

GREATER  
MIAMI  
at  
CHAMBER  
of COMMERCE

**26TH ANNUAL AWARDS PROGRAM**  
**AWARD CATEGORIES**

- Equitable Advisors Lifetime Achievement
- Health Care Professional
- First Responder
- Nurse
- Individual of Merit
- Organization/Program
- Youth Volunteer

Health Care Heroes® Awards Program celebrates 26 years of recognizing and honoring the tremendous efforts, dedication and achievements of our healthcare professionals, first responders, institutions and volunteers as well as others who have contributed to the health care delivery system and overall welfare of South Florida and its residents.

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MAY 15, 2025

**TO HEALTH CARE HEROES SUPPORTERS:**

South Florida is rapidly emerging as a global hub for top-quality healthcare, and the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce has been at the forefront of industry's evolution. Our annual Health Care Heroes celebration stands as a testament to the visionary leaders who have contributed to this remarkable growth and continue to shape a promising future for our region.

For over two decades, Health Care Heroes has been the premier community gathering honoring our local healthcare professionals. At this event, we recognize the exceptional contributions of physicians, nurses, researchers, institutions, volunteers, and many others, alongside key stakeholders from hospital systems, physician groups, managed care providers, biomedical innovators, and service suppliers—key pillars of the healthcare economy.

There may be no industry evolving as rapidly as healthcare, and no local economy better positioned to harness the power of that change. South Florida is also uniquely vulnerable to business and regulatory movement due to our unique population. That's why it's more important than ever for the healthcare leaders of South Florida to find common ground and work together in ways that benefit all our neighbors. That work starts with close, collaborative relationships that celebrate our shared success at events like Health Care Heroes.

This year, we are proud to commemorate the 26th anniversary of the Health Care Heroes® Awards program, which honors the tireless dedication and outstanding achievements of our healthcare professionals and first responders. The luncheon will celebrate those who have made significant contributions to healthcare delivery and the overall well-being of South Florida's residents.

We are thrilled to celebrate this incredible journey and rewarding partnership between Equitable Advisors and the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce for 26 consecutive years. Consistent partners like Equitable Advisors and presenting sponsor AvMed are the foundation for us to strengthen and grow our healthcare community.

Each year, we see a growing number of exceptional nominees, and the caliber of talent continues to make it increasingly difficult for our judges to select one recipient from each category. This is a testament to the relentless pursuit of excellence that defines this honor and, indeed, the mission of healthcare in South Florida and around the world.

Thank you for being part of this exciting and transformative journey. We look forward to celebrating our collective successes at this year's event



**Eneida O. Roldan, MD, MPH, MBA**  
Chairman, Healthcare Committee  
Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce

Sincerely,



**Luis G. Chiappy, CFP, CLU, ChFC, LUTCF**  
President, Southeast Complex  
Senior Manager, South Florida Branch  
Equitable Advisors, LLC  
Founding Sponsor, Health Care Heroes®

**JUDGES**

**Loreen Chant**  
President  
Health Foundation of South Florida

**Rocio Diaz, MBA**  
Healthcare Market Director -  
Florida and Puerto Rico  
Genentech

**Zuanel Diaz, PhD**  
Assistant Vice President,  
Interprofessional Education,  
Baptist Health Academics  
Baptist Health South Florida

**Kim Griffin-Hunter**  
Managing Partner South Florida  
Deloitte

**Ryan R. Hawkins**  
President & CEO  
Jessie Trice Community Health System

**Bridget Pelaez, MSN, MA, FNP-BC, EMT-P, CEM**  
Senior Director, Disaster  
& Emergency Preparedness  
Jackson Health System

**Jacqueline Perez**  
Manager, Consumer Sales & Retention  
Individual & Family Plans  
AvMed

**Congratulations to all the nominees of the Greater Miami Health Care Heroes Awards**

Nicklaus Children's would like to extend heartfelt congratulations to:

INDIVIDUALS OF MERIT

**Carolyn W. Domina, MSN, ARNP, CNOR, CAN-BC**  
Nursing Advisor,  
Nicklaus Children's Hospital

**Jose Perdomo**  
SVP, Operations & Infrastructure  
Nicklaus Children's Health System

ORGANIZATION/PROGRAM

**Nicklaus Children's  
Behavioral Health Program**

HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

**Ali Mandsourwala, CEO/Owner**  
Accessible Home Health Care of Aventura  
and Nicklaus Children's Board Member

NURSES

**Jorge A. Valdes, DNP, CRNA, APRN, FAANA**  
Dean & Fellow, FIU Nicole Wertheim  
College of Nursing & Health Sciences  
Nicklaus Children's Affiliate Member



**Nicklaus  
Children's**

Where Your Child Matters Most™



**Baptist  
Health**



# Welcome to the **Warmer** Side of Care.

There are many sides of care at Baptist Health. And each one stays true to our values. Bringing humanity, warmth and understanding to every person that comes through our doors. Which is why we're here to stand by you, through all of life's moments.

