



Board of Directors Meeting

Monday, January 22, 2024

4:00 p.m.

Location:

**United Way – Ryder Room
3250 S.W. 3rd Avenue (Coral Way)**





Board of Directors Meeting

Monday, January 22, 2024
3250 S.W. 3rd Avenue (Coral Way)
United Way – Ryder Room
4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Board of Directors

Kenneth C. Hoffman
Chair
Pamela Hollingsworth
Vice-Chair
Mark A. Trowbridge
Treasurer
Marissa Leichter
Secretary

Edward Abraham, M.D.
Laura Adams
Islamiyat Nancy Adebisi
Matthew Arsenault
Daniel Bagner, Ph.D.
Hon. Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall, Ph.D.
Morris Copeland
Norie del Valle
Lourdes Diaz
Richard P. Dunn II
Jacqueline Exceus
Gilda Ferradaz
Hon. Norman S. Gerstein (Ret.)
Lourdes P. Gimenez
Nicole Gomez
Valrose Graham
Mindy Grimes-Festge
Hon. Keon Hardemon
Malou C. Harrison, Ph.D.
Nelson Hincapie
Annie R. Neasman
Maria Norton
Clara Lora Ospina, Psy.D.
Ashna Paudel
Hon. Orlando Prescott
Javier Reyes
Hon. Alex Rizo
Hon. Isaac Salver

David Lawrence Jr.
Founding Chair

James R. Haj
President & CEO

County Attorney's Office
Legal Counsel

AGENDA

4:00 p.m. **Welcome and Opening Remarks**
Kenneth C. Hoffman
Chair

4:03 p.m. **Public Comments**
Kenneth C. Hoffman
Chair

4:10 p.m. **Approval of November 13, 2023 Board of Directors minutes summary**
(Additional Items Packet) (Pgs. 4-5)
Marissa Leichter
Secretary

4:15 p.m. **Appreciation for Outstanding Service to The Children's Trust**
Kenneth C. Hoffman
Chair
James R. Haj
President/CEO

- *Morris Copeland, Mayor of Miami-Dade County Designee*
- *Annie R. Neasman, Gubernatorial Appointee*

4:20 p.m. **Nominating Committee Report**
• *Approval of the slate of the four board officers' positions*
Dr. Daniel Bagner
Committee Chair

4:25 p.m. **Program Services Committee Report**
Pamela Hollingsworth
Committee Chair

Early Childhood Presentation

James R. Haj
President/CEO
Rachel Spector
Director of Programs

Resolution 2024-17: Authorization to negotiate and execute contracts with the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe, Miami-Dade County Community Action and Human Services Department, and the United Way of Miami-Dade, for local match funding for the federal Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership (EHS-CCP) grant, in a total amount

The public is allowed to comment on a specific agenda item but must register with the Clerk of the Board prior to being allowed to comment.

not to exceed \$2,270,000.00, for a term of 12 months, commencing October 1, 2024, and ending September 30, 2025. *(Pgs. 6-7)*

Resolution 2024-18: Authorization to negotiate and execute a contract with the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe (ELC) for local match funding for the State of Florida School Readiness Program Match grant, in a total amount not to exceed \$1,230,000.00, for a term of 12 months, commencing October 1, 2024, and ending September 30, 2025. *(Pgs. 8-9)*

Resolution 2024-19: Authorization to negotiate and execute contract renewals with six providers, identified herein, for early childhood community research demonstration projects within high-need communities, in a total amount not to exceed \$1,939,358.00, for a term of 12 months, commencing October 1, 2024, and ending September 30, 2025, with one remaining contract renewal. *(Pgs. 10-14)*

Resolution 2024-20: Authorization to negotiate and execute a contract with Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA) for local match funding to draw down federal-state funds to subsidize early child care, in a total amount not to exceed \$102,000.00, for a term of 12 months, commencing October 1, 2024, and ending September 30, 2025. *(Pgs. 15-16)*

Resolution 2024-21: Authorization to negotiate and execute a contract with the University of Miami-Nova Southeastern University (UM-NSU) Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD) for autism spectrum disorders (ASD) diagnostic evaluation services, in a total amount not to exceed \$264,000.00, for a term of 12 months, commencing October 1, 2024, and ending September 30, 2025. *(Pgs. 17-18)*

Resolution 2024-22: Authorization to negotiate and execute a contract renewal with the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine (UM) in an amount not to exceed \$1,500,000.00 for comprehensive early intervention services for children with mild developmental delays who do not meet eligibility requirements for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) parts B or C, for a term of 12 months, commencing October 1, 2024, and ending September 30, 2025. *(Pgs. 19-20)*

Resolution 2024-23: Authorization to waive the formal competitive procurement process and to amend resolution #2023-38 and the current contract with Blossom Group Florida LLC, for Youth Development services, starting from January 23, 2024, to the end of the contract term, August 14, 2024, in order to add a subcontractor, Los Pinos Nuevos Christian Corp., and to provide youth development services to 30 elementary school students, rather than high school students. *(Pgs. 21-22)*

5:55 p.m. **CEO Report**

James R. Haj
President & CEO

- *Quarterly CEO Report (Pg. 23)*
- *Monthly Media Highlights (Pgs. 24-30)*
- *Board Retreat - Thursday, February 22, 2024 (8:30 am – 12:30 pm)*
- *Champions for Children – Thursday, April 11, 2024*
Double Tree by Hilton Miami Airport & Convention Center
711 NW 72nd Avenue, Miami, FL 33126

6:00 p.m. **Adjourn**

Reminder:

Next Board Meeting/Board Retreat: *Thursday, February 22, 2024

The public is allowed to comment on a specific agenda item but must register with the Clerk of the Board prior to being allowed to comment.



**Board of Directors Meeting
Summary of Actions Taken
November 13, 2023
4:00 p.m.**

These actions were taken by the Board of Directors of The Children's Trust meeting held on November 13, 2023:

Please note that the number of board members fluctuate based on arrival and departure of some of them throughout the meeting.

Motion to approve the October 16, 2023, Board minutes summaries was made by Hon. Isaac Salver and seconded by Hon. Norman Gerstein. Motion passed unanimously, 18-0.

