

Ms. Mary Blanco, Board Member

Co-Sponsors: Ms. Maria Teresa Rojas, Chair
 Mr. Roberto Alonso
 Ms. Lucia Baez-Geller
 Mr. Daniel Espino
 Ms. Luisa Santos

REVISED
AT DAIS
BY
BOARD
ACTION

**SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION NO. 24-009 OF THE
 SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA,
 RECOGNIZING THE CHRISTMAS SMILES PROJECT**

COMMITTEE: PERSONNEL, STUDENT, SCHOOL & COMMUNITY SUPPORT

**LINK TO STRATEGIC
PLAN: INFORMED, ENGAGED, & EMPOWERED STAKEHOLDERS**

Inspired by the shared desire of helping people in the community who lacked the financial resources to celebrate the holiday cheer, in December 1997, a pair of friends, Rosemarie Rey and Andrea Lopez, began collecting toys from close friends and relatives to deliver gifts to families in need in Miami-Dade County. They wanted to make the greatest impact, so they decided to go to places with the greatest need and little assistance. Driving in a borrowed truck, with toys in tow, the pair of friends headed to the migrant workers camps in the south area of the county, and from the back of the truck, started handing out the toys. The following year, their giving operation expanded to include visits to Florida City Elementary and Coral Gables nursing home and donations of much needed items to The Baby House, the former name of the Cerebral Palsy home.

What began as two friends wanting to do just a little more for people in need, The Christmas Smiles Project has grown into an expansive giving operation that each year brings happiness and joy to more than a thousand people in the community and counting. Other partners have joined the effort such as Lourdes Mestre, coordinator of the Ministry of Mothers Sharing (MOMS) at Saint Timothy Catholic Parish Church. Almost a decade ago, upon learning about the need for toys in The Project, she kindly donated to the effort, marking the beginning of a beautiful and giving partnership. In addition to helping The Project collect more toys and bring more joy to many more children, this partnership has opened more opportunities to reach more people in need. The Project now collects toys from Saint Timothy Catholic Church and Saint Timothy Catholic Parish School.

Throughout the years, many people and entities have benefited from the generosity of The Christmas Smiles Project including La Salle Learning Center, Campbell Drive Elementary, Florida City Elementary, The Baby House, Ronald McDonald House, Kristi House, San Juan Bosco School, Sacred Heart Church, Citrus Elementary, Wayside Baptist Church, Migrant Worker Public Housing Communities in Homestead, Saint Vincent De Paul, Bahamas, Notre

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Dame in Little Haiti, Alex's Place in Jackson, Caribbean K-8 Center, Christ the King, San Martin de Porres, Saint Vincent de Paul, among others. The work of The Project extends beyond the Christmas season. They hold events to help families in need year around, including events during Thanksgiving season, back to school time and other occasions such as their recent visit to the Golden Glades Cerebral Palsy home.

We recognize The Christmas Smiles Project, its founders, families, friends, volunteers, and donors whose work and dedication throughout the years have made the mission of The Project possible. This recognition celebrates their many contributions to the community and their love for their neighbor.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
MS. MARY BLANCO:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, approve Resolution No. 24-009 of The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, recognizing The Christmas Smiles Project.

**RESOLUTION NO. 24-009 OF THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA,
RECOGNIZING THE CHRISTMAS SMILES PROJECT**

WHEREAS, inspired by the shared desire of helping people in the community who lacked the financial resources to celebrate the holiday cheer, in December 1997, a pair of friends, Rosemarie Rey and Andrea Lopez, began collecting toys from close friends and relatives to deliver gifts to families in need in Miami-Dade County. They wanted to make the greatest impact, so they decided to go to places with the greatest need and little assistance. Driving in a borrowed truck, with toys in tow, the pair of friends headed to the migrant workers camps in the south area of the county, and from the back of the truck, started handing out the toys. The following year, their giving operation expanded to include visits to Florida City Elementary and Coral Gables nursing home and donations of much needed items to The Baby House, the former name of the Cerebral Palsy home; and

WHEREAS, what began as two friends wanting to do just a little more for people in need, The Christmas Smiles Project has grown into an expansive giving operation that each year brings happiness and joy to more than a thousand people in the community and counting. Other partners have joined the effort such as Lourdes Mestre, coordinator of the Ministry of Mothers Sharing (MOMS) at Saint Timothy Catholic Parish Church. Almost a decade ago, upon learning about the need for toys in The Project, she kindly donated to the effort, marking the beginning of a beautiful and giving partnership. In addition to helping The Project collect more toys and bring more joy to many more children, this partnership has opened more opportunities to reach more people in need. The Project now collects toys from Saint Timothy Catholic Church and Saint Timothy Catholic Parish School; and

WHEREAS, throughout the years, many people and entities have benefited from the generosity of The Christmas Smiles Project including La Salle Learning Center, Campbell Drive Elementary, Florida City Elementary, The Baby House, Ronald McDonald House, Kristi House, San Juan Bosco School, Sacred Heart Church, Citrus Elementary, Wayside Baptist Church, Migrant Worker Public Housing Communities in Homestead, Saint Vincent De Paul, Bahamas, Notre Dame in Little Haiti, Alex's Place in Jackson, Caribbean K-8 Center, Christ the King, San Martin de Porres, Saint Vincent de Paul, among others. The work of The Project extends beyond the Christmas season. They hold events to help families in need year around, including events during Thanksgiving season, back to school time and other occasions such as their recent visit to the Golden Glades Cerebral Palsy home; and

WHEREAS, we recognize The Christmas Smiles Project, its founders, families, friends, volunteers, and donors whose work and dedication throughout the years have made the mission of The Project possible. This recognition celebrates their many contributions to the community and their love for their neighbor;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, approves Resolution No. 24-009 of The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, recognizing The Christmas Smiles Project.

A copy of this resolution is placed in the permanent records of this Board.

Presented this Thirteenth day of February A.D. 2024

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA

SCHOOL BOARD CHAIR

ATTEST:

Secretary