**Welcome to Baptist Health.**

**BaptistHealth.net**

## EQUITABLE ADVISORS LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD RECIPIENT

### WILLIAM W. CULBERTSON, IV, MD

Lou Higgins Chair in Ophthalmology, Bascom Palmer Eye Institute  
University of Miami Miller School of Medicine

A recognized pioneer in vision correction surgery and world-renowned expert in corneal disease, William W. Culbertson, M.D., holds the Lou Higgins Chair in Ophthalmology at Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, which has been named the best ophthalmology program in the U.S. for 21 consecutive years. A faculty member of the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine since 1978, Dr. Culbertson is recognized as one of the world's most skilled refractive and cataract surgeons.

With more than 40 years of experience in corneal diseases and surgery, Dr. Culbertson has provided crucial research that has contributed to the expanded use of lasers in eye care. He participated in the first nationally organized study of refractive surgery. With an innovative team of ophthalmologists at Bascom Palmer, he has co-developed a femtosecond cataract laser that has sharpened standard cataract surgery by using a laser to make bladeless incisions in the cornea, which are far more precise than those in traditional cataract surgery. The femtosecond cataract laser stands among the most significant advancements in cataract surgery in the last 55 years.

Dr. Culbertson's unique contributions to the field of ophthalmology include the first description of floppy eyelid syndrome, a disorder of unknown origin characterized by a loose upper eyelid that everts with papillary conjunctivitis. He also identified the herpes class virus as a cause of acute retinal necrosis, a devastating infection that causes inflammation and even tissue death in the retina. Dr. Culbertson's pioneering work includes the first successful posterior lamellar endothelial transplantation, a procedure that replaces the cornea's innermost layer with healthy donor tissue. His work represents genuine hope for people with corneal endothelial

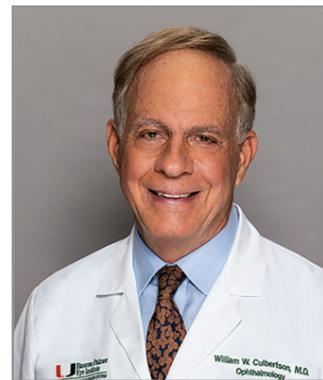
dysfunction, a condition that can lead to complete vision loss.

Dr. Culbertson holds two U.S. patents; one for his method for creating incisions to improve intraocular lens placement and one for his method for patterned, plasma-mediated modification of the crystalline lens.

A member of the Ophthalmology Times editorial board, Dr. Culbertson's professional achievements are global in scale and have been rewarded with well-deserved recognition from the most influential organizations in ophthalmology. The American Academy of Ophthalmology presented him with the prestigious Senior Honor Award and Life Achievement Award, and he has received the Lifetime Award from the International Society of Refractive Surgery, the Victor Curtin Award, and the Swedish Ophthalmological Society.

His expertise has been memorialized through named lectures worldwide, including Bascom Palmer's Edward W.D. Norton Lecture, the Proctor Foundation O'Connor Lecture, Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children's Lloyd Morgan Lecture, Laval University's Jean Lacerte Lecture, and Vanderbilt's Snyder Lecture.

He has served as president of the American Uveitis Society and is a member of the board of directors of the Cornea Society and Miami Lighthouse for the Blind. At Bascom Palmer, he founded the Uveitis Clinic, the Laser Vision Center and the clinic at the Ocean Reef Club. His commitment to advancing the field is further demonstrated by his role as director of Bascom Palmer's cornea and refractive surgery service, a facet of care that helps restore vision to thousands of people each year.



*"Dr. Culbertson's leadership in the field of ophthalmology is extensive and precisely correlates with his steadfast belief that healing is a talent that must be shared to best impact humanity. In short, Dr. Culbertson helps create a clearer, more vibrant world for people with vision problems."*

Eduardo C. Alfonso, MD  
Kathleen and Stanley J. Glaser Chair in Ophthalmology  
Director, Bascom Palmer Eye Institute  
University of Miami Miller School of Medicine

## HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

### SIR GAETANO CIANCIO MD, MBA, FACS

Chief Medical Officer  
& Chief Academic Officer  
Miami Transplant Institute/  
Jackson Memorial Hospital;  
Brandon and Kyle Simonsen  
Professor of Surgery & Urology  
UM Miller School of Medicine



*"For over four decades, Dr. Gaetano Ciancio has been known as a trailblazer in kidney transplantation and advanced oncology surgery. Because of his contributions, countless lives have been undoubtedly saved - not just in Miami-Dade County, but throughout the world."*

Luke Preczewski  
Vice President,  
Transplant Services  
Jackson Health System

A native of Roccapiemonte, Italy, Dr. Ciancio has dedicated his career to transforming lives by providing the gift of life to adult and pediatric patients in need of kidney transplants. Dr. Ciancio migrated to Venezuela and then the U.S. to pursue his medical career. As he refined his specialty, he was captivated by the profound impact of transplantation—providing not just a new organ, but the extraordinary gift of renewed life.