Finance & Operations Committee Report

Resolution 2024-10: Motion to approve the resolution was made by Hon. Isaac Salver and seconded by Hon. Norman Gerstein. Authorization to enter into a sponsorship agreement with Actors' Playhouse at the Miracle Theatre Inc. for presenting sponsorship of the Young Talent Big Dreams talent search, in an amount not to exceed \$65,000.00, for a term of 10 months, commencing on December 1, 2023, and ending on September 30, 2024. **Motion passed, 20-0. Recusal by Mark Trowbridge.**

Resolution 2024-11: Motion to approve the resolution was made by Annie R. Neasman and seconded by Marissa Leichter. Authorization to enter into a purchase agreement with Hitex Marketing Group, Inc. in a total amount not to exceed \$50,000.00, for The Children's Trust-branded promotional items for a term of 10 months, commencing on November 15, 2023, and ending on September 30, 2024. **Motion passed, 22-0.**

Resolution 2024-12: Motion to approve the resolution was made by Judge Orlando Prescott and seconded by Javier Reyes. Authorization to negotiate and execute a contract renewal with Armstrong Creative Consulting, Inc. for event planning services, in a total amount not to exceed \$290,000.00, for a term of 10 months, commencing on December 1, 2023, ending on September 30, 2024, with one remaining 12-month renewal. **Motion passed, 22-0.**

Resolution 2024-13: Motion to approve the resolution was made by Hon. Isaac Salver and seconded by Judge Orlando Prescott. Authorization for a procurement waiver from a formal competitive solicitation to enter into a purchase agreement with DoubleTree by Hilton Miami Airport Convention Center in a total amount not to exceed \$69,565.54 inclusive of a contingency of \$6,324.14, to host and cater the 2024 Champions for Children event. **Motion passed unanimously, 22-0.**

Resolution 2024-14: Motion to approve the resolution was made by Gilda Ferradaz and seconded by Dr. Daniel Bagner. Authorization for the expenditure of dues for membership in the Florida Association of Children's Councils and Trusts (FACCT) in an amount not to exceed \$85,000.00, inclusive of training and analytics tools to support public policy initiatives for a term of 12 months, commencing retroactively October 1, 2023, and ending September 30, 2024. **Motion passed unanimously, 22-0.**

Resolution 2024-15: Motion to approve the resolution was made by Hon. Norman Gerstein and seconded by Lourdes P. Gimenez. Authorization to amend resolution #2023-43 and to execute contract amendments with Miami-Dade Family Learning Partnership, Inc. and All in One Mail Shop, Inc. d/b/a All in One Direct Marketing Solutions for the support and maintenance of a birth to five book club, to add an additional \$1,000,000.00 to the contract amount, for a new total contract amount not to exceed \$3,602,239.00, and to correct/clarify that there are no remaining 12-month renewals on this agreement. Authorization to amend the FY 2023-2024 budget to increase the total allocations of Book Club to accommodate the increase in funding. **Motion passed unanimously, 21-0. Recusal by Dr. Daniel Bagner.**

Resolution 2024-16: Motion to approve the resolution was made by Dr. Edward Abraham and seconded by Annie R. Neasman. Authorization to release competitive solicitations, in alignment with the board's strategic priorities and projected available funding, across multiple investment areas with funding cycles that have ended or are ending within the 2023-2024 fiscal year. **Motion passed, 22-0.**

The meeting adjourned at 4:51 p.m.

The Children’s Trust Board Meeting

Date: January 22, 2024

Resolution: 2024-17

Strategic Framework Priority Investment Area: Thrive by 5 Early Childhood Development: Early Child Care & Education Match Slots

Strategic Framework Headline Community Results: High-quality early learning opportunities; Regular use of medical, dental and behavioral health care services; Nurturing and involved parents; Kindergarten readiness; and Good choices for prosocial behaviors in schools, homes and communities.

Recommended Action: Authorization to negotiate and execute contracts with the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe, Miami-Dade County Community Action and Human Services Department, and the United Way of Miami-Dade, for local match funding for the federal Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership (EHS-CCP) grant, in a total amount not to exceed \$2,270,000.00, for a term of 12 months, commencing October 1, 2024, and ending September 30, 2025.

Budget Impact: Funding in the amount of \$2,270,000.00 for this resolution is projected to be available for 2024-2025.

Description of Services: This authorization will award the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe, Miami-Dade County Community Action and Human Services Department, and the United Way of Miami-Dade \$2,270,000.00 in match funds for 2,062 high-quality early learning slots. The match funds are used to leverage federal funding for infant and toddler care through the EHS-CCP Grant. Children served must be Miami-Dade County residents and meet the eligibility requirements of the EHS-CCP grant. Enrollment criteria prioritize children living in families earning below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), ages birth to two years, and those experiencing life stressors. Children receive health, mental health, nutrition, and family support services. Family advocates also work closely to address each family’s unique needs and help them achieve self-sufficiency. A minimum of 10 percent of children served must have diagnosed disabilities (regardless of income).

Background: Since 1965, the federal Head Start program has provided comprehensive early education and support services for three- and four-year-old children living in families earning below the FPL. In recognition of the importance of the earliest years in children’s development, the Early Head Start (EHS) program was established in 1994 to serve children from birth to three years of age.

In 2014, the federal government made \$650,000,000.00 available to expand EHS services nationally. These funds were awarded competitively to grantees nationwide to expand access to high-quality, comprehensive services for infants and toddlers living in families earning below the FPL.

The table below represents each funded agency's funding amount and leveraged dollars. All three agencies are in year one of a five-year federal grant cycle. Service delivery continues to be satisfactory, and all slots are being utilized.

AGENCY	MATCH FUNDING	LEVERAGED DOLLARS
Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe	\$650,000.00	\$12,039,388.00
Miami-Dade County Community Action and Human Services Department	\$850,000.00	\$13,271,724.00
United Way of Miami-Dade	\$770,000.00	\$9,891,139.00
TOTAL	\$2,270,000.00	\$35,202,251.00

Per the procurement policy, section 2006, Match Funding and Funder Collaboration, the negotiation and execution of a match contract are exempt from the competitive solicitation process. Renewal of match funding beyond the initial contract term is at the sole discretion of The Children’s Trust. It shall be contingent upon satisfactory performance evaluations, quality program results, outcome achievements, availability of funding, and an ability to maintain the underlying primary funding source(s).

Geographic Area: Countywide.

