Bridge continues its partnership with Yoga Gangsters. This month was a rainy one so we took the yoga activities inside for a change.

**Lupus Awareness Day**

Homestead was seeing purple on May 20th for "Put on Purple - Lupus Awareness Day" We had a luncheon and the youth did a presentation to celebrate our very own Lupus survivor - Chasity Hart.

**Soccer Game**
Miami Bridge youth enjoyed the Columbia vs. Haiti soccer game at the Miami Marlins Stadium. Many thanks to Rafael Licea of Cardenas Marketing Network for securing these tickets for our youth.

**Fun with Hula Hoops**

"It's the little things in life."

In anticipation of summer, Miami Bridge purchased some hula hoops for our youth. We have already made use of them - competition style. Our Master Shift Leader, Antoinette, was schooled by our youth on the art of hula hooping. In a Kids vs. Staff competition, the kids prevailed and got a competitive boost to their self-esteem in the process.

Summer means school is out for our kids - so we are actively seeking fun things to keep them busy. If you have an activity that you think would benefit our youth, please contact us at info@miamibridge.org.

**WBPT-2 Issues**

Our very own Steve Hope sat with Issues to discuss the impact of recent federal cuts to local resources for the homeless.
We are accepting candidates for the Board of Directors. For more information please email mjohnson@miamibridge.org or call (305) 636-3520.

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