Dr. Ciancio's most significant contributions focus on surgically treating kidney cancer once it has spread to the inferior vena cava, and in optimizing the immunosuppression protocol after kidney transplant. In his role as chief medical officer and director of the Kidney and Kidney-Pancreas Transplant Program at the Miami Transplant Institute (MTI), he has steered the institute to become a national leader in making life-saving kidney transplant procedures available to those facing end-stage kidney disease; the institute has performed almost 10,000 kidney transplants since 1988. Dr. Ciancio has helped establish kidney transplant programs and organ donation programs and performed urologic and oncological surgeries in Latin American, the Caribbean, the Middle East and West Africa. He has established transplant programs in Peru and Nigeria, a laparoscopic donor nephrectomy program in Puerto Rico, and performed the first kidney living-kidney transplant on both donor and recipient with the Haiti Transplant Program.

He has performed several of the world's first transplant surgeries, including the first-ever multivisceral transplant of six organs, and the first successful simultaneous kidney-pancreas transplant. In 2018, Dr. Ciancio performed the first kidney transplant of a Hepatitis C positive donor into a negative Hepatitis C recipient. Dr. Ciancio has trained many professors, residents, fellows, and medical students from around the world. His dedication to teaching has been recognized with multiple awards.

### ARMEN HENDERSON, MD, MBA

Founder, Dade County Street Response  
General Internal Medicine Faculty  
Member, UM Miller School of Medicine



*"Dr. Henderson exemplifies what it means to be a health care hero—seeing beyond symptoms to the broader context of community well-being and acting on behalf of those who are often overlooked. Dr. Henderson's work is an inspiring reminder that a more equitable and healthier future is necessary, possible, and attainable."*

Loreen Chant  
President and CEO  
Health Foundation  
of South Florida

As the founder of Dade County Street Response (DCSR), Dr. Armen Henderson has created a model that addresses immediate health concerns and builds a framework for resilient, informed, and healthier communities while reducing excess costs at emergency rooms and hospital systems. DCSR brings medical services out of hospital settings and into communities experiencing housing instability, low wages, and limited healthcare access. This innovative, street medicine approach meets people where they are with compassion and continuous, free medical care, disaster relief, and preventive care. DCSR's care model integrates medical services with case management, legal advocacy, and medical education. DCSR's Doctors Within Borders clinic in Liberty City is a trusted medical resource during times of crisis and a unique training center for medical students and residents, offering services that extend beyond basic medical needs to include community support and outreach. DCSR's Disaster Relief Team has led the charge in preparing and protecting underserved communities before, during, and after environmental disasters. Dr. Henderson's responsibilities include serving as the director of health programs with Dream Defenders, where he champions initiatives focused on health equity and social justice. His leadership underscores a strong commitment to addressing the root causes of health disparities through disaster preparedness, street medicine, gun violence prevention, and social determinants of health inequities.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Henderson has been on the front lines, actively responding to the needs of Miami's most vulnerable residents, particularly those who are unsheltered. Dr. Henderson was named the Florida State Gun Violence Prevention Fellow with Doctors for America, acknowledging his impactful efforts to reduce violence and promote community safety. He holds a distinguished position as a National Medical Association Climate and Health Equity Fellow, where he integrates climate resilience with health advocacy.

## HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

**ALI MANDSOURWALA**  
Chief Executive Officer/Owner  
Accessible Home Health Care  
of Aventura



*“Ali Mandsourwala’s leadership is rooted in compassion, vision, and a deep commitment to service. His impact extends far beyond home health care — through his tireless dedication to emergency medical staffing for the state, community partnerships, and philanthropic work, he has elevated Accessible Home Health Care of Aventura and touched countless lives across the broader healthcare landscape. It’s a privilege to work alongside someone whose integrity and purpose inspire those around him every day.”*

**Joshua Laurence**  
Chief Growth Officer  
Accessible Home Health Care  
of Aventura

Under the leadership of Ali Mandsourwala, Accessible Home Health Care of Aventura (AHHC) has become a trusted provider of high-quality, compassionate home care for over 15 years. With a team of 175–200 caregivers, AHHC serves more than 100 clients, offering a full range of services — from daily home health care to emergency on-call staffing. The agency is dedicated to supporting independence, safety, and overall well-being for patients in the comfort of their homes. Mr. Mandsourwala’s commitment to community health extends beyond day-to-day care. During the COVID-19 pandemic, AHHC partnered with the Florida Department of Emergency Management (FDEM), mobilizing over 600 medical and nonmedical personnel for 17 missions across the state. Their work played a vital role in Florida’s vaccination efforts. In 2022, he expanded the agency’s reach by partnering with the Oregon Health Authority, deploying approximately 150 medical professionals to behavioral health and residential treatment facilities across the state. His leadership also guided emergency response efforts during natural disasters, including the rapid deployment of 100 medical personnel to shelters in Lee County within 24 hours of Hurricane Ian, and 25 personnel to shelters in Putnam County ahead of Hurricane Nicole. He has since expanded Accessible Home Health Care beyond Aventura, opening offices that now serve Broward County, the Palm Beaches and Treasure Coast, and Southwest Florida from Collier and Lee Counties to Sarasota County. Mr. Mandsourwala serves on the boards of the Miami Lighthouse for the Blind, Nicklaus Children’s Hospital Foundation, Entrepreneurs’ Organization (EO), and It’s For the Kids Foundation, and is a proud supporter of the Miami Walk to End Alzheimer’s. His dedication to service, both in health care and in the community, continues to make a meaningful and lasting impact.