The foregoing recommendation was offered by _____ who moved its approval. The motion was seconded by _____ and upon being put to a vote, the vote was as follows:

The Chairperson thereupon declared the resolution duly passed and adopted this **22nd day of January 2024.**

THE CHILDREN’S TRUST
MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA

BY _____

SECRETARY

Approved by County Attorney for form and legal sufficiency _____

The Children's Trust Board Meeting

Date: January 22, 2024

Resolution: 2024-18

Strategic Framework Priority Investment Area: Thrive by 5 Early Childhood Development: Early Child Care & Education Match Slots

Strategic Framework Headline Community Results: High-quality early learning opportunities; Nurturing and involved parents; Kindergarten readiness; and Good choices for prosocial behaviors in schools, homes and communities.

Recommended Action: Authorization to negotiate and execute a contract with the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe (ELC) for local match funding for the State of Florida School Readiness Program Match grant, in a total amount not to exceed \$1,230,000.00, for a term of 12 months, commencing October 1, 2024, and ending September 30, 2025.

Budget Impact: Funding in the amount of \$1,230,000.00 for this resolution is projected to be available in FY 2024-2025.

Description of Services: The School Readiness Program Match (SRPM) is a public/private partnership that helps employers meet the needs of working parents. Through this program, federal and state funding is "matched" with contributions from local governments, charitable foundations, and participating businesses on a dollar-for-dollar basis to provide childcare services for participating families.

The Florida SRPM purchasing pool fund is a general funding source to assist eligible low-to-moderate wage families earning up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level to access childcare subsidies. This ceiling is slightly higher than the basic school readiness subsidy eligibility criteria of 150 percent. SRPM allows families to access a portion of the subsidy even if they receive a pay raise. Funds contributed locally are matched dollar-for-dollar by the state and distributed according to ELC priorities. The ELC prioritizes assisting families/individuals with younger children, children with disabilities, children of teen parents, and families experiencing other significant life stressors. All funds matched by The Children's Trust are solely used for residents of Miami-Dade County.

The annual cost per slot is estimated at \$5,000.00, including \$3,500.00 in subsidy, plus an expected family sliding scale co-pay of about \$1,500.00, which depends on the family's income. More than one child might use one slot for a year. Recipients of SRPM subsidy funding must attend programs with a Gold Seal designation by the Department of Children and Families.

Background: The Children's Trust provides this local match funding according to the terms and conditions set forth above to assist the ELC in drawing down the maximum funding from the state's SRPM childcare subsidy program (formerly known as Childcare Executive Partnership). The Children's Trust contributed a dollar-for-dollar match during the past 14 contract periods. This match supports childcare services for more than 375 children. Childcare

programs participating in SRPM are located throughout Miami-Dade County. All slots are being fully utilized.

Procurement Policy: Per the procurement policy, section 2006 Match Funding and Funder Collaboration, the negotiation and execution of a match contract are exempt from the competitive solicitation process. Renewal of match funding beyond the initial contract term is at the sole discretion of The Children’s Trust. It shall be contingent upon satisfactory performance evaluations, quality program results, outcome achievements, availability of funding, and an ability to maintain the underlying primary funding source(s).

Geographic Area: Countywide.

The foregoing recommendation was offered by _____ who moved its approval. The motion was seconded by _____ and upon being put to a vote, the vote was as follows:

The Chairperson thereupon declared the resolution duly passed and adopted this **22nd day of January 2024.**

THE CHILDREN’S TRUST
MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA

BY _____
SECRETARY

Approved by County Attorney for form and legal sufficiency _____

The Children’s Trust Board Meeting

Date: January 22, 2024

Resolution: 2024-19

Strategic Framework Priority Investment Area: Thrive by 5 Early Childhood Development: Community research partnerships

Strategic Framework Headline Community Results: High-quality early learning opportunities; Regular use of medical, dental, and behavioral health care services; Nurturing and involved parents; Kindergarten readiness; and Good choices for prosocial behaviors in schools, homes and communities.

Recommended Action: Authorization to negotiate and execute contract renewals with six providers, identified herein, for early childhood community research demonstration projects within high-need communities, in a total amount not to exceed \$1,939,358.00, for a term of 12 months, commencing October 1, 2024, and ending September 30, 2025, with one remaining contract renewal.

Budget Impact: Funding in the amount of \$1,939,358.00 for this resolution is projected to be available for FY 2024-2025.

Description of Services: The early childhood community research demonstration projects support early childhood development by implementing and evaluating programs involving high-need populations and underserved communities in Miami-Dade County. These projects require active partnerships between community-based early childhood organizations and qualified research partners. Funding is invested in high-quality program implementation and rigorous program evaluation or research that can contribute meaningfully to learning about what works within the local community using participatory research methods. Projects are expected to build evidence that will contribute to the scaling and sustainability of successful practices outside of The Children’s Trust funding. Funding in this solicitation is not intended to support ongoing service delivery but must facilitate a rigorous program evaluation.

Activities are unique to each community-based research demonstration project, as noted in the descriptions below. All designs consider the diversity of Miami-Dade County’s local neighborhoods, including differences in resiliencies and challenges based on where children are born and raised. Community-based services occur in schools, child care centers or home-based locations. Projects are expected to demonstrate positive teacher, family and/or child-level outcomes. The goal is to identify, implement, and evaluate strong early childhood programs and practices that demonstrate equitable outcomes for all young children related to The Trust’s headline community results noted above. Kindergarten readiness includes the domains of language/literacy/communication, cognition, approaches to learning, physical health/motor development, self-help and social/emotional development. Some projects explore ways to reduce racial and social disparities evident in early childhood. Investing in early childhood community research demonstration projects provides for testing and evaluating early childhood development models within local neighborhoods and developing practices specifically with and for Miami-Dade County’s unique diversity of children, families, caregivers, and early learning workforce.

The contracted agencies listed in the table below are recommended for renewal.