## NURSES

**ADEMOLA “AYO” AKINKUNMI, BSN, MHA, PMP, FACHE**  
Director, Patient Care Services of Medical-Surgical and Telemetry Division  
Jackson Memorial Hospital



*“Ayo Akinkunmi has made a profound and lasting impact on healthcare in South Florida through his innovative leadership, dedication to patient care, and commitment to addressing the unique needs of the local community. His ability to lead with innovation, compassion, and vision exemplifies his commitment to going above and beyond his scope of work.”*

**Jennifer Lopez Bencomo, DNP, MBA, RN**  
Associate Chief Nursing Officer  
Jackson Memorial Hospital

For Ademola “Ayo” Akinkunmi, healthcare is more than a career—it is a calling. He has progressed through various roles at Jackson Health System, and in 2020, he was appointed director of patient care services for the medical-surgical and telemetry division at Jackson Memorial Hospital, where he oversees multiple specialty units and leads a team of more than 400 staff members. Mr. Akinkunmi played a pivotal role in developing strategies and programs as part of Jackson’s population health initiative aimed at improving outcomes for underserved patient groups in the community. He helped design targeted interventions to address frequent readmissions and emergency department visits. During the COVID-19 pandemic, he led the central staffing office, collaborating with staffing agencies to onboard agency nurses and support staff, ensuring the hospital maintained its high standards of care. In 2024, he was recognized for successfully implementing hospital-wide initiatives that improved patient flow and care delivery. He introduced structured rounds and a new patient flow application across the hospital’s inpatient units, resulting in significant improvements. These efforts, combined with a strong focus on outlier reduction, reduced the average length of stay (LOS) from 10 days to 7.7 days over two years.

While participating in Leadership Miami, Cohort 43, a Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce initiative designed to prepare the next generation of South Florida leaders, Mr. Akinkunmi’s cohort identified the Linda Ray Intervention Center, part of the University of Miami, as a critical community partner in need of support. Through strategic fundraising and outreach efforts, they successfully raised \$80,000 in cash and in-kind donations to transform the center’s park into a safe and nurturing environment for learning and play. He also joined the center’s Community Advisory Board, where he has played a pivotal role in expanding referral opportunities for pediatric patients in need of high-quality early intervention services.

## NURSES

**GUS CASTILLO, RN, BSN**  
Nurse Manager, Neurosciences  
& Epilepsy Stepdown Unit  
UHealth-University of Miami  
Health System



*“In Gus Castillo, UHealth has a leader who not only excels in his current role but also has the potential to elevate the entire health system to new heights. His commitment to transformational leadership is not just a testament to his individual excellence but also a source of inspiration for the staff from whom he has earned so much well-deserved admiration.”*

**Julio Garcia, BSN, RN, NE-BC®**  
Executive Director of Nursing  
Acute Care & Oncology  
Inpatient Services  
University of Miami Hospital  
and Clinics

A recent nominee for the UHealth—University of Miami Health System’s Transformational Leadership Award, Gus Castillo began his career as a bedside nurse. He was quickly promoted to charge nurse, a position of leadership that deemed him responsible for the efficient flow of patients through his clinic as well as providing supervision to nursing and support staff. Mr. Castillo’s current role is nurse manager for the Neurosciences and Epilepsy Stepdown Unit in the UHealth Tower, where he has helped transform it into a clinical beacon of excellence within the UHealth clinical construct. His guidance has prompted UHealth leadership to deem 6 North as an “innovation unit” that is depended upon to devise, test and refine new techniques that are expected to benefit patients and staff alike. Mr. Castillo’s knowledge of current best practices is comprehensive and his willingness to embrace the latest technologies are crucial elements in maintaining his unit’s high-performing standards. Under his leadership, 6 North has exhibited consistent improvement in performance and quality metrics that serve as the objective evaluative measures of a clinic’s effectiveness. Mr. Castillo’s team has seen a remarkable 50 percent decrease in adverse events since he assumed his current position. The decrease in adverse events tracks precisely with his time at 6 North, declining from 50 events in 2020, the year before he assumed his managerial position, and dropping annually to 44, 23, and 15 events, respectively. He continues to spearhead multiple pilot projects across the health system.

**JORGE A. VALDÉS, DNP, CRNA, APRN, FAANA, FAAN**

Dean & Fellow, Nicole Wertheim College  
of Nursing & Health Sciences  
Professor, Department of Nurse  
Anesthesiology  
Florida International University



*“What began as a clinical career 21 years ago became a calling—Dr. Valdés now leads one of Florida’s top nursing colleges with purpose and pride.”*

**Michelle Caldera, MPA, MA**  
Director of Strategic Initiatives  
Nicole Wertheim College of  
Nursing and Health Sciences  
Florida International  
University