Contracted Agency	Partners	Project Description	Amount Not to Exceed
Florida International University (FIU) Board of Trustees	<p>Community Partner: The Gathering Place</p> <p>Research Partners: Florida International University Behavioral Science Research Institute</p>	<p>The Gathering Place is a community space that offers birth and postpartum doulas, childbirth education, breastfeeding counseling, support groups, workshops, and trainings. FIU’s Black Mother’s Care Plan-Reducing Racial Bias and Supporting Maternal and Infant Health (BMCP) project is an interdisciplinary partnership that combats racial bias against African American women in obstetric patient care. BMCP convenes local doulas, midwives, and Black community members with obstetric care experience to design a toolkit to educate aspiring and current health professionals from across Miami-Dade and to reduce racial bias and disparities in health care, implementing it through in-person workshops.</p> <p>*FIU, The Gathering Place, and Behavioral Science Research Institute receive funding through this project.</p>	\$273,387.00
Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Inc.	<p>Community Partner: Miami Lighthouse for the Blind</p> <p>Research Partner: University of Miami</p>	<p>The Miami Lighthouse Equity in Education for Miami’s Visually Impaired Students and their Sighted Peers project builds on research that developed a best practice model in inclusive early learning environments for visually impaired students. Teacher-child interactions and Conscious Discipline classroom activities lead to changes in teacher classroom practices that are expected to improve children’s social and emotional skills. In addition, family engagement leads to an increased knowledge of social and emotional strategies that promote positive behaviors for children at home. The end goal is to change the mindsets of adults, creating a caring, safe learning school community, healthy relationships, and supporting families to promote parallel connections with children at home.</p> <p>*Both Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and the University of Miami receive funding from this contract.</p>	\$273,157.00

Contracted Agency	Partners	Project Description	Amount Not to Exceed
Reading and Math, Inc.	<p>Community Partners: Miami-Dade County Public Schools</p> <p>Inter-American Learning Center</p> <p>Excel Kids Academy</p> <p>Research Partner: University of North Carolina</p>	<p>Reading and Math, Inc.'s Florida Reading Corps program combines literacy and numeracy science with the people power of AmeriCorps to boost more PreK students onto a path of reading and math proficiency by the end of third grade, especially those who identify as Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) or in households that are earning lower incomes. The program is implemented in the community partners sites. Previous research found replicable evidence that the program significantly improves students' literacy skills. Now the program has evolved to integrate math content. The aim is to ensure the program operates in a maximally equitable manner for all students, especially for Black and Latino students, multi-lingual learners, and/or students growing up in socioeconomically disadvantaged households.</p> <p>*Reading and Math, Inc. and University of North Carolina receive funding from this project.</p>	\$282,000.00
Sundari Foundation, Inc.	<p>Community Partner: Lotus Village</p> <p>Research Partner: Florida International University (FIU)</p>	<p>The Sundari Foundation, Inc. operates the Prenatal and Early Childhood Development Research Project at the Lotus Village to: 1) increase understanding of the developmental, social and emotional wellbeing (mental health) and trauma of homeless children (birth-5) and mothers/ expecting mothers; 2) improve child developmental status and social and emotional wellbeing, reduce impacts of trauma, and improve mother-child relationships by providing supportive services to children and mothers; 3) evaluate the effectiveness of service interventions to optimally support sheltered children and mothers, with adaptations needed for those experiencing homelessness and their service providers; and 4) raise public awareness of the needs of sheltered children and mothers and the value of evidence-based practices to support early childhood development, well-being, and school readiness and improve the lives of children and families experiencing homelessness. FIU will evaluate the program implementation.</p>	\$423,076.00

Contracted Agency	Partners	Project Description	Amount Not to Exceed
		*Sundari Foundation, Inc. and FIU receive funding from this project.	
University of Miami Department of Psychology (UM)	<p>Community Partners: Overtown Children and Youth Coalition Connect Familias Sant La</p> <p>Research Partners: University of Miami Behavioral Science Research Institute</p>	<p>UM’s Integrated Data for Effectiveness Across Systems (IDEAS) to Action: A Learning Network to Map Early Childhood Resilience and Drive Equity creates a learning network with formalized outreach channels using local, state, and national dissemination strategies. Using a strengths-based, whole child framework, the IDEAS to ACTION has two goals. First, to develop and implement a population-based measure that can be mapped geographically to study school readiness and community factors that contribute to resilience over time in Miami-Dade County neighborhoods. The project plans to assess the impact of COVID-19 on these outcomes pre- and post-pandemic. The second goal is to implement a data-to-action process that enables communities and schools to access and utilize data for decision-making, allocate funding for at-risk areas, and guide policies to improve children’s school readiness. Community partners will utilize the data to develop implementation plans to support children’s school readiness.</p> <p>*UM, Behavioral Science Research Institute, Overtown Children and Youth Coalition, ConnectFamilias, and Sant La receive funding through this project.</p>	\$320,940.00
University of Miami Miller School of Medicine (UM)	<p>Community Partners: UM Debbie School UM Linda Ray Intervention Center Easter Seals United Community Options The Arc of South Florida</p> <p>Research Partner:</p>	<p>UM’s Multi-tiered System Supports (MTSS) for Families and Educators to Support Child Social-Emotional Functioning and School Readiness program builds on four years of successful partnership between UM and five birth-to-2 early childhood special education programs throughout Miami-Dade that predominantly serve racial and ethnic minority children with disabilities. UM implements the program at the community partners’ sites.</p> <p>The evolution of the Teacher-Child Interaction Therapy (TCIT) program seeks to address these needs by developing, implementing, and evaluating a culturally responsive and sustainable MTSS that integrates TCIT and evidence-based parenting interventions at three levels of intensity to promote positive behavioral and</p>	\$366,798.00

Contracted Agency	Partners	Project Description	Amount Not to Exceed
	University of Miami	social-emotional functioning in young children with disabilities. *UM and each of the community partners receive funding though this project.	

Background: The table below shows aggregate numbers of participants served across all projects during the 2022-23 contract year.

Measure	2022-2023			
	Children	Parents	Teachers	Staff/Other
Participants enrolled in intervention	2,229	9	195	23
Participants receiving screenings or assessments	2,353	204	334	16
Participants trained	N/A	47	188	302
Participants coached	N/A	N/A	109	100
Participants attending events (not training or coaching)	479	491	41	34

The Children’s Trust issued Request for Proposals (RFP) #2021-06 on March 8, 2021, to fund active community research partnerships. Following a comprehensive review, the six agencies listed above demonstrated their capacity, expertise, and qualifications to provide the services. These projects use community-based participatory research frameworks focused on implementing and evaluating evidence-based or promising practices supporting early child development within high-need communities.

Each program is performing satisfactorily and meeting all contract deliverables. The agencies are all engaged with their community partners and have recruited the appropriate number of participants. Activities are being delivered as contracted, and research projects are well underway.

Geographic Area: Countywide.

The foregoing recommendation was offered by _____ who moved its approval. The motion was seconded by _____ and upon being put to a vote, the vote was as follows:

The Chairperson thereupon declared the resolution duly passed and adopted this **22nd day of January 2024.**

THE CHILDREN’S TRUST
MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA

BY _____
SECRETARY

Approved by County Attorney for form and legal sufficiency _____

The Children’s Trust Board Meeting

Date: January 22, 2024

Resolution: 2024-20

Strategic Framework Priority Investment Area: Thrive by 5 Early Childhood Development: Early Child Care & Education Match Slots

Strategic Framework Headline Community Results: High-quality early learning opportunities; Nurturing and involved parents; Kindergarten readiness; and Good choices for prosocial behaviors in schools, homes and communities.