Dr. Jorge Valdés is an accomplished nurse anesthesiologist, university administrator, and health advocate with over 20 years of experience in both clinical practice and academic leadership. A steadfast champion of student success, Dr. Valdés takes great pride in Florida International University’s role in shaping the future of health care across the state. As Dean of the Nicole Wertheim College of Nursing & Health Sciences at FIU, he leads with a visionary perspective—one rooted in both firsthand clinical expertise and a deep understanding of systemic healthcare challenges. Under his leadership, the college has emerged as a state leader in addressing critical healthcare workforce shortages through an innovative, multidisciplinary approach that unites the state legislature, community hospitals, and higher education institutions. A key initiative of his tenure has been the college’s implementation of the state-sponsored Linking Industry to Nursing Education (LINE) partnership. Through this program, FIU has collaborated with major healthcare providers—including Baptist Health South Florida, Nicklaus Children’s Hospital, Memorial Healthcare System, HCA Florida, Jackson Health System, and Riviera Health Resort—to offer full scholarships and guaranteed job placements for undergraduate nursing students. Thanks to these strategic alliances, since 2022, FIU has secured \$8.8 million in combined partner and state match funds—the largest LINE award across Florida’s State University System. These efforts have effectively doubled admissions for the undergraduate nursing program. Thanks to his leadership, FIU continues to be a driving force in preparing the next generation of healthcare leaders.

INDIVIDUALS OF MERIT

**CAROLYN W. DOMINA, MSN, ARNP, CNOR, CAN-BC**  
 RN Advisor, Griffin Surgical Tower  
 Project/RN Wisdom Program  
 Nicklaus Children's Hospital



Carolyn Domina has had a distinguished and impactful career at Nicklaus Children's Hospital, where she has consistently demonstrated exceptional leadership and a commitment to advancing patient care and the nursing practice. Through her tenure, she has excelled in a range of pivotal roles, including as administrative director of surgical services, program administrator for professional services, interim director of the maternal fetal program, interim chief nursing officer, and, since June 2021, as the RN Advisor for the Kenneth C. Griffin Surgical Tower project within the RN Wisdom Program.

Ms. Domina's strategic leadership was key to the successful establishment of the Maternal Fetal Care Program. She played a central role in its development, overseeing the creation of the program's structure, business plan, proforma, service line strategy, and community outreach initiatives that set the stage for what is today the Fetal Care Nurse Navigator program. As interim chief nursing officer during the beginning stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, her leadership and ability to navigate an unprecedented healthcare crisis were indispensable. She effectively supported both nursing teams and the hospital's patient population, ensuring that the hospital's mission continued despite the numerous hurdles presented by the pandemic.

Ms. Domina's passion and invaluable skills to always provide the best pediatric care to the community has also been demonstrated through volunteer efforts. She has routinely volunteered and accompanied a neurosurgical specialty team to care for and perform surgery for children from Haiti with neurosurgical challenges. Her expertise, gained from her involvement in the Advanced Care Pavilion (APCP) construction project, proved invaluable in the planning and execution of the Kenneth C. Griffin Surgical Tower.

Her leadership in perioperative services, strategic planning, and operational transitions contributed significantly to the successful go-live of the Kenneth C. Griffin Tower on September 26, 2024. Today, she continues to mentor emerging nurse leaders at Nicklaus Children's Hospital, offering guidance and insight to help shape the future of nursing at the institution.

*"Carolyn Domina is a dynamic and results-driven leader whose contributions have had a lasting impact on Nicklaus Children's Hospital. Her unwavering dedication to excellence in patient care and nursing leadership has made her an indispensable member of the team and a true asset to the institution."*

Shannon O'Dell  
 VP, Chief Nursing Officer  
 Nicklaus Children's Hospital

**JULIETTE FABIEN, MBA, RN**  
 Chief Programs Officer  
 The Children's Trust



Born in Haiti, Juliette Fabien began her professional journey in 2004 as a registered nurse health educator at Jackson Health System, where she witnessed firsthand the profound impact of social determinants on health outcomes. Since joining The Children's Trust in 2006, Ms. Fabien has risen through the ranks, excelling in roles that showcase her versatility and strategic insight.

Her roles included leading the HealthConnect initiative—a comprehensive system of care addressing children's physical, emotional, and developmental needs—to serving as Chief Programs Officer, where she oversees a team of 25 human services professionals and guides the implementation of innovative funding initiatives, ensuring that resources are distributed effectively to meet the evolving needs of Miami-Dade County's most vulnerable populations.

Her dedication to holistic community health has transformed The Children's Trust into a catalyst for positive change, ensuring that over 103,000 students across 144 public schools have access to vital services. By deploying mobile health units, Ms. Fabien has ensured that underserved areas are reached effectively, providing essential services to students who might otherwise face barriers to accessing these critical resources.

This multi-tiered strategy also integrates telehealth services, enabling schools with on-site nurses to connect with a broader network of primary care providers. Under Ms. Fabien's leadership, The Children's Trust has reached unprecedented levels of impact. The organization now allocates the largest percentage of its \$255 million budget to direct program services, including \$31 million dedicated to health and wellness initiatives (an increase of nearly 50 percent from the previous year). These investments support critical programs such as school-based health services, vision care, oral health training, food and nutrition programs, public benefits enrollment, and injury prevention education.

One of Ms. Fabien's most notable contributions is her leadership of the annual HealthConnect conference, which equips hundreds of school nurses, social workers, and mental health professionals with the latest knowledge and practices to address students' needs.