Recommended Action: Authorization to negotiate and execute a contract with Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA) for local match funding to draw down federal-state funds to subsidize early child care, in a total amount not to exceed \$102,000.00, for a term of 12 months, commencing October 1, 2024, and ending September 30, 2025.

Budget Impact: Funding in the amount of \$102,000.00 for this resolution is projected to be available for FY 2024-2025.

Description of Services: This authorization will provide local match funding to assist the Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA) in drawing down the maximum amount of federal-state childcare development funds through Florida’s Division of Early Learning (DEL). The funds subsidize childcare for the “working poor,” a group federally designated as people who spend 27 weeks or more in a year in the labor force working or looking for work but whose incomes fall below the poverty level.

A six percent local match is required to draw down the portion of early childcare subsidy funds allocated for working poor farmworker families. Each match dollar draws down \$16.00 from DEL, leading to a \$1,632,000.00 draw-down for the \$102,000.00 requested match. This funds over 400 childcare slots, estimated at \$4,000.00 each. Throughout the year, parents must contribute an additional \$1,000.00 co-pay. RCMA will serve approximately 650 children during the contract year. More than one child may use a slot during the year, and match contributions are invoiced for specific sets of children receiving the subsidy.

Background: RCMA is a non-profit, non-sectarian organization funded through public and private sources, including DEL, United Way, public schools, county governments, children’s services councils, agribusinesses, corporate entities, and individual donors. RCMA provides high-quality childcare and early education for children of migrant and seasonal farmworkers and low-income families living in rural areas throughout Florida. RCMA was founded in 1965 by Mennonite Church volunteers in the Redlands farming area of southern Miami-Dade County to provide a safe, nurturing environment for children while their parents worked in the fields. RCMA serves nearly 6,500 children in more than 66 centers in 21 counties. More than 450 children are on waiting lists statewide.

During the past 17 contract periods, The Children’s Trust has contributed local match funding to RCMA. The total estimated local match needed by RCMA in Miami-Dade County for this fiscal year is \$228,000.00, and Miami-Dade County provides \$118,000.00 for this match. The recommendation is for The Children’s Trust to offer an annual match of \$102,000.00 to leverage the full federal amount. RCMA secures the additional \$8,000.00 match from other sources.

Procurement Policy: Per the procurement policy, section 2006, Match Funding and Funder Collaboration, the negotiation and execution of a match contract are exempt from the competitive solicitation process. Renewal of match funding beyond the initial contract term is at the sole discretion of The Children’s Trust. It is contingent upon satisfactory performance evaluations, quality program results, outcome achievements, availability of funding, and an ability to maintain the underlying primary funding source(s). Service delivery continues to be satisfactory, and all slots are being utilized.

Geographic Area: Homestead and Florida City.

The foregoing recommendation was offered by _____ who moved its approval. The motion was seconded by _____ and upon being put to a vote, the vote was as follows:

The Chairperson thereupon declared the resolution duly passed and adopted this **22nd day of January 2024.**

THE CHILDREN’S TRUST
MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA

BY _____

SECRETARY

Approved by County Attorney for form and legal sufficiency _____

The Children's Trust Board Meeting

Date: January 22, 2024

Resolution: 2024-21

Strategic Framework Priority Investment Area: Thrive by 5 Early Childhood Development: Developmental screening, assessment, and early intervention.

Strategic Framework Headline Community Results: Regular use of medical, dental, and behavioral health care services; Kindergarten readiness; Academic success; and Good choices for prosocial behaviors in schools, homes and communities.

Recommended Action: Authorization to negotiate and execute a contract with the University of Miami-Nova Southeastern University (UM-NSU) Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD) for autism spectrum disorders (ASD) diagnostic evaluation services, in a total amount not to exceed \$264,000.00, for a term of 12 months, commencing October 1, 2024, and ending September 30, 2025.

Budget Impact: Funding in the amount of \$264,000.00 is projected to be available for FY 2024-2025.

Description of Services: Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) and the Florida Department of Health Early Steps providers often identify young children who need specialized evaluation due to complex behaviors and symptoms that suggest the presence of autism spectrum disorders (ASD). This funding supports comprehensive psychoeducational diagnostic evaluation services for children ages 2 through 5 years (before kindergarten entry), provided by UM-NSU CARD at a reduced unit cost. Evaluation services include the components listed below, and the current Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders and best practices in ASD assessment.

- Behavioral observations focused on social interaction, social communication skills, and restricted or repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities across settings.
- Social/developmental history based on an interview with parent(s) or guardian(s).
- Psychological evaluation that includes assessment of academic, intellectual, social-emotional, and behavioral functioning, as well as at least one standardized instrument specific to ASD, such as the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS) and/or the Autism Diagnostic Interview, Revised (ADI-R).
- Language evaluation that includes assessment of pragmatic (both verbal and nonverbal) and social interaction components of social communication.
- Observation of the child's social communication skills by a speech-language pathologist.
- Standardized assessment of adaptive behavior.
- Functional behavioral assessment.
- Parent feedback session with individualized recommendations related to needed interventions and/or specialized learning environments, as well as connection to ASD-related community resources.

This contract is based on a unit cost payment method of \$2,514.00 per completed comprehensive psychoeducational diagnostic evaluation. This is more than a 22-percent reduced rate from the standard fees at UM-NSU CARD for providing comprehensive evaluations of \$3,600.00 per child.

The table below summarizes the services provided during prior contract years.

Contract period	Children referred	Evaluations completed	Children with ASD diagnoses
2018-2019	111	99	85 (86%)
2019-2020	107	82	75 (91%)
2020-2021	145	99	84 (85%)
2021-2022	121	90	77 (86%)
2022-2023	110	77	64 (83%)

Background: UM-NSU CARD is one of seven state-funded, university-based outreach and support centers in Florida dedicated to optimizing the potential of people with ASD. UM-NSU CARD has worked collaboratively with M-DCPS, Early Steps, and The Children’s Trust to develop the referral criteria and processes to ensure that children needing specialty evaluation services without other means of accessing them are identified and referred for evaluation. Also, reporting processes have been established to track the use of diagnostic results for appropriate school placement and special education services.