*"Juliette Fabien's impact is measured in the scale of the programs she oversees and the lives she touches. Her vision, adaptability, and collaborative approach have left an indelible mark on South Florida, advancing health equity and fostering brighter futures for children and families."*

Imran Ali  
 Chief of Staff  
 The Children's Trust

INDIVIDUALS OF MERIT

**JOSE PERDOMO**  
 Senior Vice President, Operations & Infrastructure  
 Nicklaus Children's Hospital

With a career spanning more than 42 years, Jose Perdomo's leadership at Nicklaus Children's Hospital has been marked by significant achievements that directly impacted the hospital's growth, financial stability, and operational expansion. Currently serving as senior vice president for operations and infrastructure, Mr. Perdomo provided critical oversight of the \$145 million construction of the new Kenneth C. Griffin Surgical Tower, successfully completing the project on time and \$1.8 million under budget. His leadership also resulted in the improvement of the capital asset management system, yielding \$3 million in savings.

In 2019, Mr. Perdomo was appointed interim hospital president and COO, which was pivotal in bringing stability and a vision for growth and expansion to Nicklaus Children's Health System. He implemented a medical-administrative leadership model that enhanced physician engagement and collaboration. As SVP & chief ethics and compliance officer, he led the transformation of the health system's compliance culture, shifting the organization from passive regulatory adherence to active, interdisciplinary accountability. He created a digitized accreditation process, which was recognized as the National Healthcare Innovation of the Year (2018) by DNV-G. This process became a model for remote accreditation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

While serving as EVP of Ambulatory Services, Mr. Perdomo was responsible for expanding the hospital's network of outpatient facilities, which resulted in a 15 percent increase in urgent care visits and a 13 percent growth in critical care transport team transfers. He also led the development of new facilities, including a 14-bay dental clinic and additional urgent care centers.

In his role as director of the Research Institute, Mr. Perdomo spearheaded initiatives that led to a \$1.2 million increase in research revenue, driven by the expansion of clinical trials and personalized medicine programs. Additionally, his integration of LEAN methodology into the research accreditation process helped the institution achieve AAHRPP reaccreditation, demonstrating his ability to improve operational efficiency in complex environments.



*"Jose Perdomo's contributions to patient-centered care, healthcare innovation, and community engagement have left an indelible mark on the hospital and the broader healthcare landscape. He is more than a senior leader, he has become the face and embodiment of the Nicklaus Children's culture of belonging and family centered care."*

Matthew Love  
 President & Chief Executive Officer  
 Nicklaus Children's Health System

**ORGANIZATIONS/PROGRAMS**

**HEALTHY WEST KENDALL  
BAPTIST HEALTH WEST KENDALL  
BAPTIST HOSPITAL**

**Healthy West Kendall**

Powered by West Kendall Baptist Hospital



The Healthy West Kendall coalition is a community-wide effort led by Baptist Health West Kendall Baptist Hospital, uniting more than 200 partners across schools, businesses, government agencies and nonprofits. Together, they focus on one goal – helping residents live healthier, safer lives. Launched in 2013, the coalition was formed with support from leading organizations, including the Miami-Dade County Commission and the Florida Department of Health. Today, it is a powerful network that shares ideas, identifies local needs and takes action – from hosting health fairs and safety programs to addressing priority needs such as access to care, and healthy lifestyles and wellness.

In 2014, a health and wellness kiosk, the Healthy Hub, opened in the lobby of West Kendall Baptist Hospital, offering free health screenings, health risk assessments, personalized patient education, referrals for follow-up primary care and information about community resources for healthy living. More than 36,000 screenings have been performed including assessments of blood pressure, cholesterol and glucose levels and mental wellness.

With outreach that touches residents of all ages, in 2023 Healthy West Kendall provided water safety instruction for more than 2,400 children, high school programs on healthcare careers, hand hygiene education for more than 1,000 students, six new community gardens at local schools, essential items to students experiencing housing instability and much more. By bringing together the strengths of healthcare, education, business and local leadership, it is creating a stronger and healthier community.

*“Hand in hand with its partners in industry, education, government and other sectors, Healthy West Kendall takes on issues impacting health and wellness. From promoting preventive healthcare and resources to ensuring safer neighborhoods, Healthy West Kendall is shaping a healthier tomorrow.”*

**Simone Cheong**  
Magnet Program Director  
Baptist Health West Kendall  
Baptist Hospital



**JEWISH COMMUNITY SERVICES  
OF SOUTH FLORIDA**

JCS is a steadfast advocate for Miami-Dade County’s most vulnerable individuals and families, addressing their unique needs and providing life-sustaining support.

The organization champions for its clients, ensuring access to critical services such as home care, emergency financial assistance, and mental health support, nutritional security, and other services to ensure that clients are empowered to live with dignity.

Recognizing the unique challenges individuals face when they seek support from JCS—trauma, aging-related health issues, housing and financial insecurity, mental health concerns, crisis situations and more, JCS has developed tailored initiatives, including home care services; trauma-informed mental health support; emergency financial assistance; case management services; and food security (JCS operates the only kosher food bank in Miami-Dade and provides meals to hundreds of homebound seniors daily).