Procurement Policy: Per The Children’s Trust’s procurement policy section 2000. General Purchasing and Procurement Policy, Exemptions to Formal Competitive Procurement Process (G-3), health services involving examination, diagnosis, and treatment are exempt from a formal competitive procurement process, and therefore, do not require a formal solicitation. UM-NSU CARD implemented the program for the past four years and satisfactorily meets all contractual requirements.

Geographic Area: Countywide.

The foregoing recommendation was offered by _____ who moved its approval. The motion was seconded by _____ and upon being put to a vote, the vote was as follows:

The Chairperson thereupon declared the resolution duly passed and adopted this **22nd day of January 2024.**

THE CHILDREN’S TRUST
MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA

BY _____

SECRETARY

Approved by County Attorney for form and legal sufficiency _____

The Children's Trust Board Meeting

Date: January 22, 2024

Resolution: 2024-22

Strategic Framework Priority Investment Area: Thrive by 5 Early Childhood Development: Developmental screening, assessment, and early intervention.

Strategic Framework Headline Community Results: Regular use of medical, dental, and behavioral health care services; Nurturing and Involved parents; Kindergarten readiness; and Good choices for prosocial behaviors in schools, homes and communities.

Recommended Action: Authorization to negotiate and execute a contract renewal with the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine (UM) in an amount not to exceed \$1,500,000.00 for comprehensive early intervention services for children with mild developmental delays who do not meet eligibility requirements for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) parts B or C, for a term of 12 months, commencing October 1, 2024, and ending September 30, 2025.

Budget Impact: Funding in the amount of \$1,500,000.00 for this resolution is projected to be available for FY 2024-2025.

Description of Services: The Early Discovery program provided by UM serves young children exhibiting mild developmental delays (10-29 percent) that are not severe enough to meet state eligibility criteria for federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) early intervention services. However, such children need and will benefit from early intervention services. Children are referred through Early Steps (for children under 36 months screened for Part C services) or the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS) for children 36 months and older screened for Part B services). Through Early Discovery, UM conducts domain-specific follow-up assessments for speech and language development, fine and gross motor skills, and social, emotional, and behavioral development.

Early Discovery offers short-term speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, and/or behavioral and developmental interventions based on identified needs in the areas of concern. Services typically range from 12 to 16 sessions, one to three times per week, for 30 to 60 minutes, as indicated in each child's individualized care plan. Additionally, Early Discovery offers care coordination for families, follow-up with parents, and a needs assessment for the child and family. The Early Discovery care coordinator ensures assessments are completed, services are provided, and timely follow-up assessments and referrals for other community resources. Early Discovery assists families with health insurance coverage (including Medicaid and private insurance) for early intervention services. If a family has insurance, Early Discovery helps navigate the insurance process, and The Children's Trust pays solely for services not covered by insurance.

Background: In the contract year 2022-2023, 413 children received an average of seven short-term intervention sessions. The sessions and assessments took place in-person and virtually via telehealth when appropriate and requested by the parent. Appropriate assessment tools were incorporated for the virtual format from March 2020. Early Discovery continues to offer telehealth as an option for families when requested.

2022-23 Child Outcome Improvements for:			
Speech and Language Skills	Social-Emotional Development	Gross and Fine Motor Skills	Overall Development
84% (247/294)	70% (19/27)	86% (36/42)	75% (33/44)

2021-22 Child Outcome Improvements for:			
Speech and Language Skills	Social-Emotional Development	Gross and Fine Motor Skills	Overall Development
83% (241/291)	95% (53/56)	88% (42/48)	85% (336/395)

Notably, in 2022-23, 84 percent of Early Discovery participants surveyed who were enrolled in public schools did not need special education placement. In 2021-22, 90 percent of Early Discovery participants surveyed who were enrolled in public schools did not need special education placement.

UM partners with the following subcontractors to provide several of the therapeutic service components described above:

- Florida Rehab Professionals Group, Inc.
- Sunshine Therapy Partners, LLC
- My Time, Inc.
- Therapy by Design, Inc.
- Adriana Tafur Services, Inc.
- Speech Pathology and Educational Center, Inc.

Procurement Policy: Per the procurement policy, Section 2000, General Purchasing and Procurement Policy, Exemptions to Formal Competitive Procurement Process (G-3), these health-related prevention services provided by the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, are exempt from The Children’s Trust competitive solicitation process. UM has successfully operated Early Discovery with Trust funding since 2007.

Geographic Area: Countywide.

The foregoing recommendation was offered by _____ who moved its approval. The motion was seconded by _____ and upon being put to a vote, the vote was as follows:

The Chairperson thereupon declared the resolution duly passed and adopted this **22nd day of January 2024.**

THE CHILDREN’S TRUST
MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA

BY _____
SECRETARY

Approved by County Attorney for form and legal sufficiency _____

The Children's Trust Board Meeting

Date: January 22, 2024

Resolution: 2024-23

Strategic Framework Priority Investment Area: Youth Development: K-12 After-school programs and summer camps.

Strategic Framework Headline Community Results: Academic success; Healthy lifestyle habits for eating, sleeping, physical activity and mental wellness; Good choices for prosocial behaviors in schools, homes and communities; Successful transition to adulthood.

Recommended Action: Authorization to waive the formal competitive procurement process and to amend resolution #2023-38 and the current contract with Blossom Group Florida LLC, for Youth Development services, starting from January 23, 2024, to the end of the contract term, August 14, 2024, in order to add a subcontractor, Los Pinos Nuevos Christian Corp., and to provide youth development services to 30 elementary school students, rather than high school students.

Budget Impact: There is no funding impact in this resolution.

Description of Services: Approval of this resolution will amend resolution #2023-38, attached, approved by the board on April 17, 2023, to implement Youth Development services. Blossom Group Florida, LLC was approved through resolution #2023-38 to serve high school students in a school-year only afterschool program at two sites in Hialeah, which they operated directly along with enrichment services provided by partner entity, Junior Achievement. Due to recruitment issues at one of the sites, Blossom Group has identified a new site with a need for afterschool services for elementary school students in the same area and with the same enrichment services provider. The new site will serve 30 students at Los Pinos Nuevos Christian Schools Corp., with Los Pinos Nuevos Christian Academy serving as the new subcontractor through Blossom Group's original contract. The location of Los Pinos Nuevos Christian Academy is ideal to enable the recruitment of 30 students.

Background: The Children's Trust issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) #2023-01 on October 26, 2022, to fund afterschool and summer programs for elementary, middle, and high school-age children and youth for a five-year cycle with one-year contract renewals. The foundational assumption for this investment is that children and youth need safe and engaging opportunities outside of school time. Quality afterschool and summer programs have been shown to improve academic performance, decrease risky behaviors and support working families. Blossom Group Florida LLC was awarded funding through RFP #2023-01 to provide high-quality youth development services.

Request for Procurement Waiver (requires the approval of a 2/3 vote of the board members present): On October 26, 2022, the Children's Trust issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) # 2023-01 to fund Youth Development services for a five-year cycle with one-year contract renewals.

Since executing the Youth Development contract with Blossom Group LLC, the provider requests to change a service site and the population served and add a new subcontractor due to the abovementioned reasons. This subcontractor and these services were not part of the provider's initial RFP application and proposal and therefore a procurement waiver is required.

Staff feels that these changes do not impact the core activities required by the solicitation and contract.

Geographic Area: Hialeah

The foregoing recommendation was offered by _____ who moved its approval. The motion was seconded _____ and upon being put to a vote, the vote was as follows:

The Chairperson thereupon declared the resolution duly passed and adopted this **22nd day of January 2024.**

THE CHILDREN'S TRUST
MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA

BY _____
SECRETARY

Approved by County Attorney for form and legal sufficiency _____

THE CHILDREN'S TRUST
President/CEO
Agreements - </= \$25,000
October 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023

Qty	Organization	# Served	Final Agreement Amount	Description
Promote Citizen Engagement and Leadership				
1	Children's Forum Inc	40 Youth	\$2,825.00	Participation of the Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) youth in Children's Week activities
2	Miami-Dade County League of Cities Inc	500	\$8,000.00	A Miami-Dade based civic conference hosting breakout sessions on topics relevant to community advocacy.
3	The West Perrine Community Development Corporation Inc	4000	\$24,999.00	Countywide Project - MLK Day Community Partnership
		Subtotal	\$35,824.00	
Public Awareness and Program Promotion				
1	Alhambra Music Inc	900 (Children and Adults)	\$10,000.00	Sponsorship of Spooky Symphony
2	Citrus Health Network Inc	300 - 80 Youth, 220 Adults	\$7,500.00	Sponsorship of National Adoption Day
		Subtotal	\$17,500.00	
Supports for quality program implementation				
1	The Foundation Center dba Candid	50-75 Professionals	\$12,995.00	Access to the Candid resources will be available year-round via Miami-Dade library locations and The Children's Trust.
		Subtotal	\$12,995.00	
		Total	\$66,319.00	
	Program	Total Funded	# Agreements	
	Promote Citizen Engagement and Leadership	\$35,824.00	3	
	Public Awareness and Program Promotion	\$17,500.00	2	
	Supports for quality program implementation	\$12,995.00	1	
	TOTAL	\$66,319.00	6	



Media Highlights
November – December 2023



To a child witnessing disturbing images and videos of global conflicts, the effects can be even more difficult than for the rest of us. Stress levels can easily spike for children if they are exposed to a barrage of intense media, possibly followed by symptoms of anxiety or depression. Parents and caregivers will ideally tune in to how such situations may impact their children’s emotional well-being, and when they might want to reduce exposure and offer age-appropriate explanations of what is going on.

Parents know their children best. Consider children’s individual personalities and characteristics in deciding how to broach these difficult topics. Even so, there are some things all adults can consider when communicating with children about complex situations.

Watch what they watch!

With social media and the 24-hour news cycle pressing in on younger and younger children, parents need to be aware of what their kids are seeing and how it affects them. Younger children might have more limited exposure and awareness of what is going on; keep discussions at their level of interest. Even for older kids, parents need to limit the amount of potentially disturbing information their kids are getting by taking periodic media breaks – times when cell phones, tablets and televisions are turned off in favor of other interactive activities.

Communicating with children and youth openly as a family reduces the risk of children learning about troubling world events on their own without emotional support and reassurance. When parents are ready to bring up the subject, they can start by asking how much their children know about what is going on in the world and how it makes them feel.

Their feelings matter

Let them know that however they feel, it's okay. Troubling situations are likely to make them feel fear, confusion or guilt, and those are all valid. If they ask specific questions, fill in the blanks with enough information to put them at ease without overwhelming them.

Listen to your child and if they ask hard questions about how global issues can affect your family, validate their feelings and ask what they are most afraid of, while at the same time letting them know they are safe.

For older children and adolescents, talking about global issues or politics may lead to discussions about which side is right and which is wrong. Don't be afraid to explain to them that simple answers don't come easy in real life and that global conflicts and even issues in your community can be complicated. Although it is important to teach that all opinions should be respected, parents can also use the opportunity to reflect on their own values and beliefs.

What you and they can do

Communication and dialogue will pave the way for your kids to handle these issues, but distractions and taking specific actions are other ways to put them at ease. Focusing for too long on troubling issues may lead to increased anxiety about global issues, so make sure to give your children ways for their minds and bodies to stay active. Exercise, sports and games are great ways to focus on the here-and-now and can be therapeutic if kids seem overwhelmed with certain issues. The Children's Trust funds free and low-cost after-school, summer and other youth programs that might be of interest to your children. Visit TheChildrensTrust.org/Find-A-Program to find one near you.

You can also encourage and facilitate your children taking actions to help those in need. Parents can find local organizations and institutions that are looking for volunteer help. Be sure to carefully research options to make sure they are not taking kids into a situation that is too emotionally charged or counterproductive to easing your child's mental well-being.

Parents are their children's primary supporters and advocates. To best care for your children's well-being, it is critical to first nurture your own through connecting with other parents and practicing self-care. The Children's Trust offers free parenting workshops across the county as part of its Parent Club, which offers more tools that parents and caregivers can use to help their younger or older children navigate growing up. Visit TheChildrensTrust.org/ParentClub to sign up for a free workshop near you.

HIALEAH

Realizan jornada comunitaria en Hialeah para ofrecer servicios gratuitos

POR VERÓNICA EGUI BRITO
ACTUALIZADO 05 DE DICIEMBRE DE 2023 9:05 AM

Vitia Acosta, de 33 años, tiene un año y medio de haber llegado de La Habana a la ciudad de Hialeah, en ese tiempo no ha conseguido trabajo., vive con su pareja y su hijo de tres años, Faruk Díaz.

Apenas se enteró del evento auspiciado por The Children's Trust en Babcock Park decidió acercarse para recibir información que ayude a su familia. Recibe cupones de comida y Medicaid pero le urge encontrar trabajo, así como cuidado para su hijo.