JCS also manages the 24/7/365 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, and the JCS 211 Miami Helpline for Miami-Dade & Monroe Counties to assist those experience a mental health crisis, and those seeking community resources. Through its support for Holocaust survivors, JCS plays a vital role in ensuring this treasured population ages with dignity, their stories are preserved, and their lessons of resilience live on. By fostering intergenerational connection and combating antisemitism through education and advocacy, JCS cares for all of their clients based on Jewish values.

*“JCS’s work is about more than providing services; it’s about restoring dignity, preserving history, and building a compassionate community. By addressing the physical, emotional, and social needs of the South Florida community, JCS exemplifies a holistic approach to health care that goes far beyond the ordinary.”*

**Kerry-Ann Royes**  
President and CEO  
YWCA South Florida



Where Your Child Matters Most™

**BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROGRAM  
NICKLAUS CHILDREN’S HOSPITAL**

There is a behavioral health crisis among the youth in South Florida and the U.S., leading to poor life outcomes. National surveys show an alarming rise in anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation and research shows an 8-to-10-year gap between symptom onset and care. Between 2021 and 2023, nearly 11,000 Miami-Dade County children were hospitalized for a behavioral health-related condition, with Nicklaus Children’s Hospital caring for 38 percent of the total discharges.

A key component of the hospital’s strategic plan and organizational priorities are to improve access to pediatric behavioral health services along the care continuum. Home to the largest pediatric residency program in the Southeast, Nicklaus Children’s trains four psychology fellows, four doctoral interns, and four psychiatry fellows each year. It additionally receives approximately 15 doctoral practicum students each from sponsoring local universities and offers psychiatry rotations to over 50 residents and medical students from community facilities.

The organization completed a 20-bed Inpatient Behavioral Health unit expansion in June 2023 to better serve the growing number of children who are being admitted to the hospital for mental health treatment. They expanded capacity to a total of 40 beds, ensuring that no child or adolescent needs to be transferred out of the hospital for care.

Some of the programs launched to better serve the needs of children and adolescents include the Social-Emotional Wellness Program, integrating psychology providers into primary care; the Pediatric Behavioral Health Network, which improves access to mental health services by leveraging community organizations and connecting families to the appropriate and geographically convenient facility; the Safe + Sound Digital Safety Alliance that provides education to the community about safer internet practice and the impact on our youth and their mental health; and the Zero Suicide Initiative, which has expanded universal suicide screening across the hospital and emergency department allowing for early screening, improved access, and training for the system’s workforce.

*“Nicklaus Children’s is increasing its network of pediatricians, behavioral health professionals and community partners. Additionally, the organization is addressing the national shortage of pediatric mental health professionals through robust training programs to solve recruiting challenges and to meet the growing demand.”*

**Matthew Love**  
President & Chief Executive Officer  
Nicklaus Children’s Health System



**FIRST RESPONDERS**

**JAMES “MIKE” ADAMS**

Lieutenant/Fire Investigator  
Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Department



*“Due to James Adams’ commitment to the Fire Investigation Bureau and MDFR, our Fire Investigations Bureau is considered an expert on lithium battery failures in our industry and one of the top fire investigation bureaus in the country.”*

Nicolas Morgado  
Division Chief  
Miami-Dade Fire Rescue  
Department

Lt. James Adams has been with Miami Dade Fire Rescue (MDFR) for more than 24 years. During his career, he has educated fellow firefighters, children and the public, volunteering to teach at Southridge High School, Coral Reef High School, and the MDFR Explorer program. Lt. Adams has spent countless hours of his own time building the MDFR Fire Investigations burn cell and other burn training props that educate firefighters, the public, and the insurance industry on product safety and potential product liability. Lt. Adams has also helped improve standard operating procedures, and co-wrote the first MDFR Investigator Training Task Book. He teaches and is on the board of multiple fire investigator-related associations that help improve fire investigators' working conditions and help them keep current with the requirements of NFPA 1033. This year alone, Lt. Adams has taught multiple classes outside MDFR to include Coral Springs Fire Safety Stand Down, the International Association of Arson Investigators Evidence Collection Technicians, the South Florida Auto Show, and the AASIU conference, in which he demonstrated the potential safety hazards of EV vehicle fires for the insurance industry. Lt. Adams has attended multiple conferences, training seminars, and classes throughout his career, most of which were on his own time. He was also invited to attend an EV seminar with General Motors.

**CARLOS “IGGY” EGUILUZ**

Instructor  
Miami Dade College Medical Campus



*“Through his expertise in extrication techniques, his global training initiatives, and his role as a legendary educator at Miami Dade College, Carlos “Iggy” Eguiluz has saved lives, elevated EMS standards, and inspired countless individuals to pursue careers in this vital field. His legacy is one of empowerment, innovation, and hope, making him a true icon in the world of emergency medical services.”*

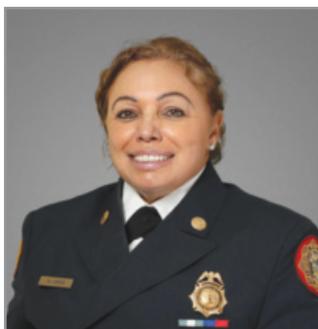
Fabio Nascimento  
Chairperson  
Miami Dade College  
Medical Campus