The Children's Trust le ofreció información sobre los programas infantiles y actividades después de clases a fin de facilitarle el cuidado de su hijo Faruk una vez consiga trabajo. Estudió contabilidad en Cuba, pero está abierta a las opciones disponibles.

En dicha actividad, liderada por el movimiento Walking One Stop, un programa social que busca conectar a las comunidades con el gobierno y la policía, estaban organizaciones del condado Miami-Dade, como Career Resource Florida.

Javier García, especialista de colocación de la agencia Career Resource Florida le dijo a el Nuevo Herald que actualmente están capacitando a jóvenes con cursos totalmente gratuitos en el sector de tecnología de información, aunque existen otras opciones. El experto explicó que ayudan a personas y empresas a conectar en todos los sectores, desde manufactura hasta profesionales.

Una de las sedes de la agencia está en Hialeah, en 240 E 1st Ave.

ENCONTRAR TRABAJO UNA DE LAS MAYORES NECESIDADES EN HIALEAH

Por primera vez Walking One Stop realizó una actividad en Hialeah, la primera de muchas dijo su líder Wayne E. Rawlins, presidente de Ummah Futures International, por solicitud de The Children's Trust.

Rawlins indicó que el idioma fue una limitación en la caminata porque la mayoría de los residentes solo hablan español, pero se mostró satisfecho de haber logrado más de 10 registros para ayudar a residentes de la comunidad, quienes una vez reciban ayuda, espera, rieguen la voz.

“Nosotros nos concentramos en comunidades que sufren de tiroteos y pandillas, Hialeah no tiene este tipo de cosas, tienen violencia doméstica pero no pandillas”, indicó Rawlins. “Fue un éxito haber hecho esta actividad en la ciudad para brindarles información y posteriormente ayuda”.

En la caminata que duró unas dos horas y media, por los alrededores de Babcock Park, entre East 5 Ave. y West 2 Ave., la mayoría de los entrevistados tenían necesidad de encontrar trabajo. Muchas personas de esta zona de Hialeah son personas mayores o parejas sin hijos.

Bárbara García, de 59 años, es una de ellas, llegó hace tres meses de Cuba, no tiene trabajo.

Acaba de capacitarse para trabajar cuidando niños y personas mayores, por lo que tiene esperanzas de conseguir rápidamente un trabajo.

“Puedo trabajar de cualquier cosa, en cualquier horario”, dijo García.

En Cuba se dedicaba a la gastronomía, pero como inmigrante no quiere limitar sus opciones.

Otras de las organizaciones y agencias presentes en la actividad fueron la Universidad de Miami, Jackson Health System, la oficina de la Fiscalía estatal, el Departamento de Justicia Juvenil, Citrus Family Care Network, FIU NeighborhoodHELP (programa de atención médica primaria), Hope for Miami, Center for Family and Child Enrichment, Miami Dade Head Start/Early Head Start (programa para la infancia y la participación familiar), entre otras.

The Children’s Trust tiene más de 117 programas sociales en Hialeah, entre ellos, un programa gratuito para ayudar a madres en la crianza de sus hijos, además de ayudas para pagar guarderías de calidad a bajo costo.

yahoo/news Search the web News Finance Sports More v Mail Sign in

Miami Herald

Miami-Dade's youth empowered through soccer, featuring new mini-pitches and Just Ball League

XIMENA NUNEZ
December 19, 2023 · 3 min read



From the humble streets of Argentina to DRV PNK Stadium in South Florida, [Lionel Messi](#)'s soccer journey is an inspiring tale of talent nurtured in modest beginnings. Growing up in a neighborhood that cherished teamwork, humility and empathy, Messi has a story that echoes the values instilled by playing in local leagues — a narrative that now transcends borders, defining him as a global icon.

Participating in sports and being part of a team, including soccer, not only shapes individuals and unites neighborhoods but helps foster crucial social skills in young players that will serve them as adults, while helping them avoid negative situations like being left alone with no direction. Recognizing this, the U.S. Soccer Foundation's Just Ball League, a success story in New York City and Los Angeles, recently kicked off in Miami-Dade County. This initiative is part of the broader Miami-Dade Soccer Initiative, a collaborative effort between the U.S. Soccer Foundation, Griffin Catalyst, Miami-Dade County and The Children's Trust.

The ambitious goal of reaching 36,000 Miami-Dade youth by 2030 involves constructing 50 new soccer mini-pitches in underserved communities. By 2026, coinciding with the FIFA World Cup in North America, these mini-pitches and accompanying soccer programming aim to offer a platform for children to enjoy the physical, mental and emotional benefits of the sport.

Beyond creating players, the Just Ball League is focused on establishing a robust community support system. Specially trained coach-mentors, referred to as "playmakers," become beacons of guidance, addressing the diverse needs of youth and ensuring encouragement for every child to thrive, regardless of background.

The recent inauguration of the first mini-pitch at Centro Mater in downtown Miami, followed by another one at Everglades Village in Homestead, signifies more than just a physical space. These mini-pitches are safe havens where dreams take flight, friendships blossom and futures are molded. It's not merely about soccer skills but about instilling vital life skills in young players. The impact of the Just Ball League is

promising, with 95 percent of participants developing more confidence, 94 percent feeling happier, 84 percent feeling less stress and 81 percent having new friends. This initiative transcends the game; it empowers youth, providing purpose and nurturing dreams that aspire to reach the stars.

Building upon the success of the U.S. Soccer Foundation's Soccer for Success program, funded by The Children's Trust in Miami-Dade since 2017, the Just Ball League works to amplify positive outcomes. Thousands of kids have received the benefits of exercise, fun and reported better attitudes toward school and homework, improved relationships with peers and teachers, and increased positive self-views.

As we all eagerly anticipate the 2026 FIFA World Cup, Miami-Dade County not only prepares to host a global event but also nurtures its own stars. The Just Ball League and the mini-pitches symbolize a belief that dreams, fueled by passion and dedication, can indeed change the world.

To find a Just Ball League location near you, visit ussoccerfoundation.org/map, and for more information on the league go to ussoccerfoundation.org/programs/just-ball-league. For more information on The Children's Trust's support of soccer, visit TheChildrensTrust.org/soccer.

Ximena Nunez has more than 20 years of experience in marketing and communications and blends her passion for children with her fervor for creative marketing and communications at The Children's Trust in Miami-Dade County, where she has been director of communications for the past five years.