Carlos “Iggy” Eguiluz’ tireless dedication to improving rescue techniques and fostering future EMS professionals has made an indelible mark on the field. By combining technical expertise with a passion for teaching, he has transformed lives both locally and globally. One of his most significant contributions to EMS is his work in teaching extrication techniques across various EMS municipalities. Vehicle accidents often pose complex challenges for first responders, as individuals trapped in cars require precise and efficient rescue techniques to ensure their survival. Mr. Eguiluz’ hands-on training equips EMS teams with the skills necessary to navigate these high-pressure situations. His approach emphasizes both safety and efficacy, enabling first responders to save lives while minimizing risks to themselves and the victims. By ensuring that rescuers are well-prepared, he has directly improved survival rates in countless emergencies. Through his international training efforts, Mr. Eguiluz has influenced emergency medical practices across diverse cultural and geographic contexts. His influence is perhaps most profoundly felt in his role as an instructor at Miami Dade College. Over the years, he has educated thousands of students, preparing them to embark on careers in emergency medical services. His teaching goes beyond textbooks, instilling a deep sense of responsibility and passion in his students. His mentorship has shaped a new generation of EMS professionals, many of whom carry forward his teachings to save countless lives. As a legendary educator, Mr. Eguiluz’ legacy is defined not only by his personal achievements but also by the accomplishments of his students. His classroom serves as a launching pad for future EMS heroes, ensuring that his impact continues to grow exponentially. By fostering a culture of excellence and dedication, “Iggy” has solidified his status as a transformative figure in EMS education.

**FIRST RESPONDERS**

**MARIA ORTIZ**

Lieutenant  
Miami-Dade Fire Rescue



*“She’s beloved by all and probably one of the hardest working women in the fire service. Her character, work, service, and love is second to none and known by all.”*

Nicolas Morgado  
Division Chief  
Miami-Dade Fire Rescue

Lt. Maria Ortiz is a 29-year veteran with Miami-Dade Fire Rescue (MDFR). She holds a certification as a Technical Rescue Technician and has been a member of Florida Task Force 1 since 2010, and her accolades include three Unit Citations, one Life Saving Award and one Major Campaign for her actions during the Surfside Response. For her entire career she has served and worked at busy units (15 years at Station 20 alone) and she has never stopped growing and training, even becoming TRT around her 20th year, and now serving within USAR for the last 10 years of her career. She has been involved with MDFR United Way Campaign for 15 years, first as an assistant and eventually becoming the department coordinator. Lt. Ortiz became a conduit and ambassador for Miami-Dade to be able to assist firefighters in several countries by providing over 600 sets of bunker gear that otherwise would have been burned. She founded a 501c3 nonprofit organization in honor of her mother, called Project for the Love of Jesus. Through the foundation, she has provided ongoing training to firefighters in the Dominican Republic and equipment including sets of bunker gear, fire helmets, fire gloves, fire hoses and medical supplies; assistance to the Haitian migrant farming community through the provision of basic food supplies; improvement of their living quarters and construction of a school and church, and the provision of clean potable water. She continues to supply a standing store located in the Dominican Republic where she donates goods and resources for families, particularly for women in need throughout the country.

**YOUTH VOLUNTEER RECIPIENT**

**JASMINE J. WILLIAMS**

Student  
The Children’s Trust Youth Advisory  
Committee



*“Jasmine embodies the qualities of intelligence, leadership, and unwavering determination that make her an exceptional candidate for this honor. Her commitment to healthcare and community service exemplifies what it means to be a true changemaker.”*

Yolanda L. Vines  
Retired Educator  
Miami Dade County Schools

Jasmine’s leadership credentials are extensive and inspiring. As president of the Southern Pearls (Top Ladies of Distinction) Chapter of Top Teens of America (TTA), vice-president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Youth Council South-Dade Branch, and former vice-president of Alliance of Youth Leaders in the United States (AYLUS) Miami, she has demonstrated her ability to mobilize and inspire others. In each of these roles, she has prioritized raising awareness about critical health issues affecting her community. Jasmine has taken the initiative to educate teens about diseases impacting minority populations, encouraging them to disseminate this vital knowledge among their peers. Jasmine’s passion for healthcare is both personal and profound. Her recent essay on HIV in minority communities showcases her ability to combine research and advocacy, highlighting her deep understanding of health disparities. Jasmine’s aspiration to become a pediatric oncologist stems from a heartfelt desire to improve the lives of children battling cancer. She is particularly driven by the possibilities of advancing cancer research and dreams of contributing to breakthroughs that could lead to cures.

Academically, Jasmine is nothing short of extraordinary. She has been dually enrolled at Miami Dade College for the past three years while excelling in a rigorous curriculum of Advanced Placement and honors courses at her high school, School for Advanced Studies. Her dedication to her studies will allow her to graduate next year with both her high school diploma and an Associate of Arts degree, with many prerequisites for a pre-med major already completed. Her hard work and achievements have been recognized through numerous accolades, including the Achievement in Academics award from the West Perrine Community Builders Association, the Top AP Statistics Student award at MAST Homestead Campus in 2023, and consistent placement on the Principal’s Honor Roll for three consecutive years.

